

Keeping Up Office Morale

PAC Pearls from the Women's Dermatologic Society

Office morale is very important. Low office morale can wreck total productivity, while high office morale can keep everyone not only productive but happy and fulfilled in their work. Signs of low morale include lack of cooperation, few personal conversations, increased rates of turnover, and overall poor performance or attitude. Here are some tips from the WDS Practice Advisory Committee (PAC) on how to improve morale in your practice.

Daily Opportunities

Inspire your staff and create an environment where they want to help you, rather than just try to stay out of your way. The following suggestions can be implemented daily to encourage positive office morale.

Lead by Example

The best way to encourage positive attitudes throughout the company is by modeling a positive attitude yourself. Positive energy, as well as negative energy, is contagious and compounding.

Say positive things, walk with a smile on your face, and personally greet people when you arrive to work. Your employees will be more likely to do the same things to their co-workers, and before you know it, you'll be nurturing a collective environment of positivity. Remain sincere, as over-the-top positivity can sometimes have the opposite effect, but stay consistent even on the tough days and you'll reap the benefits.

Provide Positive Feedback

Giving praise and showing appreciation is essential. During busy days in the office it can be difficult to find time to give staff positive feedback, but regular positive reinforcement is imperative to keeping up morale. Take time at the end of the day to write down specific things that staff members did well.

Make a point to give them these compliments in the mornings or in an email so these behaviors are encouraged and they do not feel that their efforts go without notice. Too often staff members are given necessary constructive criticism and positive feedback can easily be neglected. It also helps to know each person's love language as not all people respond to words of affirmation, many prefer quality time with you in or out of the office.

Team Building Opportunities

Communication is key. Whether a weekly huddle, monthly meeting, or quarterly team building event, creating a consistent time to air grievances, review workflow, offer new ideas, and build relationships is essential. Implement some of the following ideas to help keep up office morale.

Team Building Activities

Consider setting aside an office budget to support regular team building and experiment with initiatives for staff to celebrate each other. These gestures of appreciation can go a long way and who doesn't like a treat?

- Hold a weekly coffee or lunch meeting to encourage feedback and offer new ideas.
- Include "Shout Outs" during meetings in which staff can share something positive about a colleague, such as a positive patient comment or a job well-done.
- Host a quarterly "Happy Hour" to join a fun group activity such as visiting a corn maze in the Fall.
- Throw a bi-annual office birthday party.

Unique Learning Opportunities – Presentation Coffee Talks

One great idea is to initiate a series of coffee talks before the day gets started that helps to improve patient care and creates a staff bonding experience.

- Provide coffee and assign one staff member to choose a topic from a list of common skin disorders.
- The staff member can present a short summary accompanied by 1-2 page notes about a specific dermatologic issue or disease.
- Encourage discussion and add comments to their notes to provide more information.
- Compile the notes into a staff book for learning the basics of dermatology and recognize each member who has contributed.

It's important to realize that your staff only learn "on the job" and have never been through formal training. These presentation coffee talks provide the opportunity for staff to learn together as a team and be respected for their contributions.

Additional Considerations

Even with the best of intentions, you still may have to eliminate the bad apple(s). This can be a challenge as the toxic person in the office can often be a key employee or can be hard to identify as they may be adept at hiding in plain sight. You must remove or neutralize them with speed as office morale is readily eroded when you allow such an employee to flourish.

The **Women's Dermatologic Society (WDS) Practice Advisory Committee** supports WDS members at any stage of their career looking to manage or start their own practice by offering resources on navigating the practice environment. Visit the **WDS Blog** for more tips and advice.