

TA-DAH!

BY JUDY KAY MAUSOLF

Bridging the Gap Between Potential & Performance



In every team there is a gap between what their performance is like now and what it could be. I coach dental teams nationwide the TA-DAH Philosophy to bridge the gap between their potential and performance! The TA-DAH Philosophy embodies principles, practices and pearls of wisdom that help the entire team get happier and more engaged.

The focus of this article is on bridging the gap by developing an employee engagement strategy! An engagement strategy will help you raise job satisfaction, patient service and the bottom line. It's a win for the practice owner, the patients and the team!

The practice's bottom line and level of service are dependent on the level of team engagement. And the level of team engagement is dependent on their level of happiness at work. Happiness is not just feel good, nice to have, fluff stuff. When we feel happier more often, we entirely change our beliefs about our world, what we can achieve, and ourselves. Harvard and Mayo Clinic research supports that if we are happier more often we will be:

- more successful
- more intelligent
- more creative
- more productive
- and healthier

I think we all can agree these are awesome reasons to get happy! When your team is happy to come to work you will know they are engaged!

An unhappy team does not engage resulting in the gap! The cost of the gap is immense! Gallup Polls show the gap costs practices on the average:

- 22% Profitability
- 21% Productivity
- 45% Turnover
- 48% Team Safety Incidents
- 37% Absenteeism
- 41% Patient Safety Incidents
- 41% Less Quality of Care

Gallup shows an engaged employee out produces and is more profitable than their non-engaged colleague by 22%. In essence you could have 4 engaged employees instead of 5 not engaged and cut your overhead by an entire salary! A \$20 per hour employee working 32 hours per week would save you \$32,000 per year. That number does not include taxes and benefits. Realistically you would save more like \$40,000 per year.

Even better...get all 5 employees engaged and produce 21% more. Let's say for simple math you produce \$100,000 per month...you would now produce \$21,000 more per month (\$121,000 per month) equaling an annual increase of \$252,000! Imagine what you could do with an additional \$252,000! Not fluff stuff!

The first step in initiating an employee engagement strategy is to be able to understand and identify the different levels

of engagement. There are three levels of engagement; Engaged, Not Engaged and Actively Disengaged.

Engaged Employees are passionate about their work and feel very connected and loyal to the practice. They are always looking for ways to improve performance and patient care. They are focused on the big picture of helping the practice succeed. They base their success on the practice's success!

Not Engaged Employees are essentially checked out. They can be difficult to spot. They are just coasting through their day by putting in time without energy or passion. They are thinking about lunch, who just called on their cell phone, or what they are going to do when they get off work.

Actively Disengaged Employees are unhappy at work and demonstrate it in their words and actions. They monopolize the doctor and manager's time. They constantly have issues that need addressing. They have more on-the-job accidents and are sicker and miss more days. They also create more quality concerns. Not only do they not perform, they undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish and sabotage the practice.

Take a moment to classify the level of engagement of each team member. This will help you quantify the cost to your practice and define where you need to focus.

The next step in the engagement strategy is to implement the four core competencies, Communication, Collaboration, Commitment and Celebration.

"When you lead by example you create a picture of what's possible!"

~ Judy Kay Mausolf

Communication is the first core competency in creating a happy and engaged team! It is important to communicate with the entire team the critical business information. The

more information you share the more empowered your team is to help. Ask yourself who needs to know what information and when. Give them a reason to care by sharing the benefits and the consequences.

Clarify your expectations. I have found most dental teams don't go deep enough to define their expectations. Whenever you are sharing an expectation it is important to define the following:

- what is it you are expecting
- who is going to be responsible and for which patients
- when is it to be started and completed
- where is it to be done
- why is it being done...how does it benefit the patients and the practice
- how is it to be done
 - ♦ Always practice verbal skills, role playing and the physical walk through before you ever introduce it to your patients

Define your team members' performance goals. Define what success means. It is important to limit the definition to only one or two things. Otherwise, the team will lose sight of what is most important. For example, creating a W.O.W. service culture focused on the patient's experience. It is very important to be specific, detailed, and utilize measurable performance objectives. A simple way to gauge their success, avoid distractions and stay focused on the right priorities.

Your team wants to know their opinion matters. Everyone wants to know their ideas are being heard, understood and considered. Even if you don't use their suggestion make time to listen to them. If you are not going to use their idea explain the why behind the ultimate decision.

