

3 ways that personality assessments can benefit your dental practice

By Kevin Henry, Founder of KevinSpeaksDental.com

With today's staffing shortages, dental practices are constantly looking for ways to not only improve but also to set themselves apart from their competition. When I speak with dentists and dental teams around the country, I am often told by dentists that it is the "team" who they have hired that distinguishes their practice from others in the area. It's also the team that has been assembled and re-assembled in COVID's wake and the current hiring crisis that is vital to success in 2026.

Remember this ... if you are relying on your team to make the difference between your practice standing out and your practice merely blending into the fabric of your community, it's important to know that your team is functioning at a high level by not only understanding each other, but also understanding the customers who walk through the doors of your business every day.

Yes, your practice is a business and your patients are customers. It's something I learned during my 25 years overseeing some of the industry's most known journals, including 13 years as managing editor for *Dental Economics* magazine. It's also an important realization and idea that must constantly be at the forefront of every one of your team member's minds.

I was speaking once at a meeting in Texas and a dental assistant came up to talk to me after my presentation. She had tears in her eyes as she told me that she was ready to quit her job. She believed that no one was listening to her ideas and she was the only one who cared about moving the practice forward when it came to technology.

After we talked for a little bit, it became very clear to me that she was passionate about technology but didn't know how to help her co-workers and dentist see why she was passionate about it. She didn't know how to communicate her passions to them and show that it wasn't just what she wanted, but also what she thought was best for the future of the practice.

You see, she cared about her job. She loved her job. She wanted to stay in her job. However, the fact that she believed she wasn't being heard was enough to drive her away. Perception was reality to her, and she believed no one was listening to her or understood her. The level of frustration was evident in the tears in her eyes.

An important asset that far too many practices are not using is the power to genuinely understand their teammates and learn what makes them tick. What if we could learn how to get the conversation to travel down the path we want it to go or we could say things in a way that would generate some results. Do you think that would be a dramatic shift in your practice?

As a certified Everything DiSC trainer, I have seen how DiSC and personality assessments have not only changed how co-workers interact with each other but also how dental businesses better

connect with their customers. These two impacts have brought down the level of drama in the practice while raising the case acceptance rates. Both make the practice a better place to work.

Let me show you three ways that I have seen personality assessments change dental practices for the better. As you read this, think about if your business could use a boost in any of these three areas.

Hiring Process

One of my professional passions is working with dental assistants. I know, from talking to both assistants and dentists, that hiring the right assistant can make the difference between your practice operating like a well-oiled machine or sputtering along.

I have heard so often that dentists are often surprised by assistants (and other team members) after they're hired in their work habits, abilities to communicate with patients, lack of understanding of team goals, etc. They feel like they asked the right questions and heard the right answers during the interview. However, the person who walked in on Monday was different than the person who being interviewed on Thursday.

A practice I work with in Missouri told me that they thought the assistant who was hired for a job must have undergone a lobotomy between the time she was interviewed and the time she started her job. Her smile and easy-going nature had been replaced by a very rough and unforgiving style of communication. Immediately, her team members were put off and the drama began to build in the practice.

How does this happen? Part of it comes from the questions that are being asked. Part of it also comes from not understanding the interviewee's desires and motivations past just "getting the job."

That's where personality assessments can come into play. By having an interviewee complete a personality assessment, you can learn more about him or her than just the answers to your questions. You can see why that person is answering a question in a certain way. You can also get a glimpse into their motivations and what truly drives them to move forward.

By looking at a personality assessment, you can not only get a better feel for that interviewee's motivations, but you can also picture how those motivations can fit in with the other workers in your business. If a strong personality shows up on the personality assessment and you are looking for someone with more of a nurturing, caring style, that person may not be the best fit for your practice.

Now, let me be clear ... personality assessments can be a part of the hiring process, but shouldn't be the focus. If someone is fantastic in all other aspects of the interview but doesn't hit a home run on the personality assessment, don't let that be the reason he or she isn't hired.

Also, please check with your human resources contacts and state dental board to see if personality assessments carry any legal ramifications in your state. There have been some instances where using personality assessments in the hiring process have led to discussions of discrimination

when the person didn't get the job. Again, ask the experts to make sure you're in the clear in your state and your practice setup.

Choosing your next employee is critical to the success of your business. Gaining insight into a person's personality can help ensure that your choice is the right one.

| Understanding the Team Better

Whether you're looking to integrate a new person into your practice or find ways to bring your current team closer together, personality assessments can help solve some of the drama that may be infiltrating your practice.

Often it isn't just what is said in the practice, but also how it is said that makes a difference. Team members can often want the same thing, yet the tone of how something is said can make another person's defenses go up and opportunities for collaboration wither away.

There are often the non-verbal bits of communication that go on in the practice as well. The heavy sighs. The eyerolls. The stomping of feet down the hallway. The slamming of a drawer or door. These ways to communicate can not only heighten the drama in the practice but also be picked up by your customers ... and those customers would then likely feel very uncomfortable in your place of business. And that's not good for business at all.

I once visited a practice in Florida where the assistant and hygienist couldn't stand to be in the same room with each other. They avoided each other in the hallway of the practice and, when they had to work together, it was very uncomfortable ... for them and the patient in the chair.

With personality assessments, team members can not only see their own styles and characteristics but also gain insight into the co-workers as well. Someone who seems very straight-forward or controlling may just have that as their personality so how can others learn to work with that person so their personality is understood rather than a roadblock?

These personality assessments can be valuable clues to what other team members want and how people can work together toward a common goal or mission. I've personally seen these assessments melt away thoughts that were keeping team members from truly becoming a cohesive unit.

If you're looking to bring your team closer than ever before, personality assessments and training on what they mean can do just that.

| Working with Patients

Just like personality assessments can help co-workers understand each other better, they can also be used to help team members comprehend the needs of their patients as well as what will help them accept treatment or the next steps in their oral health journey.

There is a practice in Oregon that is using a 60-second personality assessment (email me at the address below if you're interested in receiving this) on their patients to understand them better.

After treatment, that same practice pairs up a team member with the same personality style as the patient with that patient to explain what happened and potential next steps. They have seen a dramatic rise in their case acceptance rates simply because they took the time to understand what their patients wanted and how to communicate with them.

That patient's personality style is included in his or her patient notes for the next time that patient visits the practice as well. This helps create an experience that best suits every patient every time he or she walks through the door.

Different kinds of people with different emotions and motivations sit in your chairs every day. How are you working to treat them as individuals rather than just as patients? Personality assessments can give you a greater understanding of your customers which can help you connect with them in ways you didn't think possible.

So what can personality assessments do for your practice? Plenty. If you're ready to take the next step and talk about what it would take to incorporate these ideas into your business with in-person or virtual training, drop me a line at kevin@kevinspeaksdental.com.