

Video Script: Leadership and Setting the Tone Every Day in Your Dental Office

Hello, and welcome to today's course, *Leadership and Setting the Tone Every Day in Your Dental Office*. Thank you for giving your time to join us.

So let's get a few preliminaries out of the way and give you an overview of today's content:

- Well, we'll start off by taking a look at a working definition of the concept of leadership and what we understand by the term.
- Secondly, let's clarify the differences between leadership and management – believe it or not, they're quite different animals.
- We'll then move on to looking at different kinds of leadership and ask you to consider what kind of leader you are (always good to know).
- Delegation is a really important aspect of leadership, so we're going to delve into the ins and outs of delegating tasks to your dental staff.
- As always, we want to equip you with some practical, hands-on leadership practices that are proven to work and that you can start applying right away!
- Finally, before we check out, we're going to give you folks a short quiz based on today's course – so listen up!

Working Definition

It helps to think of leadership in terms of *influence* rather than power. In the context of a dental practice, consider how you influence your employees by setting the right tone, rather than how you coerce them simply by virtue of your official status as their boss. Leaders have vision, and they *empower* and *inspire* their team to help realize that vision. By witnessing the leader's commitment, team power is unleashed.

Leadership versus Management

Both are important and it's worth asking yourself which category more applies to you. Being a leader is the ideal. However, a leader must also *manage* if they are to maximize their impact. It's worth remembering that it's better to be a manager with only limited leadership qualities than it is to be a great leader who can't manage – functionaries may be 'boring', but they sure get things done!

So to help you discern the differences, we'll take a brief look at some binary descriptions of the two:

Leader

Motivates
Inspires
Thinks
Creates
Pro-acts
Initiates improvement
Drives
Inspires loyalty
Sets the pace

Manager

Organizes
Controls
Does
Administers
Reacts
Adjusts to change
Coordinates
Seeks discipline
Follows procedures

Let's take a look at these binary oppositions in a little more detail:

As manager of a dental practice, you organize your employees and create the systems; a leader of a dental practice *motivates* others to take an organizational role.

A manager controls the work that is done (sometimes by the dreaded micro-managing!); the leader *inspires* trust and can rely on employees to follow procedures.

The dental office manager *does* all the managing work; the leader has ideas, thinks about innovation, improvement and development.

The manager does the administrative work; the leader creates effective systems whereby work is shared, providing useful training and experience for employees.

A manager *reacts* to change, adjusting accordingly; a leader is *proactive*, initiating effective change.

A manager will seek *discipline*; a leader *inspires loyalty* and trust in the whole dental team.

A manager *follows* procedures set down by others; a leader *sets the pace* and creates new procedures where necessary,

What Kind of Leader Are You?

You may think you know the answer to this. But do you? Really? The best people to let you know how well you lead are your employees. Be brave, and have them answer these questions coming up with a simple YES or NO. Anonymity will ensure more honest responses! First of all, though, try it yourself: for each question, jot down YES or NO, according to what you think your employees would say. Got your pen and paper ready? Twelve questions, then, with a simple Y or N for each:

Does Your Dentist:

1. Hold regular meetings?
2. Talk to you informally about work, weekends and family?

3. Hold regular 1:1 meetings about your work?
4. Compliment your work?
5. Celebrate team success?
6. Arrange celebrations?
7. Always seem unavailable?
8. Regularly respond angrily?
9. Mostly communicate with you via email or telephone?
10. Work variable hours, making them difficult to pin down?
11. Regularly work off-site/at home?
12. Take credit –without giving it - for successes?

Answering YES to questions 1-6 labels you as someone who is confident and does not feel threatened by employees and colleagues. Well done – you are a successful communicator who enjoys celebrating success with your team!

Answering YES to questions 7-12 labels you as a leader who is under pressure and uses blocking methods to avoid conflict. You are struggling, yet unwilling to delegate responsibility.

Answering YES to questions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 labels you as a sociable, people-centred person who is capable of successfully mixing work with pleasure.

Answering YES to questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 labels you as someone who is responsive and wants to share information.

Hopefully you didn't discover anything too uncomfortable about yourself there! Let's see how this marries up with your 'leadership style' – or, indeed, 'styles'.

Leadership Styles

There are six different types of leadership. Let's take a look at the characteristics of each, and identify which one applies to you – then learn from it! Better still, if you're brave enough, ask your *employees* which one describes you best!