Give positive reinforcement and constructive feedback. Always consider how your words may impact the other person. Ask yourself; how can I say what I need to say and be respectful of how they may feel? Always avoid sarcasm and gossip.

Your team wants to discuss and resolve matters in real relevant time. Once a year or a quarter are not often enough. The

longer the time frame between the event and the discussion the more assumptions and negative energy will arise.

Schedule team meeting time. If you don't schedule time to meet it won't happen. It is a priority and takes precedence over that extra patient you had to add into the schedule. The business of your practice will not run itself. I have yet to see any dentist or dental specialist run a happy and successful practice without having consistent scheduled team meetings. I suggest the following meetings

- Daily Huddles
- Monthly or Bi-Monthly Team Meetings
- Quarterly Workshops
- 6 Month Checkup
 - ♦ What where your goals for this period?
 - ♦ What accomplishments would you like to celebrate?
 - ♦ What are your goals or projects for the next period?
 - ♦ How can I best support you?
- Annual Review
- Additional time as needed

Collaboration is the second core competency in creating a happy and engaged team! Leadership that lifts empowers the team to collaborate and work together better.

"We are all here
to lift each other up
to shine!"

~ Judy Kay Mausolf

Teams will willingly follow those that inspire them. A leader that lifts is open and willing to consider new and different ideas from others. They are excited to brainstorm together on what works and what does not. They are flexible and believe there is more than one way to do things. They agree on a solution based on what is in the best interests of the patients and the practice and not any individual including themselves. Leaders that lift pursue

excellence not perfection. Perfection is unattainable. When we pursue excellence instead of perfection we lose the fear of being wrong and grow more confident.

Here are some examples of the difference between those who pursue excellence instead of perfection. People pursuing excellence strive for high standards not impossible standards. They value who they are not what they do. They learn from failure instead of being devastated by it. They correct their mistakes instead of dwelling on them and being defined by them. They appreciate instead of fear critical feedback and see it as a way to continue to learn and grow. They don't see things that happen in life as black and white or right or wrong. Their self-esteem is not based on winning. They focus on the process as well as the results.

Collaboration involves perseverance. The willingness to keep trying until it works. Team collaboration means they don't give up on each other. They help and support each other whenever needed. They understand their individual success is interdependent on the success of the entire team!

Collaboration also involves being answerable to one another. Being answerable always starts from the top down. It is important for leadership team (doctor(s) and practice administrators) to hold every team member answerable for their actions or lack of actions. Answerable by establishing and enforcing consequences for those who choose not to engage or support the team and the practice. Team collaboration includes peers holding each other answerable as well. Answerable by having the willingness to address unsupportive or unethical behavior and remind one another when they are not living up to the performance standards of the group and the practice.

Commitment is the third core competency in creating a happy and engaged team! It is necessary for the entire team to commit to support the leadership team and the practice standards. Team members may not always agree with or buy into every decision the leadership team makes. However, they are expected to support the decisions and standards out of trust and respect

for the leadership team. If they do not trust and respect the leadership team it is time for the team member to work with another leadership team they do trust and respect. Otherwise, as long as the working relationship continues there will continue to be animosity, frustration and stress. I see this often where team members are disgruntled and dis-engaged because of their difference of opinion on how the practice should be managed. In the end it is always up to the doctor(s). I suggest to team members that if their philosophy does not align with the doctor and practice philosophy and standards find one that does. It will be a win for all because everyone will be happier!

Commitment to support includes a supportive attitude. A team member with a supportive attitude performs task in a positive, can-do, happy and upbeat manner.

Commitment to support includes using supportive words. Supportive words are words that lift and encourage. Avoid negative or derogatory language such as sarcasm and gossip about team, practice and patients. Sarcasm is the use of irony to mock or convey contempt. It is often a mask used by bullies who when challenged respond by saying "I was just teasing"! I don't know about you but for me the "just teasing" doesn't take the sting away. It always leaves room for doubt of intent which leads to loss of trust and respect. Sarcasm is not supportive in any manner or form. Gossip reaps the same result. We don't trust or respect people who gossip about us or even others. Haven't you wondered when listening to someone gossiping ...I wonder what they say about me when I am not around? Gossip is also not supportive in any manner or form.

Commitment to support includes using supportive actions. Words mean nothing without the actions to support them. Supportive actions means every team member helps whoever, wherever, however, whenever to help the practice succeed! The leadership team shows supportive actions by treating each team member like a partner with a stake in the outcome. Their stake in the outcome is measured by the success of the entire team and practice. Their compensation is

based on performance of the individual and the practice as whole.

