



REPRODUCE

Recipe for loyalty

For more on this topic, go to www.dentaleconomics.com and search using the following key words: *staff turnover, loyalty, respect, communication, leadership, empowerment, Dianne Glasscoe-Watterson.*

- *Stress in the office is palpable.*
- *Staff members cannot get along with each other.*
- *The doctor is short-tempered, grouchy, and/or overly perfectionistic.*

Here is my **RECIPE FOR LOYALTY:**

- 1 heaping cup praise*
- 1 cup respect*
- 2 tablespoons humor*
- 2 tablespoons empowerment*
- 1 tablespoon interest*
- 1 tablespoon feedback*
- Stir in a warm greeting each morning*
- Sprinkle liberally with “thank you” and “please”*

Dear Dianne,

One of my greatest frustrations in practice is staff turnover. Just when I think I have the perfect staff group, someone leaves! Several staff departures have been unpleasant, and I always feel hurt, especially when someone goes to work for one of my competitors. After the hurt comes anger and frustration, then the agony of searching for a replacement. Do you have any tips for controlling staff turnover?

Dr. M

Dear Dr. M,

It sounds like you are lacking in the loyalty department. What does it take to build loyalty in staff members? Shouldn't a paycheck be enough?

In various lecture and office venues, I have asked staff members with 15 years or more of longevity to share with me why they have stayed so long in one place. Here are some of the recurring answers:

- *The doctor treats me with respect.*
- *I like my coworkers and patients.*
- *The doctor understands when I need to be absent.*
- *I have great benefits here.*
- *The doctor is so easy to work with, and we like one another.*

Good pay is a factor, but rarely do staff members with significant longevity say that they stay because of compensation. Simply put, staff members stay solely where they are happy.

Staff member turnover is inevitable when people go back to school, relocate, or start families. However, these reasons represent less than 25% of departing staff members. The other 75% depart for these reasons:

- *The doctor is unreasonable in his/her expectations.*
- *The doctor disrespects the staff member and his/her time.*
- *The doctor is lacking in tact, communication, and/or leadership skills.*

The good news is this recipe does not have to be exact. You can use variations of the above ingredients, but make sure all ingredients are present. You see, staff members do not automatically give you their loyalty. You have to *earn* it. Further, you have to be *consistent*. There's nothing worse than insincerity.

Ask yourself what part of this recipe you have been leaving out. Are you moody and unpredictable? Do you have problems at home that you are bringing to work with you? Do you vent your frustrations regularly on your staff members? Have you ever lashed out at someone, and then promptly forgotten about it or minimized the hurtful situation? Guess who does not forget?

Have you ever apologized when you spoke in anger or an unkind manner to a staff member? The best way to have the last word is to say, “I'm sorry.”

A part of your privilege in being a business owner is employing people who will help you reach the professional and financial goals you have established. In that respect, those people are very important. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for you to operate your practice without supportive staff members. Make the most of that privilege by treating the people you employ with the importance they deserve. It is simple, yet profound.

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Dianne Glasscoe-Watterson, MBA, assists dental practices in achieving their highest potential through practical, effective, on-site consulting. Call (301) 874-5240 to discuss how your practice management challenges can be solved. Visit Dianne's Web site at www.professionaldentalmgmt.com or e-mail her at dglasscoe@northstate.net.