



The Top Ten Countdown (for Staff Management)

These “Golden Oldie” tips are as relevant as ever.

BY LYNN HOMISAK, PRT

To Our Readers: *There are no foolish questions. Chances are that if you have a question or concern in your practice, others are experiencing a similar situation. We're here to help. PM [doctor and staff] readers are encouraged to submit questions to lynn@soshms.com, which will be printed and answered in this column anonymously.*

Re: Greatest Hits and Tips

Dear Lynn,

Please, can you share ten of your best employee tips? I could use all the help I can get!

Okay, since I like listening to some ‘Golden Oldies’, let’s borrow from a number of famous artists and song titles. Here are some greatest hits. Let the “Top 10 Countdown” begin!

10. “SLOW DOWN, YOU MOVE TOO FAST”—Simon and Garfunkel

Don’t rush through your hiring interviews for the sake of onboarding that extra needed pair of hands. It usually ends in disappointment.

In fact, stop the employee revolving (exit) door from spinning. There is a much better chance of getting it right if you put the extra time and effort into the selection process. Call preferred applicants back for sec-

presence is making it difficult for you or other team members to stay motivated, concentrated, and productive, despite their receiving multiple reprimands, it’s time to face reality. These “Negative Nellies” are a threat

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ond, even third interviews. When interviewing your applicants, focus on their character, personality, trainability, and attitude. You can always teach skill. A final thought: let your staff meet prospective new employees before “sealing the deal” to avoid potential personality conflicts.

9. “YOU HAD BETTER GO NOW”—Moody Blues

Let go of existing staff who continuously demonstrate bad attitudes and/or behaviors that are abusive (regardless of their length of employment or role in the practice). If their

to the overall health of the practice. If you do or say nothing, you are condoning their behavior and in doing so, may lose other good employees who have “had enough”. Do the responsible thing for everyone involved. Cut them loose, eighty-six them, show them the door, and always document!

8. “TAKE IT EASY”—The Eagles

Consider hiring an office manager to handle necessary and overwhelming staffing and administrative issues. When you have to manage these tasks

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AND treat patients, it can put you on a less than desirable road of decision fatigue leading to exhaustion, negligence, and in extreme cases, burnout. Delegating some of these time-con-

suming activities to your manager (and other appropriate hands-on patient tasks to your qualified assistants) allows you to spend more time focusing on and enjoying what you do best—treating and healing patients or having more personal time to yourself—while essential operations continue to function simultaneously. Can you afford to hire an office manager? Can you afford NOT to?

7. “YOU CAN’T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT”—Rolling Stones

Don’t ignore the need for policies and rules to govern the practice, maintain order and discipline, and establish fairness across the board. Believe it or not, staff prefer it when polices are put in place for this very reason. It is critical to address acceptable and unacceptable employee conduct, dress code, job expectations, compensation and absences from work, etc. with staff. Equally important is to follow through with consequences as outlined in a written disciplinary policy. Such guiding principles are the essence of an Employee Manual or Practice Rule Book. Once established, staff policies and protocol become routine and thus require less management.

6. “SHE WORKS HARD FOR THE MONEY”—Donna Summers

Pay staff fairly; allow them to create a positive work environment, give them opportunities to improve, tools to succeed (i.e., manuals, new technologies, scripts, resources, etc.) and don’t forget to recognize jobs well done. Motivated staff are

far more productive when they feel like they are involved and included in practice decisions, listened to, valued and appreciated. Not financially feasible to issue set raises? Talk to your staff and discuss alternatives such as spot bonuses,

5. “GET IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME”—Billy Joel

increased sick and/or vacation days, personal days, birthday or anniversary day off, etc. Use your imagination. Don’t “wing” your training efforts or minimize the effect that a first-rate employee training, orientation, and

measurement of their performance as well as a path to communication. While performance feedback should be a daily exercise, doctors have the ability in a closed door session to privately discuss each employee’s strengths and weaknesses and areas of potential concern with them. It should also be a time to verbally praise them for contributions made to the practice, and set action plans for the future—all in an effort to cultivate a more engaged staff and a stronger practice. Closing your eyes to their performance because addressing it is too

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mentorship program has on the overall productivity of your staff and the success of the practice. Telling them is not the same as teaching them. Each team member needs the “hows” and the “whys” of each task they are assigned. They should never be left to assume or read your mind, particularly when patient safety and care are at stake.

4. “TELL ME WHY”—Beatles

Provide performance feedback. People don’t know what they don’t know—simple right? In this regard, annual reviews serve as both a

confrontational translates as disinterest to your staff, which can lead to their job dissatisfaction. Staff want to learn and they want to do things right. Help them.

3. “CHANGES”—David Bowie

Listen and be open to new ideas that staff may present. Keep in mind that staff are on the front lines, actually seeing areas of logjam, hearing patient comments (and grumbles?), and finding new ways to improve operations. So why not tap into their change propositions? If they attend

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conferences to learn to be more efficient and productive, why not give the suggestions they bring back a try? At least hear them out. Change can be good, fresh, and stimulating. If you are not moving forward, you

are standing still or worse, going backwards.

2. “COME TOGETHER”—Beatles

Make time to communicate as a team, whether in a staff meeting setting or gathering for 15 minutes in the beginning of the day for a quick

huddle. Just do it! This time together gives everyone a heads up of what to expect from the day ahead by reviewing patient needs, doctor expectation, staff duties, and room readiness. Furthermore, it allows for shared insights and better scheduling. In short, it puts all members of the team on the same page. Offices that implement this activity are all convinced this is a success strategy, responsible for making their day run smoothly.

1. “THANK YOU”—Céline Dion

Show appreciation. Saved the best for last. Appreciation, acknowledgement, respect, and simple acts of kindness are all reasons that employees stay at their jobs. After putting a lot of time, effort, and (make no mistake) investment into training your staff, the last thing you want is to lose them. Make a special point of saying “please”, “thank you”, “good morning”, and “you’re welcome” more often. Smile more. Pay them a compliment. It literally costs nothing to be nice, to treat others as you would like to be treated. We are taught, as children in kindergarten, about kindness and gratitude to others; yet somehow, these humanitarian values get lost in the haste of day-to-day activities. The “Golden Rule” still really IS the gift that keeps on giving. Use it with wild abandon!

And there you have it. My “Top 10” picks. Hope these give you a peek into creating your own special workplace and successful practice. **PM**



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