It is important for the entire team to verbally commit to each other when they are committing to implement something new. Give them the opportunity to address any concerns or obstacles. Ask them to speak now or forever hold their peace. Otherwise, they will have no right to walk down the hall and talk about it in any way that is not supportive. Once all concerns have been addressed asked for a verbal commitment from each team member in front of the entire team. It stops the negative response later..."I didn't agree I just didn't say anything." A team meeting setting works best.

Celebration is the fourth core competency in creating a happy and engaged team! We get happier when we celebrate life every day. There is a power in celebration. Celebration lifts our spirits and empowers us to instantly feel happier.

"Everything is here until it's not...celebrate every second!"

~ Judy Kay Mausolf

Celebration not only makes us happier, it reduces our stress level, which makes us smarter. When we are stressed, our prefrontal cortex shuts down. That's the cognitive part of our brain that helps us process, create, problem solve and think and behave rationally. It's the smart part of our brain. We can reduce our level of stress and get smarter just by getting happier!

Celebration is really just a way of publicly showing appreciation by giving thanks and praise. Celebrate by showing appreciation for others. Effective appreciation is timely, specific, genuine

and in person. Try show appreciation as close to the action or event as possible. Instead of saying you are a great doctor or hygienist or assistant tell them what you specifically appreciate. For example, if you are the doctor showing appreciation to your hygienist; "I really appreciate how well you Tee up the treatment for me with the patients. They are ready to proceed with very little reassurance from me."

A fun way to show appreciation is to have an appreciation board displayed in an area both the patients and team can view. Ask everyone on the team to write down on Post Its when they appreciate something about another team member and put it on the board. It is important to include date, name of giver and receiver of compliment and compliment. Celebrate the positive Post Its at your huddles and team meetings. I also suggest a Recognition Award for the employee of the month voted on by the entire team. Everyone is eligible to win including the leadership team. Take a picture of the winner and showcase them in the corresponding picture frame for that month. I suggest twelve picture frames, one for each month. I call it the Wall of Fame!

There are specific actions that demonstrate appreciation and celebration and makes us feel happier. These are all positive body patterns.

If we change our physiology (body patterns) to positive patterns when we are stressed and feeling unhappy, we can change our psychology (how we feel). Body patterns are the repeated actions our body reflects when we feel certain emotions. They are how our body speaks to us and therefore, have a direct connection to our moods.

Smiling, laughing, thumbs up, high five, or a victory pose are all positive body patterns that will help us feel happier. A victory pose is holding your arms air in the shape of a "V". For example when runners run a across a finish line they throw their

hands up in the air to celebrate their victory. These are all signals to our bodies to send serotonin, the happy endorphins, which make us instantly feel happier, less stressed, smarter and give us a sense of wellbeing. So, if we are feeling stressed and want to change our moods to be happier, all we have to do is change our body pattern!

I teach TA-DAH as a way to change our physiology to change our psychology in less than 5 seconds. I started doing TA-DAH when I was a small child. Maybe you did too. Do you remember when you were a little kid and you would do something you thought was pretty cool in front of people? For example a somersault or a little dance and you wanted to celebrate your success. Did you ever throw your arms up in the air and shout "TA-DAH!?" It was a victory pose.

Our bodies recognize TA-DAH as a positive body pattern and instantly send the happy endorphins that reduce our stress, make us smarter, happier and healthier, which all lead to greater success!

The awesome part is we can recreate that feeling of happiness and wellbeing whenever we want. All by just shouting a passionate TA-DAH with a smile and a victory pose.

So let's take a moment and practice doing a TA-DAH together! On the count of three, I want you to smile, throw your arms into the air and shout in your loudest voice..."TA-DAH!"

Bridge the gap in your team's performance by applying the TA-DAH Engagement Strategy and harnessing the power of communication, collaboration, commitment and celebration!

Contact Judy Kay today if you would like to learn more about how she can help your team get engaged and bridge the gap between their potential and their performance!



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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.

She is President of National Speakers Association (NSA) Minnesota Chapter (2012-13), and a member of the NSA Academy of Dental Management Consultants, Speaking Consulting Network and an Advanced Transformational Trainer. She is author of Rise & Shine; An Evolutionary Journey to Get Out of Your Way and On Your Way to Success, and a contributing author for The Progressive Dentist, Dental Economics, AGD Impact, First Impression, Pink Tooth and the Observer. PracticeSolutionsInc.net judykay@practicesolutionsinc.net

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