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# COMMUNICATION IS THE FOUNDATION OF SUCCESS

*The most successful dental practices thrive on great communication. Trying to understand why people do what they do is one of our biggest challenges. Understanding behavior is a constant challenge, but it also offers us huge rewards – if we could only crack the code of human behavior.*

**TEAM:** Finding out what motivates them, what doesn't motivate them and communicating in ways to maximize impact. Are they interested in higher pay or simply getting better recognition for a job well done? Are you talking to someone who constantly analyzes everything or someone who is so optimistic about things they never see pitfalls? Are you speaking very bluntly to someone who has a low tolerance for bluntness? Are you expecting someone to be a collaborative team member when they really want autonomy? These are some of the small behaviors that make up the "culture" of the practice.

Many people assume that culture is what it is and can never be changed. Culture is a pattern of behaviors which is encouraged or punished by the management systems over time. In reality, to change culture, all we have to do is change behavior. Attitudes change as behaviors change.

It doesn't matter whether you are the doctor or a team member, what you often want from the people around you is the same thing, behavior change. You want more production, higher quality of work, better customer service, more attention to detail. To get more from people, we need behavior change. The first step in changing behavior is to become fully aware of current behaviors that are not working and make a list of very specific things that need to change for team and practice success. Then create a culture and action plan to initiate the desired behaviors and how success as a result of these changes will be measured.

Learn to say "YES" to yourself, to new opportunities, and to new ways of being. By learning to express your needs, your expectations, and your vision you become a better YOU. A better you is a much better leader of the team, so self-awareness is the first step in connecting better with your team. Your team



## *Attitudes change as behaviors change.*

wants a capable leader and when you communicate effectively; your leadership skills are elevated. This involves communication of your expectations verbally and in writing.

Always be planning ways to improve your patient service, improving or maintaining your quality and your standards, keeping your systems working properly and changing the ones that need to be changed. Morning meetings along with regularly scheduled team meetings should improve job descriptions as well as generate task lists explaining ultimate responsibilities.

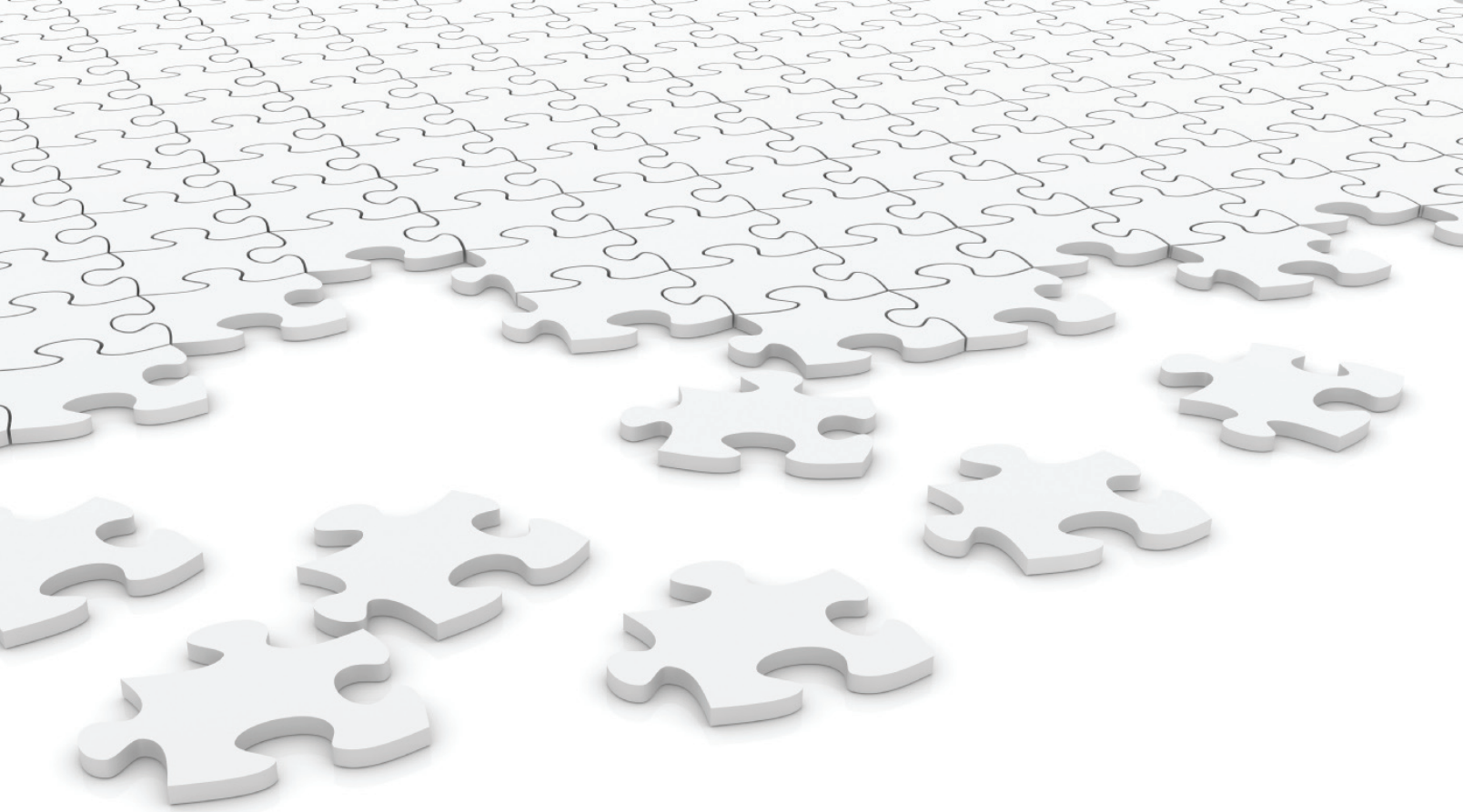
**Communication with patients:** The 1st phone call, the new patient experience, consultation, treatment presentation, recare exam, introducing new technology, new procedures, changing policies, insurance. These are the many opportunities where communication will make or break the interaction. Having a team that communicates effectively, with confidence, and with consistency will take you to the

