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Creating High Performing Teams in a Professional Practice

James O. Gist

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Consultancy Project
Executive Summary

Organization: Gardner-Webb University School of Education

Project Title: CREATING HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS IN A
                       PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Candidate: James O. Gist

Consultancy Coach: Dr. Jeffrey Hamilton

Defense Date: July 14, 2020

Authorized by: Dr. Kareem Sprattling, Owner Latta Family Dentistry

Approval

This consultancy project was submitted by James O. Gist under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

_____   _____
Dr. Jeffrey Hamilton, Faculty Advisor   Date
Gardner-Webb University

_____   _____
Dr. Kareem Sprattling, Site Advisor   Date
Owner

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge everyone who encouraged and assisted me on this journey to fulfilling a personal goal of mine. Receiving this doctoral degree has been a dream of mine for some time now. The road has been challenging and at times felt dim, but thanks to my love, Christen, I never felt the urge to quit. With her encouragement and strong natured advice, giving up was never an option. I would also like to acknowledge my classmates and fraternity brothers who always had a positive comment and advice to give. Last, but definitely not least, I must mention my children, James Ashby, Nyla, Saniya, Joshua, and Janese, who were my true motivation.

Abstract

CREATING HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS IN A PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE. Gist, James O., 2020: Consultancy Project, Gardner-Webb University.

Latta Family Dentistry is a small rural dental office located in Latta, South Carolina. The owner, Dr. Kareem Sprattling, is looking to provide affordable dental care and would love to open another office in a similar town. In order for him to open a new office, he must first improve the effectiveness of his current team and improve on structures already in place such as technology, the website, and the current efficiency while attracting new patients. Challenges this dentistry faced ranged from a revolving door of new employees, people working within a silo, the need for a much updated website, and technology. As a focal point of this project, I aim to add to the interview process by creating questions that will attract team-oriented candidates. In addition, this project will aim to assist with morale through incentives and rewards. This project emphasized effective collaboration among the staff, which sparked ongoing improvements to their website and technology. Results of this project were favorable and progress has definitely been achieved, even though all work and improvements have not been fully implemented. As of now, the number of new patients has increased (not yet meeting the established goal), the staff is stable with the same employees for the last year and a half, new patients can now download forms to bring with them to their appointment, and tablets have been ordered for a smoother check in process.

Keywords: team-building, collaboration, professional development, leadership

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Purpose

Latta Family Dentistry is a small town dentist office dedicated to educating the small community of Latta, South Carolina. The founder and owner, Dr. Kareem Sprattling, is from a small town in northeastern South Carolina and started dentistry to ensure that families with low means and insufficient insurance would still have the benefits of seeing a dentist thus creating long-term dental health. After years of being in business, the founder would love to see his dentistry expand to other places. In order for this business to thrive, the owner has made it clear that he would love to establish a structure conducive to expansion. This is where creating high-performing teams will come into place to assist this local small town business grow into the business model the owner has deemed for his business.

So far, training and establishing functional teams needed for expansion have been a challenge to the owner. This business has seen everything from incompetence in employees to embezzlement. This project is to investigate, find, and create structures that will develop a high-performing team so the owner can effectively expand the dentistry. Latta Family Dentistry is resolute in its efforts to educate low-income families on the importance of good dental health. Foreseeable challenges will include hiring and retaining dedicated staff with the pay offered and motivation to work with the targeted population.

1.2 Associated Documents

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda template

Appendix B: Meeting Norms

Appendix C: Interview Questionnaire

Appendix D: Incentive Program for Latta Family Dentistry

Appendix E: Advertisement

Appendix F: Latta Family Dentistry Patient Satisfaction Survey

Appendix G: Latta Family Dentistry Staff Team-Building Satisfaction Survey

Appendix H: Professional Literature Review

1.3 Project Plan Maintenance

Any changes or updates went through the owner, Dr. Sprattling. In order to update or change anything, an email went to the owner stating the update. The update was then placed on the agenda. After discussion, the owner would approve or deny.

2 Project Scope

2.1 Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives

2.1.1 Objectives
For this project, the SMART Objectives were
- increase the number of staff members (currently have three) by the spring of 2020,
- conduct monthly professional development centered around team building and collaboration, and
- increase the number of new patients by 10% each quarter.

