

Workplace culture a top factor in employee retention

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The ADA Health Policy Institute, in collaboration with the American Dental Assistants Association, American Dental Hygienists' Association, Dental Assisting National Board and IgniteDA, conducted primary research in 2022 to learn which workplace conditions were to blame for dental assistants and dental hygienists leaving their positions, and which conditions retain those who are satisfied in their positions.

The research found that dental practice employers cannot overlook workplace culture. Specifically, a positive workplace culture along with good work-life balance are top factors associated with retention, while a negative workplace culture with poor communication are top factors associated with attrition.

We asked three WDA member dentists what strategies they use at their practices to promote a positive workplace culture.

Dr. Meghan K. O'Brien (Antigo), a general dentist and owner of Antigo Dental Clinic, has had little staff turnover on her team of seven during her 20 years of practicing. "I think the best thing is recognition," Dr. O'Brien shared. "We do many activities for the community and to recognize our team. We celebrate anniversaries, birthdays and holidays, and we attend outings to support local charities. I'm always looking for ways for the team to connect and appreciate one another."



Dr. Ashley Berghuis (Racine) practices with Racine Dental Group, a large practice with 12 general dentists, three pediatric dentists, four specialists and hundreds of employees. "As a group, we maintain positive culture by planning building-wide outings such as Milwaukee Brewers games, summer picnics and quarterly team meetings."

To maintain that positive culture in her individual practice within the group, Dr. Berghuis and her staff always make it a point to not take life too seriously and to have fun. Her team most recently read the book "The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to Fuel your Life, Work and Team with Positive

Energy" by Jon Gordon, which shares ways to approach life and work with positive, forward thinking. "We now hold one another accountable to ride the "energy bus" on a daily basis," said Dr. Berghuis.

Dr. Berghuis also shared that she has weekly check-ins with her staff to discuss not only their professional life and goals, but also their personal life and goals, which "has truly made all the difference."

Dr. Lisa Teel (Brookfield) of Meridian Endodontics, Periodontics & Implant Dentistry said that creating a positive growth-centric culture allows for their team members to advance their skill set, interests and contributions within the practice and beyond. "We challenge our team members to identify what areas they would like to grow in or master, which often leads to advancement in education and life-passions," said Dr. Teel. "We've now had seven dental assistants move on to either hygiene or dental school. We provide rich continuing education experiences that create life-long learners in our team members."



If you're seeking more information on this topic, don't forget WDA members enjoy free access to Mineral's human resources tools. Email info@profinsprog.com to set up your free Mineral account and access free tools and resources about workplace culture today.