Coercive Style:

You like to be in control and keep a close eye on your employees. You may also believe that negative consequences are necessary in order to force improvement in the workplace and you expect your staff to do as they're told. This style of leadership can be useful in crisis situations and as a last resort strategy when all else has failed. However, this style of leadership can stifle your more self-motivated staff and prevents initiative. It can also cause resentment, so watch out!

Authoritative Style:

If you run your practice in this manner then you're generally firm but fair. You articulate a clear vision for your employees and you like to motivate by balancing

positive and negative feedback. You will seek your employees' views on your vision and try to 'sell' it to them. You definitely have long-term goals and monitor performance against these goals. This can be a great way to lead your practice if all is already going smoothly and you simply need to keep a steady standard, or when your employees need a little guidance. The downside? It creates dependency and prevents creative initiative.

Affiliative Style:

This kind of leader has clear priorities: people first, task second. The happiness and well-being of your employees are very important to you and you try and promote friendly interactions. Personal characteristics are prized more than performance; you may place employee and colleague needs above those of the practice. You may also find performance-related confrontations pretty uncomfortable. If you have this style of leadership, it can be great for bringing diverse 'types' of workers together and an atmosphere of personal help and support is never a bad thing, is it? True – but avoidance can mean that under-performing employees *continue* to under-perform. It's also worth bearing in mind that not everyone wants friendship at work – some people prefer to be more task-orientated.

Democratic Style:

As you might expect, this kind of leader encourages open debate about issues affecting the practice and invites employees to participate in any decision-making. You rarely give negative feedback because you like to reward adequate performance. Generally, you trust your employees to do their job well and will listen when they have concerns. This is a great leadership style if you have a good team. When there are competency issues, however, this style may not be enough.

Pacesetting Style:

This kind of leader is always tempted to just do a job themselves! You have very high standards and expect others to follow your lead. Because your standards are so high, you are extremely apprehensive about delegating. If a sticky situation arises, you will tackle it personally. This style works well when you have highly motivated employees or when quick results are needed – you are most definitely a leader. However, you can leave those behind you in a dazed state as well as creating an awful lot of work for *yourself!* Delegating is a key strategy for you to develop – more of that later.

Coaching Style:

You provide on-going instruction on what works within your practice and give feedback. Employees are encouraged to establish long-term development goals and you are happy to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses. You will seek and reach agreement on an employee's role in improving their performance in

the practice. You may sometimes accept lower standards as a trade-off for long-term gain.

In all probability, you are a combination of two or three of these styles. Think about your team of employees – which leadership style best suits them? You may have to adapt a little to get the best out of the people who work for you. For example, if you have a very competent and motivated team, they won't react too well to a 'coercive' style of leadership.

The Importance of Delegation

Delegation is important for several reasons: it sends a message of confidence, hence is motivating; it enables staff to develop skills and confidence; it encourages a sense of responsibility; it gives a feeling of 'ownership'; it provides variety and interest in the job; it helps employees develop their roles and careers; finally, it gives you more time to lead.

So I'm now imagining all the difficulties popping up in your heads at the thought of delegation:

- ! What if my employees do a job better than I do?
- ! I don't want to over-burden people.
- ! I don't have time to train my staff.
- ! They can't do it as well as I can!
- ! I don't trust them...

But we know that delegation is one of the signs of a good leader - and can make your practice run more smoothly! Here's how to do it:

1. List the tasks that could be delegated in your practice. There are probably more than you think.
2. List the names of your employees and write their strengths next to their name.
3. Allocate the list of tasks according to employees' strengths. It's that easy.

The Delegation Path:

Delegation is a long-term investment in setting the tone and establishing yourself as an effective leader. Here's a useful path for the delegation process:

1. Decide which tasks will be delegated, and to whom – as just described.
2. Brief and train the employee. This is crucial. A little time invested here will pay dividends. Generally, if a task is not completed correctly it's because the person performing it has not been adequately briefed.
3. Inform others. This ensures clarity and everyone is informed as to who performs what. No room for confusion!
4. Give 'ownership'. Don't micro-manage – it defeats the purpose. Allow the employee to settle into a task and claim it for themselves. This becomes their area of expertise.

5. Maintain accountability. Delegating should not be 'passing the buck'. Accountability for ensuring a task is done well still stops with you – the leader. Know the difference between *delegation* and *abdication*. On that note, ensure that you are always available for advice.
6. Actively monitor. You still need to keep an overview on how tasks are progressing – for example, by asking employees for updates in meetings.