2.1.2 Success Criteria
Success for project will be identified by
- establishing human resource needs,
- receiving 80% or more satisfaction rate on employee surveys, and
- meeting the desired new enrollment of new patients and 80% or higher satisfaction rate on patient surveys.

2.1.3 Risks
With any improvement to an organization, there will be risks. Going into this project, the risks were
- ❏ *Unneeded positions* – As this organization looks to expand, there could be a rush to develop and hire for positions that are not beneficial to the vision and also will also lead to loss of money.
- ❏ *Can lose sight of vision* – With any endeavor, it is crucial to stay focused on the vision. Losing that focus is always a risk and would be detrimental to this project. When you lose sight of your vision, the organization can be pulled in all directions except for forward.
- ❏ *Loss of employees* – Losing employees will delay the growth of this organization, which is one of the main goals of this project. Without the employees to function as a team, there is no project and no expansion.
- ❏ *Loss of revenue* – With creating unneeded positions, an organization will definitely lose revenue. For this project, revenue is a major component needed for an organization to expand.

2.2 Outline of Student's Objectives

2.2.1 Objectives
My objectives as a student for this project include
- assisting the organization with their growth goals,
- developing my leadership skills, and
- developing a plan that can assist other small businesses grow.

2.2.2 Success Criteria
Success will be determined by
- being perceived as an effective leader,
- being referred to other small businesses, and
- being a factor of the organization seeing growth and improvements.

2.2.3 Risks
Risks include
- failing to assist the organization with their growth goals,
- growing and improving unsuccessfully as an effective leader, and
- not being referred to other small businesses.

2.3 Definitive Scope Statement
Upon completion of this project, Latta Family Dentistry will have developed high functional, collaborative teams with clear leadership, visions, and goals. In addition, this organization will become a beacon of a workplace to attract the best qualified staff in order to expand and open a new office in other underserviced parts of this area. This work is only to improve the quality of the employees and procedures for team building, collaboration, the hiring process, and branding to increase the number of new patients in order to open a new office.

3   Deliverables

3.1   To Partnering Organization
Allocated space for collaboration **–** Having a consistent space for staff meetings is an important step in establishing routines within your teams. Having a consistent place for your staff meetings creates a familiar and conducive environment for your staff. A warm and inviting environment helps to provide a safe place for collaboration.

Meeting norms **–** Creating meeting norms establishes how your meeting will be conducted. This will provide the backbone and structure of your meeting. Meeting norms allow your staff to feel safe during the meeting, which promotes collaboration and team building through respect.

Agenda templates **–** This allows the staff to be prepared for the meeting, which helps the meeting run smoothly. This will also encourage staff members to give ideas for topics, which promotes participation and a feeling of ownership.

Team-oriented interview questionnaire **–** This will allow the team to see which candidates are team oriented and fit the vision of the organization. Questions should be developed in a way that shows which candidate will fit into the new direction of the organization.

Advertisement **–** Increasing your organization's visibility in the community is always a positive when trying to increase your number of patients when trying to expand. In order to expand, you will need more patients and revenue. Word of mouth is powerful but should not be your only form of advertisement.

Incentive program **–** Word of mouth is powerful; but with some people, you have to give them a reason beyond great service to spread the word. Some people need to see the benefits of promoting your business to their friends and family. This is another form of advertisement that will not break the bank.

3.2   From Student
N/A

4 Project Approach

4.1 Project Lifecycle Processes
The project was broken down into different phases. The first phase was an introductory phase where the owner and I talked about the goals of this project; and from there, we started with the onboarding process. We developed interview questions based around team building and collaboration. From there, we went into the second phase, which was building a culture of team building and collaboration with reading articles on team building and the skills needed. The last phase was strictly structural. We examined everything needed to build a stronger structure and increase efficiency, such as improving the website, advertisement, and technology. Each task during each phase was given a point person responsible for the implementation of that task. Any suggestions or questions would be directed to that person either during staff meetings or via email. I played the role of facilitator during the process. I was just the point person for the articles.

