

# OPEN UP!

## *Let the Ideas Flow*

By Larry M. Guzzardo

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Practices that survive to be the most profitable will be those whose doctors give up command and control, and focus on values and purpose rather than day-to-day direction.

They will create an open organization where people collaborate and feel free to say what they think, fostering a sense of partnership and ownership. Adopting an effective leadership style is a competitive must. When there was little choice and patients were unsophisticated, leadership could be slow, unresponsive, and autocratic. Most doctors today talk about focusing on and responding to patients, but many fail to realize how their controlling styles foster staff attitudes that are inwardly focused on pleasing the doctor. Tight control creates a static practice that is afraid of risk and change.

Creating a high-performance staff that succeeds depends on doctors as leaders who focus on philosophy, values, and purpose. People are energized not by financial goals but by a sense of service to something larger than themselves.

A practice that sees itself as a community serving patients and bound by strong values and clinical excellence will always surpass a practice with no mission or purpose.

The values for your practice are not created by a statement on a wall; they must be reinforced in daily action and most doctors need constant feedback on how well the message is heard. Real learning organizations allows open information flows and an environment that encourages teamwork, conversation, and constructive differences.

Doctors who do not share information and do not create a safe place to resolve conflict do so at the risk of staff high turnover. Doctors who encourage the free exchange of information help spread knowledge throughout the practice and create an environment where the staff can respond quickly and grow rapidly.

Finally, successful doctors must work to build a sense of partnership with each staff member that motivates them to treat the practice as if it were their own. The sense of ownership is created by access to information and by a say in how the practice is managed. The vital signs of the practice are reviewed regularly and every staff member has the ability to read them and understand what they mean. This enables the staff to immediately implement new ideas. Nothing is better for responsible decision-making and for generating ideas. ■

*Larry M. Guzzardo who has co-authored two books, "Powerful Practice" and "Getting Things Done", conducts in-office practice management consultations exclusively for dentists to enhance trust, create organization, increase profits, and to develop patient relationships that last. Larry has presented numerous workshops including, "Winning Patient Acceptance," "Business Communication Systems," and "The Leadership Challenge." Larry can be reached at 800-782-5770 or [Larry@larrymguzzardo.com](mailto:Larry@larrymguzzardo.com) if you have further questions.*

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