Remember, though – before embarking on the delegation process, really analyze your team: What is their preferred style of working – independently, within a group, etc.? Do they like to take the lead? Are they better in a team environment? What are their goals and ambitions? Are they 'big picture' people or details people? Do they operate best in public? Or in a more private sphere? Get to know them! Analyze them!

Practical Strategies to Inspire Respect

So, what we really want is some hands-on strategies we can employ in our practices tomorrow and then reap those benefits, right? So here goes with some tried and tested methods that characterize a brilliant leader – YOU!

- Communicate your vision. Ensure that your vision is clear and in writing.
- Realize the vision – make sure that all employees are conversant not only with the vision of the practice, but how that vision is to be realized. Everyone should be able to answer the following questions: What is the 'Big Picture' for the practice? Who is responsible for each role? What is the timescale for the realization of the goal (or a milestone goal)? Why is the vision important? What's in it for everyone (employees and patients)? What are the specific goals? How does the vision tie in with the status of dentistry across *the US*? What information or instructions are needed to actively pursue this vision? How is commitment to the vision secured?
- Identify skills gaps. Try and find people who complement each other. If you surround yourself with people who all have the same strengths, this can be limiting. Use strengths to plug weaknesses.
- Identify and promote talent. Recognize the particular talents of your employees, and let them know it! Utilize their particular talent within your practice. Give them opportunity to grow and develop. Where actual promotion isn't realistically feasible, this could be something like attending a conference, or leading some in-house training.
- Lead by example. As the leader of a dental practice, it is your responsibility to act as a role model. Set high expectation, but don't expect anything you wouldn't demand of yourself too. Leading by example is critical.
- Delegate! This has already been covered here, but do remember that people do things in different ways – sometimes someone else's way is better than your own. Don't be didactic.
- Be prepared to move people on. While it is the ideal that employees are helped to develop and be part of a successful venture. Sometimes that just

isn't possible. If all else fails, you need to accept that you cannot allow one individual to 'poison' your practice. It's time to part ways. Other employees will respect you for this, especially if you have handled it sensitively.

- Try SWOT analysis. Many businesses use this strategy and it can be extremely effective for 'checking the pulse' of your practice and planning for improvement. Basically, SWOT analysis consists of four boxes: Strengths (S); Weaknesses (W); Opportunities (O); and Threats (T). Have each member of your team complete one of these - then collate the results. Celebrate the strengths and opportunities; *act upon* the weaknesses and threats.
- Be a 'one-minute manager'. Although your aim is to be a leader first and manager second, management is vital on a day-to-day basis. Here's the game plan: For 'goals achieved', administer one minute praise (praise the success; do it immediately; be specific; tell the employee what they did well; tell them how you *feel* about it; offer the employee words of encouragement. For 'goals not achieved', administer a one minute reproof: acknowledge the failure; do it immediately; be specific; tell the employee what their role was in the failed objective; tell them how you *feel* about it; offer words of encouragement. In both cases, being timely and precise is key.
- Keep everyone 'in the loop'. Be open and honest.
- Aim to tell one employee every day how much you appreciate the work they do.
- Be very clear in your expectations and demands. All employees should know exactly what is expected of them.
- Show your appreciation when even routine tasks are done well and on time.

Summary/Conclusion

As you can see, we've covered some of the key principles and strategies to help you demonstrate your leadership and set the right tone every single day in your practice. Let's finish by checking out what you remember by taking this short quiz. Again, thank you for listening and have a great day.

Quiz

1. Leadership and Management are the same thing. True/False?
2. Never ask an employee for their opinion on your leadership. True/False?
3. What does the T in SWOT Analysis stand for?
 - a) Treats
 - b) Triumphs
 - c) Threats
4. How many questions are in the list you should give to your employees?
 - a) 8
 - b) 10
 - c) 12

5. How many steps are there in the Delegation Path?
 - a) 6
 - b) 7
 - c) 8
6. Which of the following is good reason for delegating tasks?
 - a) Employees get paid
 - b) It inspires confidence
 - c) You can go home earlier
7. Which leadership style hates to delegate?
 - a) Affiliative
 - b) Coercive
 - c) Pacesetting
8. Which of the following words describe a leader?
 - a) Reacts
 - b) Motivates
 - c) Does

Quiz Answers

1. Leadership and Management are the same thing. True/**False**?
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References

K. Blanchard and S. Johnson, *The One Minute Manager*