4.2 Project Management Processes

Activity	Person responsible	Timeline
Meet with Dr. Sprattling about professional development topics and schedule possible dates	James Gist	May 2018
Tour facility to create meeting space	James Gist and Dr. Sprattling	August 2018
Schedule team building activities	James Gist	Ongoing throughout year beginning in September 2018
Set up and schedule meeting dates	James Gist and Dr. Sprattling	Ongoing throughout year beginning in September 2018
Developing meeting norms	Entire Staff	August 2018
Creating meeting agenda and email agenda	Dr. Sprattling and Office Manager	Ongoing throughout year beginning in September 2018
Advertisement on radio and Internet	Dr. Sprattling and Office Manager	Beginning October 2018

Update Website	Office manager	September 2018
Create incentive program for referrals	Dr. Sprattling and committee	Ongoing beginning in September 2018
Creation of interview team and interview questionnaire	Dr. Sprattling and Office Manager	October 2018
Hiring and training of new staff	Interview team	November 2018 (sooner if needed)

4.3   Project Support Processes

I conducted periodic checks via telephone to make sure processes and procedures were followed. Release of power was a particularly difficult process for the owner, which is understandable. The owner was supplied with everybody's responsibilities and was expected to inspect to make sure expectations were met. The owner even sent in friends to act as new patients to report on their experiences.

4.4   Organization

4.4.1 Project Team

There was no formal structure. The tasks within the project were assigned a point person who was responsible for that particular task. Roles were based on an individual's strengths and voluntary basis. For example, Dr. Jachelle Sprattling's strength is technology, so she was given the task of technology.

4.4.2 Mapping Between Latta Family Dentistry and Student

Each staff member was given some role and/or responsibility. All roles and tasks were approved by the owner, Dr. Sprattling. In order for this project to operate smoothly, tasks were monitored by me and Dr. Sprattling. Mapping was as follows:

Owner – responsible for incentives, budget, communication, and final approval of any change.

Co-owner – responsible for updates to website and advertisements.

Registered Dental Associate – responsible for analyzing survey data.

Certified Dental Assistant – responsible for assisting with survey data and presentation and assisting with advertisements.

Receptionist – responsible for maintaining copies of agenda, surveys, and keeping lobby warm and friendly.

5 Communications Plan

Who - stakeholder	What info do they need	Why do they need it	When will they get it
Dr. Kareem Sprattling	Roles and responsibilities	To know each persons tasks	In possession
	Budget information	To make approvals	As Budget needs arise
	Information that needs approval	person who makes final approvals	As decisions are needed
Dr. jachelle Sprattling	Technology and website updates	Person responsible for website updatees and improvements	Monthly
R.D.A and C.D.A	any information on incentives	To improve staff morale and assist in attracting new patients	monthly

Internal and External Communication Plans

Internal Plan--Meeting with any internal stakeholder within the dental office
- Dr. Kareem Sprattling
- Dr. Rachelle Sprattling
- Office Manager
- Registered Dental Associate and Certified Dental Assistant
- Receptionist

Items will be communicated through emails, face-to-face meetings, text messages, google calendar, and virtual software.

External Plan–Communicating with any stakeholders outside of the dental office
- Community members
- Existing patients
- Potential customers
- Sponsors

New information, community outreach, and any exciting news will be communicated through
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Emails
- Latta Family Dentistry website
- Junk mail

6 Work Plan

During this project, several tasks were identified. Using the knowledge of the current staff, duties were assigned based on staff strengths. Because of the complexity and amount of work with certain tasks, multiple people were assigned to a task. In the chart below is a description of the task along with the person(s) responsible.

6.1 Work Breakdown Structure

- Create and maintain a consistent meeting place
- Establish and create meeting dates and times using google calendar
- Develop meeting norms
- Create and email meeting agenda at least 2 days in advance
- Create a more visible brand by using advertisement on radio, restaurants, and the Internet via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Create referral incentive program
- Create interview questionnaire that highlights attributes like collaboration
- Form interview panel
- Improve website so patients can complete the forms online and pay online

