

BUILDING A DENTAL TEAM To RAVE ABOUT!

For Kelly Wettstein, DMD

the task of building his Chandler dental practice actually began at home. "This business is something my wife and I share," he explained, "This is not *my* dream. This is *our* dream."

Dr. Wettstein earned his dental degree from Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine in 2005 (top 10% of his class) and joined AzDA soon thereafter. He and Lynette, who have been married for nearly nine years and are raising three children, decided to open a General Dentistry practice in an emerging area on the outskirts of the city. Recently, Dr. Wettstein shared their collective wisdom and experience in building not only a practice, but a strong dental team.

While you were starting this dental practice, what did you encounter that you didn't expect?

When you scratch start a practice as we did, you initially have stars in your eyes and believe that with hard work everything will fall rather gracefully into place. That hasn't been quite the case for us. Our biggest eye-opener early on was learning that team members are absolutely critical to success. You must have the right people working for you.

What makes them the right people?

They have to believe in you, they have to be flexible, and they have to grow as you grow. If team members put up roadblocks to every suggestion or idea, you not only won't accomplish new things, you won't even get to *try* them.

The most efficient, effective, and excellent team members go above and beyond your expectations. Look for highly qualified, friendly, articulate, hard-working, and smart people. We have been blessed to find team members who fit that description. We rave about all of them!

How did you find them?

Referrals are always optimal. Our business manager, for instance, came from a referral. Internet job sites can also be effective. For one opening in our practice, we received 125 resumes in response to our online ad. Lynette

went through them and called every single person whose resume looked like an appropriate fit.

For every conversation that goes well, we hang onto the resume. This way, when another position opens up, we pull resumes from our files and start making phone calls.

Do you believe it's important to put the right person into the right position, or do you hire someone for a position and hope for the best?

Some people are fantastic with business, some are fantastic with patients, and some are fantastic with both. We feel very strongly that every position must have a clearly defined job description. You may think that a person with many skills would make an ideal employee, but we've found the opposite to be true. When you hire a "Jack of all trades," it confuses the other team members and can also confuse your patients.

While in the process of filling a scheduling coordinator position, for instance, it became obvious that one of our top candidates would be better suited for office manager. Scheduling coordinator was too narrow for her.



KELLY WETTSTEIN, DMD AND TEAM

Corporations spend a great deal of time and resources on candidate testing and profiling in order to make that perfect match, if you will. In that regard, we have found it very wise to be more corporate in our approach.

Ask questions specific to the job duties and find out what each candidate likes to do. Experience is important but if they can present treatment but don't necessarily love doing it, that may become a problem. Each team member must have the passion for their job so that they can not only enjoy their work, but can continue to get better at it.

What do you look for in an application?

Resumes and cover letters containing spelling errors and poor grammar are immediately dismissed. Look for candidates who get directly to the point and who choose their words carefully. Look for specifics. For instance, does the person applying for the job detail how he or she would keep no-shows and cancellations down to a minimum? The resume must be relevant to the position for which the person is applying. If a resume does not reflect the ad you placed, you will know the applicant didn't carefully read that ad. He or she saw "dental" and applied.

It's a new generation and new age of dental offices. Some are tricked out with decor and ambience, others are more low-key. The commonalities we are seeing, however, are a higher level of professionalism with more offices requiring degrees as a condition of hire and while still maintaining an image of hometown dentistry.

What are some of the questions you ask during an interview?

We ask candidates to describe a typical day in their previous employment. We ask what they love about dentistry. We ask what they do not necessarily love about dentistry. We ask what they enjoy most and least about interacting with other team members and about interacting with patients.

Often, a candidate will indicate that he or she is looking for a dental home. Should someone express that sentiment to you, ask him or her to describe what their ideal dental home looks like.

Have you had any hiring disasters?

Unfortunately, yes. We hired someone who, within three weeks, was spreading negative energy and tearing our team apart. She wanted us to believe in her without first believing in us. She wanted every opportunity to display her skills while telling us how to run the business.

Like every dental professional reading this, we are too busy to gossip or mess around. We keep our schedule full so that we can be productive. Down time is no fun and we hire people who thrive on being busy. We walk in the door ready to work hard all day. We walk out the door feeling fulfilled and confident we made a contribution.

How did you part ways with this person?

I was in the process of recommending her to another dentist when she quit via email one hour before she was scheduled to start work that day. I

wound up being very glad the dentist to whom I'd made the recommendation did not hire her because she lacked some of the most basic professional skills.

What do you teach your team members about customer service?

Learn from the great service you receive whenever you interact with another business. Shake hands with new patients. Call them by name. Specifically acknowledge their individual needs, among many other things.

People come to dental offices in a vulnerable state, often with fear and anxiety. They are trusting you with their dollars, their personal information, and their health.

Customer service is an art, a gift you give to your guests. I've been in some businesses that have barely acknowledged me. That does not work in a profession as intimate as ours. Our job is to make our guests feel welcome and comfortable.

Do you have an employee manual?

Oh yes, and it is a constant work in progress. It describes our philosophy and expectations. It contains each of the job descriptions and step-by-step instructions for patient visits from greet to finish. We document how to do every piece of correspondence and run every type of report.

Your practice manual determines the standards for your business. It puts you, the business owner, in complete control. The manual is the team's roadmap for success.

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DR. WETTSTEIN INTERVIEW CONTINUED

Let's switch gears for a moment and talk about your start-up. How did you initially market your practice?

I went door-to-door with our baby daughter in the wagon. I wanted to look normal and not frightening. I handed out goodie bags with dental supplies and business cards. I knocked on at least 1,000 doors and two years later we still have people calling, so I'd call that a success.

We also held an open house and invited everyone in our community with hand-made cards that we made ourselves. We bought 3,000 sheets each of blue and brown paper, 300 glue sticks, and for the next six weeks after we put the children to bed, Lynette and I made cards... and we made cards... and we made cards [laughs]. We mailed them three weeks before the open house.

We set up a tent, my brother-in-law the chef made trendy food, our families came, we gave tours, some 200 people showed up, and we made about 35 appointments that night.

From there, we created flyers and hired someone else to go house-to-house to stuff them into mailboxes and under doors. I would not do that anymore, though. We got a couple of phone calls from neighbors complaining that our delivery person stepped on their flowers. Now, we prefer to utilize direct mail.

We also did 150 complimentary mouth guards for a high school football team. We are recognized at the games and have gotten many new patients as a result. We had no idea the impact it would have on our practice and quite frankly it was stressful at first. We learned what it really means to have a crazy day! But learning together makes it a more worthwhile learning experience.

Extending ourselves into the community has proven to be a powerful and highly effective marketing strategy. Ours is a referral-based business model. We hung our shingle and then hung out with our neighbors.

It's also important to mention that our marketing efforts communicate that we are accessible virtually around the clock. At closing time, we forward the practice phones to our cell phones. We take calls any time and I do that for two reasons. I want our patients to hear a live voice, and I want to know if there is a cancellation so that it can be filled. We've had patients call in the middle of the night crying in pain, one

an 85-year-old man. Your patients need to know that your commitment goes beyond filling and drilling.

In closing, because you and your wife work together, what are your words of wisdom for balancing marriage and career?

We are asked that often and my answer is consistent -- I work for Lynette. She prefers to spend her time quietly behind the scenes but don't let that fool you. She is a powerhouse. If your spouse is directly involved in your practice, do all you can to keep it exciting and fun.

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WETTSTEIN FAMILY