



## Your first 100 days: Are you ready to lead a successful practice?

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**A**fter months and perhaps years of anticipation, the deal stress is finally over. You are a practice owner! Are you ready to lead? As you put on your new CEO hat, focus on leadership in three key areas to ensure a great start and long-term success: building team trust, baseline benchmark development and strategic planning.

Based on your pre-purchase due diligence, you will have a number of things you'll want to dive into and change. Your instincts may be to charge ahead, but it is best to take things slow. The only exceptions to this are cash management, data security and internal accounting control.

From the start, the most important priority is to

build trust with your team – as a group and individually. With strong relationships built on trust, you will be able to conquer the world. Realize that you represent a major change for them. Some will be excited for positive change, some will be afraid and insecure, and some will wait and see. Communicate clearly and honestly that you acquired the practice because of all the wonderful work they have done. Let them know that you'll spend your first few months taking it all in – learning about how they go about their work and getting to know them and patients. Then, about three months out, you will be ready to take stock of things and likely implement some changes – with good reason and their input. Communicate frequently in group and individual settings. Conduct regular one-on-ones

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with each team member to get to know them – use active listening skills and open-ended questions to get them to open up about how they think about the practice and their role within it.

As you build trust with your team, quietly develop your baseline assessments of clinical and verbal skills as well as benchmarks for the revenue and cost drivers that you can use as future reference points. Scheduling efficiency, DDS and HYG utilization, productivity, hygiene procedure mix, adherence to X-ray and perio protocols, patient recare and collections among others are important. Listen carefully for the verbal skills and interactions. Note the effectiveness of patient handoffs. Observe how your team interacts with each other and how patients seem to feel about their care. Resist the temptation to “correct” every little thing. As time moves along, you will be able to blend your listening sessions with the baseline data to establish your

priorities and identify areas where early wins can further build trust and teamwork.

Utilize your fresh “100-day” perspective to begin to frame out your long-term strategic plan. Every business has a set of strategic and foundational building blocks that are critical to long-term success. In a dental office, it’s important to have effective leadership, culture/positive working environment, a strong brand, high performing team, clinical skillsets, depth and breadth of product line, and efficient systems. Developing this framework now will allow you to make near-term changes that are consistent with your long-term strategy.

Your success in dentistry often depends on non-clinical factors – specifically leadership and communication. As the new CEO, your focus on these three non-clinical areas will serve as a helpful guide to get off to a great start and to lay a strong foundation for long-term success!

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