Roles and Responsibilities

Task	Person responsible	Timeline
Meet with Dr. Sprattling about professional development topics and schedule possible dates	James Gist	May 2018
Tour facility to create meeting space	James Gist and Dr. Sprattling	August 2018
Schedule team building activities	James Gist	Ongoing throughout year beginning in September 2018
Set up and schedule meeting dates	James Gist and Dr. Sprattling	Ongoing throughout year beginning in September 2018
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Advertisement on radio and Internet	Dr. Sprattling and Office Manager	Beginning October 2018
Update Website	Office Manager	September 2018

Create incentive program for referrals	Dr. Sprattling and committee	Ongoing beginning in September 2018
Creation of interview team and interview questionnaire	Dr. Sprattling and Office Manager	October 2018
Hiring and training of new staff	Interview team	November 2018 (sooner if needed)

6.2 Resources

During this project, certain resources were used in order to start, maintain, and finalize tasks. These resources were vital in the formation of this project. Below are the resources needed for the project:

o Best practices on team building
o Google Docs
o Gmail
o Google Meet
o Miscellaneous items

7 Milestones

Milestones for the project were in three phases. Phase 1 was the set-up phase where mostly meetings and discussions took place. In Phase 2, roles and responsibilities were assigned; and in Phase 3, the actual work began. In the chart below, the milestones of this project are outlined.

Milestone Number	Title	Forecast date
Phase 1	Meeting with Dr. Sprattling and Staff	June-August 2018
Phase 1	Meeting Norms developed	August 2018
Phase 1	Team building interview questions selected	August 2018
Phase 2	Assignment of roles and responsibilities	October 2018
Phase 3	Website	December 2018-ongoing
Phase 3	Incentive programs	December 2018-ongoing
Phase 3	Advertisement	December 2018-ongoing

8   Metrics and Results

Metrics	Results
Satisfaction of new patients	see results below
Satisfaction of new staff (team oriented questions)	see results below

For this project, I focused on measuring the satisfaction level of the staff and patients. Within the last 2 years, this organization has seen an increase of approximately 200 new patients. Of those patients,123 of them completed the new patient survey. The results per question were

1. *How did you hear about us?*
   Advertisement 62% (76 patients); referral 35% (43 patients); other (walk up) 3% (four patients)
2. *How satisfied are you with the dentist's attitude and behavior?*
   Very satisfied 93% (115 patients); somewhat satisfied 7% (eight patients)
3. *How professional was the dentist in his/her work?*
   Very 100% (123 patients)

Results from Staff Survey
At the time of the survey, the organization included four employees. They include the owner, co-owner, certified dental assistant, and the receptionist.

Note the responses were absolutely true (4), mostly true (3), occasionally true (2), and never true (1).
1. *I clearly understand the purpose of my team.*
   75% responded absolutely true.
   25% responded mostly true.
2. *As a team member, I understand how OUR work affects the larger goal of our department.*
   100% responded absolutely true.
3. *Our team is recognized for its accomplishments.*
   50% responded occasionally true.
   50% responded never true.
4. *Team members openly express their ideas and opinions.*
   50% responded mostly true.
   50% never true.
5. *Our team can have productive meetings without the influence of a team leader.*
   100% responded mostly true.

9   Risks, Constraints, Assumptions

9.1   Risks
Potential risks to this project were

Risk	Potential Reason	Impact of Risk
Employees rejecting idea of project	The employees are the catalyst of this project. Without the participation of the employees, there is no project.	High
Owner losing interest in the project	If the owner loses interest, the project would be terminated.	High
Closing of Organization	If organization closes, the project will be delayed and/or terminated.	High
Poor communication between all participants	Communication is vital in the implementation of the project. If communication is poor, the project effectiveness decreases.	Medium
Scheduling conflicts	Scheduling conflicts can delay progress of the project.	Medium
Inadequate funding for project	Without adequate funding for advertisement, growth will become difficult to obtain, thus decreasing the effectiveness of the project.	Medium
High turnover rate	In order to build an effective team, the team must have consistent members. Adding/losing team members will cause delays in implementation of the project.	Medium

Criteria:
High risk – immediate impact on revenue and personnel, 70% - 100%
Medium – moderate impact on revenue and personnel, 50% - 69%
Low – low impact on revenue and personal, below 50%

