

## What Makes A Great Leader

### For Dentists Who Want to Build Dynamic Practices

Good leaders make people feel that they're at the very heart of things, not at the periphery. Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization. When that happens people feel centered and that gives their work meaning.

- Warren G. Bennis

The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born - that there is a genetic factor to leadership. This myth asserts that people simply either have certain charismatic qualities or not. That's nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born. Failing organizations are usually over-managed and under-led.

- Warren G. Bennis

Leadership is an art and a science. It is an art because it continually evolves, changes form, and requires creativity. It is a science because there are certain essential principles and techniques required. A good leader knows when it is time to change shape because they are highly attentive to those around them. Coming from a position of strength, a great leader takes risks by freeing up the creative genius in their followers or team members to build their capability and multiply the talents within the practice. This leads to community and greatness. By powerfully communicating a vision that animates, motivates, and inspires team members and patients, a great dental leader is able to transform his or her practice. A good leader needs to be able to laugh; a great leader needs to be able to laugh at oneself.

What kind of leader are you being? Where is your practice in relation to your vision?

What do you think makes a great dental leader? Who do you think was a great leader? Who do you know that is a great leader in a flourishing dental practice?

What qualities did or do they routinely exhibit? What does your team want to know in order to believe in you? What are the words that lead them to believe you? What qualities inspire your patients and encourage their compliance?

Consider the following as a beginning list of Qualities:

- Communication
- Cooperation
- Collaboration
- Consistent
- Creative
- Conscious
- Caring
- Capable
- Courageous
- Innovation
- Understanding
- Integrity
- Sense of humor

Now consider the following Questions that relate to those Qualities:

Do you communicate effectively giving timely messages of appreciation and recognition? Do you communicate your vision and invite participation and buy-in on practice values, patient experience, a well done schedule, and team responsibilities?

Do you cooperate with the best in the people on your team or do you demand from them?

Do you routinely work with them to bring innovation and best practices to your dental practice or do you push your ideas on them?

Are you consistent in demonstrating the principles of leadership you wish others to emulate, or do you vacillate in your own modeling?

Do you encourage creativity with brainstorming sessions or are your ideas the only ones that work?

Are you conscious and present with each person on your team, with patients, with vendors, or are you in a conversation in your head while with them?

Do you balance caring in the choices you make that effect your practice or are you only interested in the bottom line?

Are you the only one capable in your practice, or do you unleash capability by empowerment through equality in responsibility and authority?

How courageous are you? What does risk look like to you? Does your practice go through frequent paradigm shifts continually advancing your vision for your practice?

Do you foster a collaborative working environment or does your leadership style reflect mainly "telling?"

Do you balance understanding with expectations on deadlines when the circumstances dictate?

Do you model integrity? What does integrity look like to you?

Are you able to laugh at yourself and laugh freely and openly with your dental team?

One of the joys of coaching emerging leaders in dental practices is the well-spring of ideas that surface in the coaching conversation. I find that both new and existing dentists understand the dynamics of leadership required for today's complex business environment. A dental practice is a unique business. Leadership in a practice requires a delicate balance of business principles and personal influence. The desire to build a great team and to become a great leader is an excellent starting place in creating a very successful practice. The team is the heart of the practice and leading them well is crucial. Many dentists emulate the qualities covered above. Where do you stand?

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