



PROGRESSIVE INSIGHTS - JANUARY 2025

From Stress to Success: Retaining Great Staff in Your Dental Practice

Many industries grapple with talent shortages, employee churn, and staff retention. The dental industry, more specifically the dental implant space, is no different, and these issues have emerged as top challenges for many practices.

Successful dental practices focused on high-value procedures like implants and cosmetic treatments face the unique challenge of delivering excellent care and effectively selling these services to potential patients. This is a new responsibility for many team members, especially for those who haven't worked in practices where lead generation, sales, and strategic growth are integral to the daily operations. This can be overwhelming and frustrating – leading to a high staff turnover rate, which for dental implant practices is generally considered to be significantly higher than 10%, with some reports indicating it can reach up to 27.5%.

According to the American Dental Association (ADA), approximately 90% of dental practices find it “extremely” or “moderately” challenging to find qualified staff, underscoring a widespread staffing shortage within the dental industry.

Rounding out these jarring statistics, the highest risk for team turnover is among dental front office workers, with the potential for turnover as high as 30%. Staff shortages and high turnover lead to lost revenue as patient care suffers. These issues often stem from undefined roles and responsibilities, a lack of dedicated positions, ineffective onboarding, and the absence of structured compensation or bonus plans. As a result, turnover can be high, and employees may feel unmotivated or uncertain about their long-term career prospects.

By addressing these key areas, practices can improve staff retention, create a more cohesive team, and foster a positive workplace culture. The following breakdown explores these three main issues in more detail.

Unexpected day-to-day business and sales responsibilities.

Nearly 43% of job seekers said they left their new position because they were unaware of the full responsibilities of the job. Not disclosing the complete details of the team members' specific role and their areas of accountability in the interview process can drive a new team member out fast or lead to termination, as they often feel overwhelmed with the responsibilities and case acceptance process and have trouble keeping up.

To mitigate this, it's crucial to present each team member with a well-written job description that outlines the education and qualifications required for the role and the specific duties required of each person of your dream implant team. Taking the time to reveal the full job description as well as a snapshot of what



their day would look like, makes it more likely that you will hire qualified individuals to fill the position, and lets each employee know upfront what is required to fulfill the requirements of the job successfully.

Unclear expectations and ineffective internal onboarding.

Ineffective onboarding for new team members in a dental implant practice can leave individuals feeling uncomfortable and unprepared in their roles. Without proper training and support, they may struggle to understand the specific responsibilities and expectations required in a specialized setting like implant dentistry. This lack of clarity can result in confusion, frustration, and a lack of confidence, all of which contribute to poor work experience and, ultimately, higher turnover rates.

To alleviate this, practices should implement a comprehensive and structured internal onboarding process that thoroughly introduces new team members to both the technical and business aspects of implant dentistry as well as the practice's culture and values. According to Trainual.com, a well-structured onboarding process can increase early productivity by 70% and improve retention of new hires by 82%. Providing detailed training, mentorship from experienced staff, and clear expectations from the outset can help new employees feel supported and more confident in their roles.

Absence of Structured Compensation & Incentive Plans.

Without structured compensation and incentive plans, a dental implant practice can struggle with staff retention, especially the staff you need to help secure and sell high-value cases. When pay, rewards, and incentive plans aren't clear or tied to performance, team members may feel undervalued or uncertain about their growth, resulting in disengagement and low morale. This inevitably leads to higher turnover as team members look for better opportunities with better rewards.

To remedy this, set up clear compensation plans that link performance to rewards like bonuses, commissions, profit-sharing, or career growth. Regular performance reviews and clear, achievable goals give staff direction and motivation. Offering incentives based on metrics like case acceptance or patient satisfaction helps keep employees engaged. For example, a 2-3% commission for each full-arch a Treatment Coordinator closes is typical, with a monthly bonus goal of around \$1000-1500. Patient Advocates should be earning similar commissions for every "show" appointment. A transparent, fair, and rewarding environment leads to higher job satisfaction, more loyalty, and lower turnover.

Reducing turnover and improving team member retention is imperative for the long-term success of a high-value procedure practice. It is estimated that the cost of directly replacing an employee can run as high as 50% of their annual salary. In comparison, the average annual cost of training and developing an employee is just 10%. Recruiting and training new staff requires significant time and financial investment, while existing team members bear the burden of increased workloads, stress, and low morale. This not only affects the internal dynamics of the practice but also directly impacts patient care and the practice's reputation. By taking these steps to reduce turnover, you can avoid the negative consequences on both the team and the bottom line.

Retaining top talent is crucial for the long-term success of your dental practice. If you're struggling with talent, recruiting issues, and staff turnover, don't navigate it alone—we can help. Contact us today for expert guidance on building a loyal, motivated team.