

A Culture of



BY JUDY KAY MAUSOLF

Trust is the foundation of every happy, healthy, and high performing culture. Trust is essential for great team and patient relationships. In this segment we will focus on trust between the team.

Imagine a culture where:

- Leadership was by example
- Everyone worked together for the greater good
- Co-worker's didn't question each other's intent
- Open respectful communication was the standard
- Gossip ceased to exist
- Accountability was self-maintained
- Honesty was the only policy

It may sound like a fantasy, but TRUST me... its real!"

The dictionary defines trust as instinctive unquestioning belief in and reliance upon something. The culture of trust I am suggesting is not one of blind faith but instead one of confidence! Confident trust is based on consistency! Consistency of good reasons to trust from significant past evidence and experiences.

Think of the people in your life that you confidently trust. Take a moment to reflect why you feel confident in trusting them. Confident trust does not just happen overnight. It takes time to nurture and grow. However, breaking one's trust can happen in a heartbeat. The great news is that trust can be rebuilt. It takes a sincere daily commitment to be transparent and consistent. An actionable and measureable process is to assess your every action, attitude and conversation by checking off the following list:

- Am I being transparent
- Am I being consistent
- Am I able to realistically commit – do I have enough, time, money and people
- Am I doing what I said I would do when I said I would do it

Breaking trust is often not out of evil intent. Many very nice people break trust because they are people pleaser yes people. Their intent is good. Their results are not. They have OCD..Over Committers Disorder! They commit and commit and commit because they are nice people. They want others to like them so they don't say no. OCD's believe that by saying no they are letting the person down. Perhaps you know someone like this...could it be you? Yet the reality is by overcommitting we are letting everyone down including ourselves. I have found the following response a caring way to say no to stop overcommitting; "Our relationship is so important I am

going to say no because I can't commit 100% to yes. I don't want to let you or any of my previous commitments down." It is not necessary to explain why to the other person. Some people will continue to push hard to get a commitment even after they have been told no. A simple no thank you I am going to pass and end the conversation.

A team meeting with the entire team is the most effective format to discuss trust in the practice. Discuss the benefits of having a culture of trust pertaining to patients and team. It is important for the entire team to understand how a low trust level affects the patient experience, practice culture and the bottom line. As a team assess the current level of trust in the practice. Define what builds and what breaks trust. Use a large easel pad and write down all the answers being shared by the team. I like the self-stick pads with individual pages that can stick to the wall.

Some examples of a low trust culture are:

- Not keeping the team in the loop with details that pertain to them and the practice
- Adding rules or steps for everyone to compensate for the inadequacies of a few specific team members
- Extra staff to cover for lack of a accountability with a specific team member(s)
- Redundant systems and processes

A predominant sign of low trust with the leadership team is difficulty getting the team on board and willing to follow their lead. Imagine how much more productive a practice would be if the team confidently trusted leadership and each other?

Gossip is another sign of low trust that results from lack of transparency. If the leadership team does not keep the team in the loop they will talk to each other. Gossip that is made up from assumptions will run rampant.

Your team will no longer feel trusted and become frustrated when you make rules that affect the entire team to compensate for the inadequacies of few specific team members. You may even end up losing your good team members.

The next step at the meeting is to ask the team to share what they feel they need from each other (including leadership) to build trust.

Some examples might be:

- Be transparent by keeping in the loop
- Be consistent with daily tasks
- If you have a concern talk to the person
- Help when you see help is needed
- Ask for help when help is needed
- Ask don't assume
- Take ownership - do what you say you will do when you say you will
- Focus on the greater good instead of WIIFM (What's in it for me)
- Don't gossip
- Tell the truth and be compassionate
- Don't be late or absent for trivial reasons

Together as a team create your list and label it Culture Guidelines. Next print it, frame it and put on display for future reference. It will be important to review whenever you hire someone new or...because old habit die hard; whenever someone's behavior deems it necessary!

Ta-dah...you have just established Culture Guidelines to build the level of trust in your practice! The awesome part is that when people create it they own it!

The bottom line is that trust is not just a social virtue it greatly affects patient experience, practice culture and the bottom line!



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Judy Kay Mausolf is a dental practice management coach, speaker and author with expertise in helping others get happier and more successful! She coaches teams how to grow their practices by becoming better leaders, working together better and delivering service with more passion and fun. She provides teams with what they need to know on how to communicate positively, effectively and have a better attitude on a daily basis. She teaches teams how to get the re-engaged and accountable by building a culture based on happiness, trust and respect.

She is Past President of National Speakers Association (Minnesota Chapter), Director of Sponsoring Partners for the Speaking Consulting Network, and a member of the National Speakers Association and Academy of Dental Management Consultants. She is author of two books; *"Ta-Dah! And Rise & Shine!"*, and a contributing author for many dental magazines. She also publishes a monthly newsletter entitled *"Show Your Shine"*.

Judy Kay lives in MN with her awesome husband Steve who makes her special coffee every morning and Zoe, her "it's all about me" 7 pound Yorkie!