



Providing training, value for OMS practice team

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The past few years have seen incredible shifts in workplace culture on a number of issues such as the importance of paid parental leave, the value of virtual work, the benefits of a fair working wage and more.

But employee hiring and retention also is an important piece of workplace culture that can be challenging for businesses of all sizes for various reasons. Business owners may cite any of the following issues as reasons for struggling to find and retain talent for their teams: “There are not any people suited for the role in my area,” “I don’t know how to train them effectively,” or even, “I would have liked more time to train them but didn’t because I desperately needed an extra set of hands.” These are not unique situations – they are universal challenges.

A well-trained and engaged team is a critical component of any OMS practice. There’s a great quote along the lines of, “What if I train them and they leave?” The follow-up to this question is even more important: “But what if you don’t train them... and they stay?”

Value of training

As a best practice, begin training team members from the moment they start working in a practice. Create role-specific checklists demonstrating how each new employee

will spend their first two weeks. Training should occur before they begin to “do their real job” – whether that involves answering the phones, assisting with a procedure or charting a patient.

The first two weeks should prepare them from the ground up with the how, including how to answer the phone, how to respond to patients’ frequently asked questions, how to chart a patient, how to scribe, how to answer questions on the practice’s social media channels without violating HIPAA, how to coordinate patient care and even how to log into their email address. Even if the task is simple, new staff should be trained on it. Some practices record videos on how to do each of these things, which saves time down the road. This also benefits the practice team members by giving them an accessible resource should they ever need a refresher.

Once new team members have completed their first two weeks of employment at a practice, they should still be supervised closely and assigned a mentor. This helps the onboarding process by providing a trusted colleague to answer questions, preventing unnecessary mistakes and ensuring only one team member is taking on the time commitment of training.

Employee training should be ongoing. It is recommended to have a monthly all-team session focused on handling the most frequently experienced challenges in the practice, such as disgruntled patients bullying the practice team or running behind on appointments. This monthly session can provide training time for the team and also can be used

to address any issues and brainstorm solutions that will benefit the entire practice and its patients.

Also be sure to schedule quarterly trainings with different vendors for the practice on everything from practice management software (updates may occur frequently and without notification) to equipment and other products used within daily operations.

Offering regular continuing education opportunities on company time is another valuable tool to help train staff. Clinical team members have

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different sets of skills and tasks they handle than that of the billing and coding department, for example. Educational opportunities such as webinars help employees remain engaged in their work. Consider an education stipend for each team member to provide access to paid training that would help them enhance their knowledge base or further their skills.

If a practice owner chooses to register the team for an in-person conference or educational event, set expectations and requirements ahead of the travel. In writing, let everyone know which sessions, events and meetings they are expected to attend to avoid an all-day pool lounging session from occurring on company time (and the company's dime). Some workplaces require their team members to be with them for a certain period of time (30 to 90 days, or even six months) prior to qualifying them to attend in-person meetings requiring travel and extra expense.

To this end, should a practice invest in the team's continuing education – whether it be conference attendance or a type of certification – work with the practice attorney to create a formal written policy noting who is eligible for paid educational opportunities. Include specifics on length of employment, type of educational offerings the employee may choose to attend, reimbursement or employee expense policy. This is not an all-inclusive list; work with the practice attorney to tailor the policy to the practice and its specific needs.

Providing additional value to your team

Beyond traditional training, there are other ways to support team members and provide value to them.

A decade ago, five days of paid time off after one year of employment may have been common; now, it's nearly

unheard of and employees may immediately begin accruing two weeks of PTO per year. If a practice does not have enough employees to be eligible for a group health insurance plan, consider a monthly health insurance stipend for each eligible team member (available up to a certain amount and paid with proof of their policy). Be sure to work with the practice attorney to comply with all local, state and federal requirements.

Additionally, put together a comprehensive benefits package demonstrating the financial value of each item. This may be done in an Excel spreadsheet, which can help make clear the value of each PTO day they earn, health insurance offered, 401k matches, tuition reimbursement and more.

Remember that the practice's benefits package must not only compete with other practices but other businesses in general. The front desk team, office managers and some assistants may opt to work in other industries if they feel the opportunities are more abundant elsewhere. This is very important to remember when managing a team. Lastly, treat the team with fairness and remember respect goes a long way when it comes to increasing employee retention. ■

Mara Shorr has spent nearly 15 years guiding practices toward operational, administrative and financial health. She has been honored with 2018, 2019 and 2021 Best Practice Management Company awards from The Aesthetic Guide as well as the 2017 to 2023 Top Aesthetic Service Provider/Top CEO Awards from Aesthetic Everything. She writes for numerous esthetic industry publications and is a speaker at esthetic industry conferences.



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