

TROJANTODAY

The Newsletter for Today's Dental World

Volume 25, Issue 3

IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURE: SETTING THE CULTURE

ASK THE CONSULTANT: INFECTION CONTROL

SERVICE SAVVY: XRAYS

Setting the Culture: Negative Policies and Your Team

by Alan Twigg

In today's economy, no employee should be treated as disposable. Quite possibly, in fact, any decent or stellar employee currently in your office should be treated like a rare and precious asset, and employee and team engagement are critical components to keeping your employees around.

In looking at ways to engage your employees and retain them, have you considered that it goes beyond just wages and benefits? To us, engagement encompasses trust, respect, appreciation, recognition, and support. In other words, your overall culture.

As an employer, it is important to always ask yourself, what, if anything, are you doing that might be contributing to an undesirable culture and a lack of engagement? Sometimes, it is your policies that can lead, in subtle ways, to an overall culture of negativity, lack of trust, and fear.

Use the following questions and scenarios to see if any apply to you and, if so, learn how you might change it.



(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

1 Do you have policies that punish employees for small mistakes?

For example: maybe you put a policy in your manual/handbook that if employees lose their paycheck, they have to pay the stop-payment-reissue fee. Or, if they lose their parking pass, they have to pay for the replacement cost.



For example: maybe you put a policy in your manual/handbook that if employees lose their paycheck, they have to pay the stop-payment-reissue fee. Or, if they lose their parking pass, they have to pay for the replacement cost.

This might be the result of a bad experience once when someone somewhere sometime lost a paycheck or parking pass. Now,

this financial punishment on future employees feels justified in order to mitigate the inconvenience on you or the office.

Whether or not these types of charges are legally allowable is a topic for another article. In general, they are not. This is an area that requires knowledge about federal and state rules before implementation in order to ensure compliance and avoid liability.

The real questions are: *should* you have these policies? What sort of message do these arbitrary and minimal cost policies convey in your office? How would these policies look to a brand-new hire, reading your manual/handbook for the first time? Let's say your office is financially successful this person is

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

Ask the Consultant

Answer by Ramona Colbert



Q: I have an infection control concern. A coworker believes it is OK to reuse HVE suction tips (she thinks it will save money).

A: My understanding is that your coworker wants to reuse plastic suction tips. Plastic materials cannot be sterilized in a head sterilizer (autoclave); therefore plastic suction tips cannot be adequately sterilized and thus cannot be reused.

Check out trojanonline.com for some of our favorite "classic" Trojan Today articles:

3/15/23
Turning 65
 by David Nelson

3/25/23
**Workplace Violence:
 Are You Prepared?**
 by Twigg & Boartfield

Trojan Benefit Service
 800.451.9723 ext. 3 www.trojanonline.com

excited to begin a new career chapter at your particular office, and now they learn that the office won't absorb a one-time \$25 mistake. Does this inspire confidence and trust, especially as a first-impression?

As an alternative, you could take each situation on an individual case-by-case basis. If an employee loses their paycheck/parking pass once, chalk it up to "mistakes happen" and move forward. If an employee loses their paycheck/parking pass multiple times, treat this like any other performance issue and proceed accordingly with disciplinary action (verbal and/or written counseling, suspensions, termination).

2 Do you have strict and punitive policies about employees paying back money for continuing education (CE) courses if their employment ends?

This one is often a reaction resulting from one employee, in the past, who attended a CE course and then resigned. The most extreme versions require an employee to pay back the full cost regardless of when their employment ends.

These policies are illegal in some states, and difficult to collect in full even if allowable, regardless of whether there is a signed agreement. Furthermore, if the costs associated with CE events are required to be paid by you, which is often the case, then it can't be recouped even if you want it to be. When viewed as the "cost of doing business," the burden can't be placed on your employees' shoulders.

We understand the desire for fairness and recouping your investment. A "middle ground" position could be a loan program where the cost is paid back in a



forgiveness manner over a set period of time (assuming recouping this cost is allowable by law).

For example, the course is \$2,400, and you agree that it will be paid/forgiven in 2 years or 24 months. This is a monthly payment of $\$2,400 \div 24 = \100 . Therefore, each month that the employee remains employed, the \$100 is forgiven. If employment ends after 12 months, the employee would owe half the total, or \$1,200.

Again, how you would be able to collect this amount is a different matter altogether. Like #1, state and federal laws come into play and have limitations that must be applied.

Another perspective is seeing these costs as a good-faith investment in your team. When you invest in your employees, they invest in you. Are there selfish bad apples out there? Absolutely. But don't let the fear of one bad apple ruin the investment and positive growth on the whole. Your team is your competitive advantage and worth investing in.

Spend some time thinking about your Unique Employee Proposition (UEP). Why should someone work for you versus the office down the street? If a person is experienced, qualified, and has a fantastic attitude, what do you offer that is unique and special? Anyone can compete on money or benefits. Long-term retention of quality employees comes from your office *culture* and how you make the people *feel*.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

QUOTE-WORTHY

“Corporate culture is the only sustainable competitive advantage that is completely within the control of the entrepreneur.”

