

# How to Establish Standards that Generate a Happy, Healthy and High Performing Culture!

BY JUDY KAY MAUSOLF



I help dental teams nationwide work together better! I have found the most prevailing reason teams struggle is from confusion about their practice standards. If you only do something when you can fit it in, or when you feel like it, or when you can remember to do it or only a few people on the team do it...it is not a standard it is only an impressive suggestion.

Standards define the practice culture! They increase clarity, unity, congruency, level of service, and your business reputation! They also prevent the chafing and disagreements from opinions of who is right and wrong.

The focus of this article is to clarify how to set happy, healthy and high performing standards that your team will want to support and sustain!

I have found the best way to create clarity is to answer the what, who, when, where, why and how questions!

**What:** The dictionary defines standard as an accepted or approved example of how you do something. Here is where many offices go a little crazy...they have a standard for everything even the little things that aren't very important. So when push comes to shove no one is held accountable to the standard because it just wasn't that important. When it comes to standards think in terms of must haves and forget about nice to have. Here are two questions to help you define if it is important enough to establish a standard.

- What makes you most happy that you absolutely want to see happen every day?
- What drives you crazy that you never want to see happen again?

Standards are often confusing. This may sound familiar...we do this when this happens but not when this happens and sometimes when this happens but only on certain days when certain people are working. Ugh! I would need a rule book to remember it...and we wonder why we have difficulty getting the team to support the standards. When it comes to establishing standards keep them simple. Simplicity creates clarity. If there are too many variables it becomes confusing and very difficult to support and sustain. Avoid creating standards that include words like often, occasionally or sometimes. They can be interpreted differently and therefore create confusion and lack of consistency.

**Who:** Who is responsible for doing it on the team and who do we do it for? Again remember to keep it a simple statement with the least amount of variables.

**WHEN:** When do we do it? Pick a specific time, sequence or situation.

**WHERE:** Where do you do it?

Clearly define the location or locations.

**WHY:** Why do we do it is very important.

We need to understand the why in order to be motivated to continue to support and sustain the standard. The why, creates value and purpose and the reason for what we do. The why, must include WIIFT (What's in it for them) to consistently support the standard. It is very difficult to get buy-in if the person responsible

for doing it doesn't see WIIFT!

**How:** How do we do it? This is the training process and is key in the success of the standard! It is also where most practices drop the ball. The most effective training is the following method.

- Tell them
- Show them
- Have them show you
- Have them teach someone else

Have the entire team take turns practicing verbal skills, role playing and the physical walk through. It is during the training process when most obstacles appear! This gives the team the opportunity to eliminate the glitches before introducing it to the patients.

### **COMMITMENT:**

It is necessary for every team member to commit to support the practice standards in attitude, words and actions. Therefore, it is always important to test the standard before establishing it as a standard. Is it realistic to achieve based on time, people and money that are currently available? What would need to change for the standard to succeed? Encourage the team to have an open discussion to address any obstacles and concerns before implementing the new standard. Inform the team that this is their opportunity to speak and invite them to share. Otherwise, the expectation will be that they support the standard.

Ask each team member to verbally commit their support in front of the team. Verbal commitment helps prevent team members from grumbling later to their co-workers that they didn't agree, but they just did not say anything. You may want to use a phrase such as, "I commit to support \_\_\_\_\_ in my attitude, words and action."

It is imperative for every team member to understand that it is necessary for them to support the practice standards in words, attitude and actions to be a part of your team. It is also their responsibility to hold each other accountable to support the practice standards. There are no individual opt outs if someone doesn't like a standard. Standards are an all or none team decision process. If you allow one team member to not support the practice standards, you sacrifice the practice culture. It is when all the players on the team work together to support the standards that they have the power to create a happy, healthy and high performing culture!

*Contact Judy Kay today if you would like to learn how she can help you build a cohesive team that support each other and the practice, become better leaders, and deliver service with more passion and fun!*



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Judy Kay is a dental practice management coach, speaker and author. She coaches dentists and managers who want to be better leaders, get their teams to work together better and ultimately grow their practice.

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