Mitigation/Contingency Plan

Risk	Mitigation Plan	Contingency Plan
Employees rejecting idea of project	• survey employee for interest level in being part of team • use interview process to hire team-oriented candidates	• reinforce the importance of effective teams with the vision of organization • provide support and guidance through professional development
Owner losing interest in the project	• be transparent with all aspects of project with owner • align project to owner's vision for organization	• reinforce the importance of effective teams with the vision of organization • provide support and guidance through professional development
Closing of organization	• have back-up organization to complete project	• have back-up organization to complete project
Poor communication between all participants	• establish consistent vehicle used for communication • establish norms for communication	• reinforce importance of timely communication • follow organizational chart
Scheduling conflicts	• have all employees utilize a calendar • require an invitation and a response be sent for all meetings	• look to establish consistent meeting times if possible • explore alternative meeting options when needed
Inadequate funding for project	• create budget for advertisement and adhere to the budget • explore cheaper options for advertisement	• partner with other businesses which can allow for free or low-cost advertisement • recruit sponsors
High turnover rate	• provide work-based incentives • establish a positive work environment • provide support for employees	• provide competitive pay • establish systems of support and training for employees

9.2 Constraints

Constraints are a part of every project. Constraints are defined as limiting factors that affect the execution of a project, program, portfolio, or process. This project will operate under the following constraints:

1. **The willingness of the employees to work as a team –** This project is designed around building effective teams. If the employees are not willing or do not understand the benefits of building effective teams, the project will not produce the desired results.
2. **My leadership –** Without leadership from me, the project will suffer. The project success and/or failure will rely on the implementation from me.

9.3 Assumptions

Assumptions are defined as factors in the planning process that are considered to be true, real, or certain, without proof or demonstration. As part of my consultancy project, there will be assumptions. The following are my perceived assumptions:

❏ We will be able to create and sustain an interview team.
❏ The created interview team will be able to recommend qualified people to fill open positions in a timely manner.
❏ Vehicles used for communication will be used appropriately.
❏ There will be funds available for advertisement.
❏ Advertising will bring in new patients and more revenue.
❏ Someone on the current staff can manage the website.
❏ Website will increase accessibility and convenience to business for patients.
❏ We will have the employees and space to accommodate new patients.

10 Financial Plan

The budget was strictly monitored by the owner and the office manager (Dr. Jachelle Sprattling). The owner created this budget. Professional development and incentives were purposely budgeted higher than expected.

Activity/Item	Cost per year
Professional Development	$500
Team Building Activities	$250
New Staff	Administrative – $35,000 Dental Hygienist – $50,000
Technology	$5,000
Updating website	$1000
Advertisement	$3000
Incentives and gifts – Referral	$1000

11 Quality Assurance Plan

PDCA Cycle

Plan ❏ Recognize an opportunity ❏ Plan a change	❏ The opportunity for this plan is to build an effective team to increase overall efficiency, increase number of patients, improve technology, and eventually open a new office. ❏ This plan will include the entire office staff and new potential staff. ❏ The plan will change the overall morale of the staff, leadership style of owner, current uses of technology to improve customer experience, and ways to attract new customers.
Do ❏ Test the change ❏ Carry out a small scale study	❏ To test the change, a survey is needed for current staff and patients to understand the beginning state of Latta Family Dentistry. ❏ After changes, another survey is needed to rate the effectiveness of the changes. This survey is to be given to the staff and patients.
Check ❏ Review the test ❏ Analyze the results ❏ Identify what you learned	❏ A copy of the survey is provided with the plan. (I currently do not have the results of the survey.) ❏ Data will be reviewed for what customers liked and did not like.
Act ❏ Take action based on what you learned ❏ If the change was unsuccessful, go through cycle again ❏ If the change was successful, incorporate what you learned from the test into wider changes ❏ Use knowledge to plan new improvements	❏ Need to attract more teenagers as patients. (They seem to travel to Florence, SC for dental care.) ❏ New improvements and wider change are now being discussed.

