



Dr. James Harding was the IACA's President at the 2008 IACA in Orlando, FL.



# Having One Team Member **NOT ON BOARD** Can Sink the Entire Ship...

*Or at the Very Least, Steer it in the Wrong Direction!*

Let's face it doctors, when it comes to building those great dental teams we all hear and dream so much about, we are "not too good" at this part of our job. Most of us poorly recruit, interview, hire, train and build the employees who are vitally important in making our practices successful. Not to mention having the right team in place makes for a much more enjoyable place to spend 40 hours a week! What perhaps is most alarming is how we continue to make the same mistakes with these team issues hoping for a better outcome. I know we have all heard the definition of insanity so no reason to rehash that here!

While there are many reasons why a high percentage of dentists fail miserably in this critical part of our professional lives, a strong case could be made that we simply were never given the proper tools in dental school to succeed. Additionally, the day to day hustle and bustle of running a busy dental practice is usually not conducive to training employees and team building. I think most dentists would be shocked if they realized how much more time, energy, and resources are spent in the corporate world on employee development. Systems and policies on how to run every facet of a company are the norm in the business universe while they seem to continue to be the exception in dental practices.

One very interesting example of this cooperative dedication to employee development is Verizon which has been regularly recognized by Training Magazine as the top company in the area of

employee development and training. Verizon invests \$300 million in development, education and training of its employees and another \$100 million in tuition assistance each year. This equates to almost \$13,000 per employee every year for training. That type of commitment clearly demonstrates why they are considered one of the best companies to work for with high employee and customer satisfaction when compared with their competitors.

*We dentists should look at these types of programs more closely when we are trying to build our teams.*

A few years ago I purchased a small rural dental practice from a retiring dentist. Along with the purchase I inherited a group of employees who had been working together for several years. Unfortunately, the extent of the team training primarily consisted of going to a yearly OSHA update seminar.

While important this did not exactly constitute high-level systems and policy training and team building. Recognizing that this would never work I immediately set down a path of



transforming this group of employees into a “team.” Looking back on this process of righting the ship it is interesting how I did several things very well and others, well...not so much!

*It is my strong opinion that the first thing most dentists need is to enlist the services of someone to help create a high functioning dental team and the necessary systems to run a high functioning dental office.*

In my case, I have procured the services of Sherry Blair at The Las Vegas Institute for many years and for numerous different issues. Sherry has not only completed in-office training multiple times for my teams, she has taught them at LVI during Core courses and perhaps just as importantly, always been there to answer my calls and emails of desperation and panic! This type of training has proven to be vital in all areas of business management that I’m willing to admit is not my strength.

For most of us highly driven dental types who tend to be more involved and concerned with the bond strength of our latest resin, we require someone to help “steer” the office in the right direction and prevent the inevitable “sinking” of our practices when the whole team is not on board. This office I purchased was very eager to learn a whole new way of doing dentistry so that proved to be a very valuable starting point. Unfortunately, there was one very important piece of this puzzle known as a dental team who did not fully buy into the “new” way of doing things. I was, as often is the case, the last person to realize how this one team member had become a cancer and threatened the success of this adventure!

Just before mutiny broke out on my ship I finally listened to the rather obvious hints and suggestions of the rest of the crew and removed the employee. I think the rest of the team would have rather she walked the plank than spend another day bringing down our ship! What was even more interesting was that the pieces of a great puzzle were right there already on payroll just waiting to be given the opportunity to succeed! All that was required was some minor additional training from our trusted consultant, Sherry Blair and the team was off and running. The systems can be there but

if they are not being utilized by everyone it will remain difficult if not impossible to reach your full potential.

In a matter of two months after this “Super Crew” took control of our ship the office was regularly doubling the production of the prior six months and the accounts receivable went from a figure that caused me to have heart palpitations to being in a “negative” range I never imagined was possible. Our case acceptance went through the roof and people were paying in advance for all of their dental procedures. Additionally, with everyone so much happier at work the atmosphere became amazing. Not a single day would go by without this being recognized by our clients which was validation of how much better the environment had become.

Now that the ship has been righted and we no longer need to be constantly bailing water we have moved on to bigger and higher level Team Development. This conglomeration of employees has become a TEAM and now craves new learning and growth. All I can do is try to hold on and gently steer them in a direction where this dental office remains a place where people enjoy coming to work each and every day. If I don’t keep up they might throw me overboard!

Does your team have a piece that does not fit and is holding you back or worse yet, sinking your ship? Don’t repeat the mistakes I made and be the last one to know. Take a close look at your employees and office systems to make sure you are ready to set sail. Most importantly, seek the services of someone you can trust to help build the practice of your dreams. Become the captain of your office!

## **Upcoming Team Courses at LVI**

### **Advanced Neuromuscular Team 1**

[www.lviglobal.com/lvi-dynamic-team](http://www.lviglobal.com/lvi-dynamic-team)

June 5-6 • September 11-12

### **Advanced Neuromuscular Team 2**

December 3-5

### **Patient Centered Systems**

[www.lviglobal.com/patient-centered-systems](http://www.lviglobal.com/patient-centered-systems)

March 17-19 • September 8-10



**Scan for Course Information**