

YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE

Inspire your team to master new technology.

by DR. LOU SHUMAN, PRESIDENT OF THE PRIDE INSTITUTE

TIP

When contemplating any change, even a "good" change, most individuals weigh the benefits of the proposed change against the potential risks. In general, people resist those changes that they perceive threaten them in some way. The key is to give your team members some sense of control about the situation and to assure them that the benefits will outweigh the risks.

The word "inspire" originates from Latin and means "to breathe." This is particularly appropriate when we consider that new technology brings new life and greater breadth to the dental practice.

As the practice leader, your role must go far beyond the purchase of hardware or software. You need to involve and motivate your team members who will implement and experience the technology.

There are four important components to inspire your team to master new technology.

Communicate your vision

Before you purchase new technology, you need to create a practice personality that compels your team to be committed and enthusiastic even when faced with the inevitable bumps in the road. If you portray passion in providing state-of-the-art technology and clinical processes, your team members will sense this and be proud that the office and they themselves represent the leading edge of dentistry. After all, the technology you choose may be a key differentiator between you and your competitors.

This vision serves as your guidepost. It will answer their questions about why you are doing this, how it will help them as individuals, how it will improve patient care and how it will enhance the practice as a whole. Your vision statement about technology represents your values, your goals and your image of success.

Partner with your team

One mistake many dentists make is to go off to a conference, purchase new technology on impulse and announce its imminent



Lead your team through resistance

To minimize resistance and maximize enthusiasm, you need to be prepared to answer the following questions for your team.

- **Why do we need to make this change?** The team needs to understand the limitations and costs of the current system and fully appreciate the benefits of the new technology. You need to describe how the new technology will increase efficiency, improve communication, enhance productivity and boost profitability.
- **What's in it for me?** This is the pivotal question you need to answer. Initially, the team may not be as interested in the benefits to the practice as compared to the benefits to themselves. After all, if the practice is profitable enough to afford these new "gadgets" then the practice must already be doing well. Why change? And more importantly from the employee perspective, wouldn't it be better to avoid this new expense and instead increase salaries? Team members
- **Will I be able to learn how to use this system?** Once individuals understand and agree with the need for change, the next series of questions will concern training and implementation. You need to assure your team you understand that learning is a continual process and not a one-time event. Both you and the team need to be comfortable with varying learning styles and paces. Your role as the leader will be to support each team member as each person learns, risks, fails and tries again.

Technology has the capacity to transform the way your practice does business, to impact how you are perceived by consumers and the dental community, and to provide the opportunity to transform your team. All it takes is inspiration.

arrival on Monday morning. Because team members are often the ones who will use the new technology and communicate about it to your patient base, incorporating them in the decision-making process and

providing them with that level of ownership mentality is very often the make-break point for integration success.

Invite your team members to meet with you and vendors, if possible. Share informa-

Getty Images / Yagi Studio

tion about the options and your criteria. The more involved your team is in the purchasing phases, the more invested they will be in the implementation phase.

Train your team effectively

If you want your investment in technology to succeed, you also need to make sure your team is provided with excellent training. And because you are both the leader of the practice and the role model for your team, you need to be present for all on-site or off-site training. Training should be organized around specific learning outcomes, should be hands on, and ideally, should be delivered in half-day increments as opposed to one long intensive day. In addition, you will need training on updates so your team remains current and you can maximize the technology to its fullest extent.

Appoint a technology liaison

Choose a team member who will be the information leader for each piece of technology. This person would act as the liaison between the technology vendor/trainers and you and your team. This strategy gives the team ownership and responsibility and helps develop self-directed leaders among your team members. It is a way to communicate both to your team and to your vendor that you trust and empower your team. ●

Dr. Lou Shuman brings a wealth of experience and expertise to Pride Institute in the areas of strategic relations, emerging technologies, Internet strategy, practice management and marketing. Dr. Shuman is sought after as an outstanding speaker and educator and has lectured extensively throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Japan, including every major meeting in the U.S.

Your vision

Example of a technology vision statement...

We are passionate about using innovative technology so our patients receive thorough, accurate and customized treatment that represents the finest in complete dentistry. Our state-of-the-art practice attracts patients and team members who value a healthy marriage between high tech and high touch. By enhancing our scheduling, diagnostic tools and internal systems, both patients and team members will be assured that our dedicated focus is on clinical excellence.