Appendix A

Meeting Agenda Template

Agenda

Location:	Latta Family Dentistry (Meeting Room)
Date:	August 10, 2018
Time:	7:30 AM

- Agenda details:

    I. Set up meeting norms
    - a. Expectations
    - b. Day, time , and duration

    - c. Roles and Responsibilities

    II. Mr. James Gist (Doctoral student)
    - a. New Direction--Building Effective Teams
    - b. Expectations
    - c. Possible Improvements

- o **III**. Comments? Questions? Concerns

Appendix B

Meeting Norms

Latta Family Dentistry

❏ Be on time (work, meetings, return from lunch)

❏ Come to meeting with an open mind

❏ Show respect to each other

❏ Actively Participate in meeting

❏ Listen to understand

❏ Celebrate team accomplishments

Appendix C

Interview Questionnaire

1. Give an example of a successful project that you were part of. What was your role? What made the project successful in your view?

2. Describe a situation from your past work experiences in which you have determined a team was the best potential solution to a problem.

3. Do you feel more energized when you are working alone or when you are working as part of a team?

4. What actions and support, in your experience, make a team function successfully.

5. Can you share an example of a situation in which teamwork enhanced your ability to accomplish your goals or the outcomes that were expected from you as an employee?

6. Share a time when you experienced working with a difficult coworker on a team. How was the coworker difficult and what did you do to resolve the situation to encourage the team's ongoing progress?

7. Do you feel more energized when you are working alone or when you are working as part of a team?

8. Describe the perfect work environment level of interaction with coworkers in which you would experience the most success.

9. Give me an example of a time when your workgroup or department worked especially well with another workgroup or department to accomplish a goal.

10. Have you been a member of a team that struggled or failed to accomplish its goal? If so, what assessment did you make of the reasons for the failure?

11. Have you had the opportunity to work with a virtual team? If so, what special team dynamics, activities, and actions did working virtually require How did you create team cohesiveness in a virtual setting?

12. Have you managed a group of employees in the past? If so, how did you build the group's sense of teamwork so that the members could work more cohesively together?

Appendix D

Incentive Program for Latta Family Dentistry

For staff

Dr. Sprattling uses a unique bonus system called the Grab Bag bonus, which he adopted from a dentist at a dental convention. He has a bag filled with envelopes. Each envelope contains either $20, $50, or $100 bills. When office goals have been met staff can reach into the bag and pull out an envelope. This is a monthly deal.

For existing patients

Earn a $50 credit on a future service with a referral to Latta Family Dentistry.

For New Patients

$69 for first time cleaning for new patients

Appendix E

Advertisement

Latta Family Dentistry

(a division of Modern Legacy, Inc.)

Dr. Kareem Sprattling, DMD
Dr. Jachelle A.G. Sprattling, DMD
203 S. Marion Street | Latta, SC 29565

(third building down from the Latta Museum)

We believe in comprehensive dentistry for the entire family…

● General Dentistry ● Cosmetic Dentistry ● Fillings ● Extractions ● Crowns ● Bridges	● Veneers ● Partials / Dentures ● Root Canals ● Cleanings ● Routine Check-ups	● Dental Implant Placement and Restoration provided by Dr. Jachellle Sprattling

Drs. Sprattling and their team work hard to CHANGE THE PERCEPTION that dentistry has to hurt, that teeth must always be removed and "plates" made, that bad habits have to persist… So come in today and experience truly gentle dentistry.

"We love to see you smile!"

CALL TODAY FOR AN APPOINTMENT ~ Walk-ins are welcome!

¡Se habla español!   **(843)752-7655**

Appendix F

Latta Family Dentistry Patient Satisfaction Survey

1. **How did you hear of us?**

    Friend/relative   Television advertisement   Leaflets/brochures
    Newspaper Posters   Other   (Please   specify)

2. **What is the name of the dentist who treated you?**

3. **How satisfied are you with the dentist's attitude and behavior?**

    Very satisfied
    Somewhat satisfied
    Neutral
    Somewhat dissatisfied
    Very dissatisfied

4. **Rate the following based on your satisfaction:**

    Cleanliness
    Restrooms
    Staff behavior

5. **How professional was the dentist in his/her work?**

    Not at all
    Slightly
    Moderately
    Very

6. **Do you have any individual comments to the dentist?**

7. **How can we improve our services?**

Appendix G

Latta Family Dentistry Staff Team-Building Survey

1.   I clearly understand the purpose of my team.

2.   As a team member, I understand how OUR work affects the larger goal of

our department.