next level of success. Learn how to be an active listener. Talking is good but listening is better. The best thing you can do in any conversation is to actually be in the conversation. Don't be thinking of what you are going to say next. You end up talking over the other person when you do this and nothing gets accomplished. It takes patience to listen but when you do, you get results. Listen and hear what others are actually saying.

*Communicating to Your Team in ways that create growth will help them be better in their roles.*

While performance evaluations and raise reviews are critical for effective communication, it has been my experience that most dentists are not so good at this. The practices that empower members to go further than they imagined, and create a well-functioning team working towards a common set of goals, help with team morale and for long retention of key team members. Finding out what is important to individual team members is a key component in retention and a high level of engagement in personal and practice goals.





Learn behavior ‘flips.’ We all know ways to push someone’s buttons; especially the closer we are to them. They may respond by shutting down, getting angry, or creating a diversion. When we learn our own and our team’s behavioral traits, we can avoid the “flips” in our behavior that are an indication we are under stress and behaving the opposite of how we normally act. How often do you go home from a day at the office and you feel zapped of energy from managing everyone’s personalities? How would it feel to go home energized after a day of working with a team that understands each other’s motivators and needs?

While technology is advancing at a gallop, it still won’t let you see inside my mind and I can’t see inside yours either. This “black hole” of human logic means that if we believe attitude must change before behavior, then we will be waiting a very, very long time to see any measurable difference in human performance. However we can use a

tool that has existed for more than 70 years. It’s a science called “behavioral analysis”. Using some specific tools, we can crack the code that reveals why people do what they do. And we can empower ourselves and others to achieve performance we never thought possible.

Results are achieved by a myriad of behaviors. Think of your favorite dessert. The dessert is the result. But the sugar, flour, cream, butter, chocolate and other items that make up the dessert are behaviors. When we get the behaviors right, we can cook up some amazing results. Culture, like a dessert can be toxic or nurturing. There’s nothing like a molten chocolate lava cake to add warmth and flavor to the end of a meal.

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**“The art of communication is  
the language of leadership.”**

**James Humes**

