



Successful integration

Luke Arnold considers the importance of recruitment onboarding.

As more and more practices struggle to fill positions and levels of staff dissatisfaction continue to creep up, onboarding is arguably becoming one of the most important aspects of a practice's recruitment process. Firstly, because integrating a new employee into the business and helping them to feel settled helps to increase staff retention and prevent quick exits – which is critical in the current climate – but also because it can save you a lot of time



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and money in the long run. It takes a lot of valuable resources and effort to recruit a new employee, after all – why waste them?

Back to basics

Whether you've recruited 100 members of staff before or one, it's never a bad idea to go back to basics with recruitment onboarding. Remind yourself why it's important and look at processes you can incorporate into your practice to induct a new employee into your business successfully and get them up to speed. It may be that you could be doing more – or perhaps there are techniques you hadn't even thought of. Below are some top tips to help you get it just right.

Surprise

Before their first day, the terms of the contract should be discussed with the employee in detail and collectively agreed upon. Any hidden surprises

or changes will only get their back up, so be sure to have everything set in stone early on. What's more, if legally everything is crystal clear from the off, you are less likely to have the contract come back and haunt you later on down the line.

Parking

Whether you have available spaces for all your members of staff or limited parking, you need to let your new employees know what to expect for the duration of their employment so they can make the appropriate arrangements. They don't want to be turning up on their first day only to find that they need to park down the road next to a parking meter or on double yellow lines so that they're not late. It is stress they don't need and can be easily avoided. Equally, if you have gated facilities that require a fob key or access code, be sure to sort that out for them in advance. ➔

Feel good factor

A positive first-hand account from current or past staff about what it's like to work for the business can go a long way in keeping your new employee's confidence and eagerness high during their transition into the practice. Saying that, in order to have an enthusiastic, happy team your practice has to be a nice place to work in, so look after your staff and they'll look after you.

Be welcoming, be social

Don't forget to make sure that your team knows when a new member of staff is starting and what his or her name is. Being asked 'who are you?' on day one is a sure-fire way of making someone feel unwelcome, so send out a memo or call a meeting to notify your staff in advance.

Arranging a social gathering such as a lunch or night out with the team is also a great way to welcome a new member of staff into the practice family, and will help you to get to know them – and vice versa.

Ready from the off

Having the right log in details and passwords for computers and software, access to a practice email address, and correct equipment is essential for any new employee to be able to hit the ground running. Plus, it can be extremely frustrating coming into a role only to find that the right information and tools aren't available. Not only will the new employee not be able to do their job properly, but it also looks like you've spun them a line, which hardly gets your relationship off to a good start.

Make it easy for them to get started and have the right support system in place so that they know where to go should they have any questions.

Check-in

Recruitment onboarding is an ongoing process that should continue well beyond the initial starting period. Check-in with your new employees after their first day, first week, first month and so on to see how they're feeling and if the practice can do anything to help them feel more settled in their new role.

If you can do all of the above, you should not only be able to greatly increase your staff retention rates, but improve your employees' well being and productivity – so next time you recruit, be sure to consider your onboarding strategy.

Celebrating 30 years

Frank Taylor & Associates (FTA) recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, and used the opportunity as a time to reflect on how the market has evolved. Lis Hughes, managing director of FTA, explains, "Back in the mid-1980s Claudius Ash, a dental supply company, introduced a service which provided a valuation of a dental practice, enabling the principal to sell the practice (normally to facilitate retirement) onto an associate. Two of Claudius Ash's employees, Frank Taylor and Sandra Rhodes, saw an opportunity for a new business, devoted exclusively to supplying this type of service to dental practices, so they left Claudius Ash to set up their own business, which they named Frank Taylor & Associates.

"The two founders realised that dental practices could, and should, be run as a business, a concept that was totally alien at the time. The first practice valued for sale was in Hove, East Sussex, for a record breaking £21k (£16k for goodwill and £5,200 for equipment, fixtures and fittings). In today's market, a similar practice would be £625k, an increase of 3,061 per cent.

"Over the years we have grown our client base of sellers and buyers, and today we have 4,921 dentists who have registered an interest in buying a dental practice. To put it in context, if you were looking to buy a dental practice in Hertfordshire today, you would be in competition with 2,066 dentists for a mixed NHS/Private practice and 1,477 for a fully private practice."

"The dental market survived the financial crash of 2008 better than most other sectors and it was at this point that we started to see a change in attitude between private and NHS practices. Banks were happy to continue providing funding for the purchase of dental practices, but wanted security that bank loans could be repaid. What better security than the comfort of an NHS contract with

guaranteed regular income. Unsurprisingly, the value of NHS goodwill increased significantly compared to private practices, and continues to do so to this day.

"FTA continued to grow and in 2010 FTA Finance was born, headed up by David Brewer. This was driven by the demand of our purchasers, who not only needed advice on finance to buy their practices, but also guidance on managing their cash flow and producing business plans. The business grew further over the next couple of years, with FTA mortgages, FTA Law, FTA Wealth and most recently, FTA Media being added to the portfolio.

"Although we've always been a national business, in 2013 we opened an office in Manchester so we could have a physical presence in the north of England. By 2017 we delivered our 10,000th valuation and continue to feel privileged that we're trusted by so many dental practices across the UK. We see some truly amazing practices, each has their own story, and we are always thrilled to get the opportunity to be the story teller."