3.   Our team is recognized for its accomplishments.

4.   Team members openly express their ideas and opinions.

5.   Our team can have productive meetings without the influence of a team

leader.

Appendix H

Professional Literature Review

Collaboration

The idea of collaboration has been linked with education for many years;
however, until recently, it was not deemed widely as a major skill to possess. As of late,
educators have grown to understand the importance of teaching collaboration as well as
being collaborative with other educators. With this movement, we are starting to see
collaboration from teachers to teachers, principals to principals, and even superintendents
to superintendents. The notion of figuring things out alone is definitely becoming the
exception rather than the norm, even policy makers are seeing the benefits of
collaboration. For example, Common Core State Standards have identified collaboration
as a communication skill that is vital for employment and an important 21st century skill.
The purpose of this literature review is to (a) examine how collaboration is defined, (b)
examine skills needed for effective collaboration, and (c) understand the benefits of
collaboration.

Definition of Collaboration

According to the Association for Information and Image Management (2020),
"collaboration is a working practice whereby individuals work together to a common
purpose to achieve business benefit" (para. 1). This is an example of how the business
world defines collaboration.

Within the healthcare profession, collaboration is viewed as "two or more
healthcare professionals who have specific roles, perform interdependent tasks, and share

a common goal; a negotiated agreement which values expertise and contribution that each individual brings to patient care" (International Journal of Nursing Studies 2017, para. 1)

Collaboration within the education field is defined as, "getting individuals, who may or may not have similar interests, to work together in an organized endeavor to a satisfying and most appropriate group end" (EdTechReview, 2014, para. 3).

Skills for Effective Collaboration

In this section, I will examine how to develop necessary skills needed to collaborate. Half (2019) stated five ways to develop your workplace collaboration skills:

❏ Work on projects outside your comfort zone

❏ Communicate clearly

❏ Find a mentor

❏ Join industry groups

❏ Participate in team-building activities

In contrast, Kashyap (2019) wrote that in order to build and improve collaboration skills, people must (a) improve their self-awareness, (b) create a learning experience, (c) encourage innovation, (d) expand their definition of success, (e) improve soft skills, (f) be able to address problems, (g) be forgiving of mistakes, and (h) live by purpose.

According to Forbes (2018), six ways to improve team collaboration and enhance productivity leaders must (a) inspire innovation, (b) keep individuals organized, (c) ask employees to tell their story, (d) implement effective task management, (e) encourage open communication , and (f) align their interests

Benefits of Collaboration

In this section, the benefits of collaboration from different disciplines are examined. It would seem that these benefits are common sense; however, we still have people not engaging or understanding why we should collaborate. The National Education Association (2018) stated the benefits of collaboration are that it helps to brainstorm creative ideas; professional collaboration teaches you about yourself; and it helps students increase higher thinking skills, boost confidence, and develop leadership skills.

In an article written by Sivakumar and Fleischman (2019), they explained the benefits of scientists collaborating. They found that scientific collaborations can bring 30 researchers with different backgrounds together to solve a scientific problem; putting multiple scientific minds together helps confirm validity and accuracy of every scientific experiment and its interpretation; the use of time and funding money can be significantly optimized by collaboration; and collaborations also promote shared scientific credits.

Business deals more with the bottom line, so benefits to the business world largely circulate around saving time and making money. Efficiency is the key to many businesses, and they see collaboration as the vehicle. According to Smartsheet (2020), benefits of collaboration include

❏ faster-paced innovation,

❏ increased efficiency for remote teams,

❏ employee skill building,

❏ increased employee satisfaction,

❏ big picture view, and

❏ more satisfied customers

Summary

Through the research needed for this literature review, I saw collaboration is similar within different realms. From the definition, to the skills needed, and ending with the benefits, the similarity is obvious. With the definition, basically no matter how you define collaboration, it is people working together looking for a positive outcome. When building or improving skills, you have to set goals and communicate. However, the common thread with the benefits was related to the discipline; but in the end, all benefits seem to include efficiency. Like my consultancy project, I had to first define collaboration and improve the skills needed for collaboration, and then we saw the benefits of collaboration.

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