



Are you seeing your team's performance accurately, or do you have blinders on?

By Julie Parker

I have recently surrendered on an issue and it feels oh, so good! A dental receptionist I've been working with for many years, let's call her Robyn, was tracking her Incomplete Treatment follow-up in a way that she found worked well for her. However, it was not the system I had encouraged her to use, as it meant entering information in an area of the dental software that is normally used for something else.

Robyn does not come from a dental background, so part of my coaching of her includes how to use the dental software effectively. Despite my reasoning and numerous explanations, Robyn could not see how my way was better than the process she developed.

Time and again, I would come across Robyn's Incomplete Treatment follow-up messages and I felt my frustration rise.

"This is not the area to enter these messages!"

For those readers who know me, you know that I'm passionate about allowing team member autonomy.

You will also know that I used to be a micro-manager and I'm always wary of its influence over my management of teams. Because of this, I tried to manage Robyn in a fair and empowering way.

But, why wasn't Robyn taking my advice? Why was she questioning my knowledge of the dental software and doing the opposite to what I was suggesting?

After some months, I contemplated the situation and decided to take a different approach.

I asked myself:

"What is the cost to the practice if Robyn continued managing Incomplete Treatment patients her way?"

NOTHING.

"Are the patients with Incomplete Treatment being followed up?"

YES.

"What is the potential negative impact on Robyn if I keep pushing my agenda?"

HIGH - making her adhere to a process that made no logical sense to her would likely make her performance suffer.

So, I decided my best path of management was to SURRENDER!

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The next time I had the chance, I told Robyn of my decision and she should feel relaxed about continuing in the manner that she found efficient, straightforward and productive. She was relieved.

What I discovered over subsequent sessions with Robyn was how surrendering my attachment to that one area opened my eyes to how effectively she managed other aspects of her work. My low-level frustration had actually been affecting the way I perceived Robyn's overall performance and I hadn't been aware of it.

Our perception of team members and their performance can easily become unfairly biased to the negative. We become blind to their positive attributes and work from a short fuse when assessing areas that could be improved.

My attachment to one aspect of Robyn's performance was out of proportion to the ultimate impact it would have. What surprised me was how much it affected my assessment of everything else she did.

It brings to mind a powerful insight that I heard from American developmental biologist and epigeneticist, Dr Bruce Lipton. *"The meaning we attach to reality is far more powerful than the reality itself."*

Despite Robyn providing evidence by way of her performance and behaviour that she was achieving great success in many areas of her role (reality), the meaning I attached to her for this period of time was that she was not coming up to par (my subjective reality). My subjective response to Robyn belied the objective evidence in front of me that I could not see.

So much of what we do, as practice owners and managers, has a profound impact on each team member's self-confidence. We can compromise our team's achievement of success because we become too focused on "a thing" on which we have decided to place a particular meaning. Our awareness of this, and insightful response to it, will allow us to take our self-imposed blinders off and see - and enjoy - the many wonderful attributes of those with whom we work.

About the author

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