-David Cummings

3

Have you spent significant time debating whether to payout unused vacation or PTO at termination? Or requiring two weeks' notice to payout unused benefits?

This one is also born out of bad experiences where an employee uses their vacation and quits immediately. This can result in an employer adopting complicated paid time off calculations, strict controls on usage, changing to a system of "advancing" time off benefits so the employee "owes" them back if they quit at a certain point, outright elimination of all paid time off benefits, and other such modifications all in an effort to protect oneself in the future. Employers will spend precious time trying to determine the exact way to prevent this at all costs, some of which may or may not be legal, depending on your state laws.

Something that will definitely cost more than paying out paid time off benefits is turnover. Turnover estimates consistently put the total cost equal to that person's annual salary (or more, depending on the position and how long it takes to fill it and get the new person up to speed.) So, if you lose an employee who makes \$45,000/year, your office will ultimately suffer at least a \$45,000 loss in direct and indirect costs. Compared to these numbers, one week of vacation is an incredibly small impact.

Rather than focus on recouping the cost of paid time off, focus on why this person quit in the first place. The reasons for turnover have been covered in other articles, but the short version is this: happy, engaged, and appreciated employees don't quit. When leaving, they might say, "I can make more money at another office." What they are really saying is, "I'm not making enough money to put up with this work environment."



Now, flip your hat from employer to employee: Would you work for you? How would you feel if you were considering working for yourself and these were the rules and policies in place? This article might persuade you to revisit your written policies and adjust or eliminate them—that is a good first step.

Next is asking yourself, how do you view your team? Do you think of them as an asset, a liability, a resource, or an expense? Don't let a negative perception worm its way into your entire office culture.

The team you have is hopefully your team of the future—a team of capable, decent people who genuinely want to do a good job. They may not be perfect (no one is), but they want to support you and be supported in turn.

Employee and team engagement are absolutely possible; it's never too late to start. We have clients who experience little to no turnover. Their employees show up on time, work hard, have a great attitude, and stick around. Are these offices just plain lucky? No. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, these offices view their employees in a positive light and continually demonstrate their appreciation. The engagement results speak for themselves.

Ask around and see who hasn't had to hire a new employee for 5, 10, 20, or 30 years. You will hear (as we do) inspiring stories of focusing on the future. If you want the positive office culture you've dreamt about, it begins with your leadership, the tone you set in your verbal and written communications, and a consistent focus on employee and team engagement.

Alan Twigg is Vice President at Bent Ericksen & Associates with expertise in client consultations, strategic planning, marketing plan development, operational support, and product development.

FMI: www.bentericksen.com, info@bentericksen.com, or (800) 679-2760



Read more by Alan Twigg:

Trojan Today: "Building A Multi-Practice Empire? Don't Get Tripped Up with Labor Nuances." by Alan Twigg - Trojan Professional Services (trojanonline.com)

READ MORE



X-rays! To send or not to send. That is the question.

X-rays can be a hassle when the time comes to file your insurance claim. Some insurance companies insist you send them with certain procedures. Others do not want them at all. Your decision to send them can make a difference in the turnaround time of your claims. Here are a few hints to help the claims process when x-rays are involved.

Paper claims:

Considering the turnaround time for paper claims through the mail, offices find it is better to send the x-rays if there is any doubt about whether the insurance company wants or needs them. Never send the originals, when sending x-rays with paper claims. Claims for crowns, bridges, dentures, partials, and root canal therapy, should all be accompanied by x-rays. Remember to send periodontal charting as well as x-rays with periodontal procedure claims

Electronic claims:

The turnaround time for an electronic claim is far less than with a paper claim, especially if there is not an x-ray to slow it down. You are better off not sending x-rays and having them tell you to do so, rather than sending unnecessary x-rays and having your claim delayed while the insurance company waits for an x-ray they don't need. To expedite the claim, carriers will usually process without accompanying x-rays.



TROJAN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Accelerating dental practices to excellence
by providing services that increase case
acceptance, production,
collections, and profit.

TROJAN TODAY PHONE: 1-800-451-9723 • E-MAIL: nikkim@trojanonline.com • www.trojanonline.com • Published monthly by Trojan Professional Services, Inc., P.O. Box 1270, Los Alamitos, CA 90720 and distributed to members of the dental profession. Statements of opinion in TROJAN TODAY do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Trojan Professional Services, Inc. or the Editor. Neither Trojan Professional Services, Inc., Trojan Today, its Editor or staff assume any liability in connection with the use or implementation of any policies or procedures discussed in this newsletter. Trojan Today is distributed as a newsletter and with the understanding that neither the publisher, the Editor or the staff is rendering professional or legal services of any kind. If legal or professional advice of any other kind is required in connection with topics discussed in this newsletter, competent advice should be sought.

• PRESIDENT: Ingrid Kidd Goldfarb • EDITOR: Nikki Myers •

Copyright ©2021, Trojan Professional Services, Inc. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form without permission.