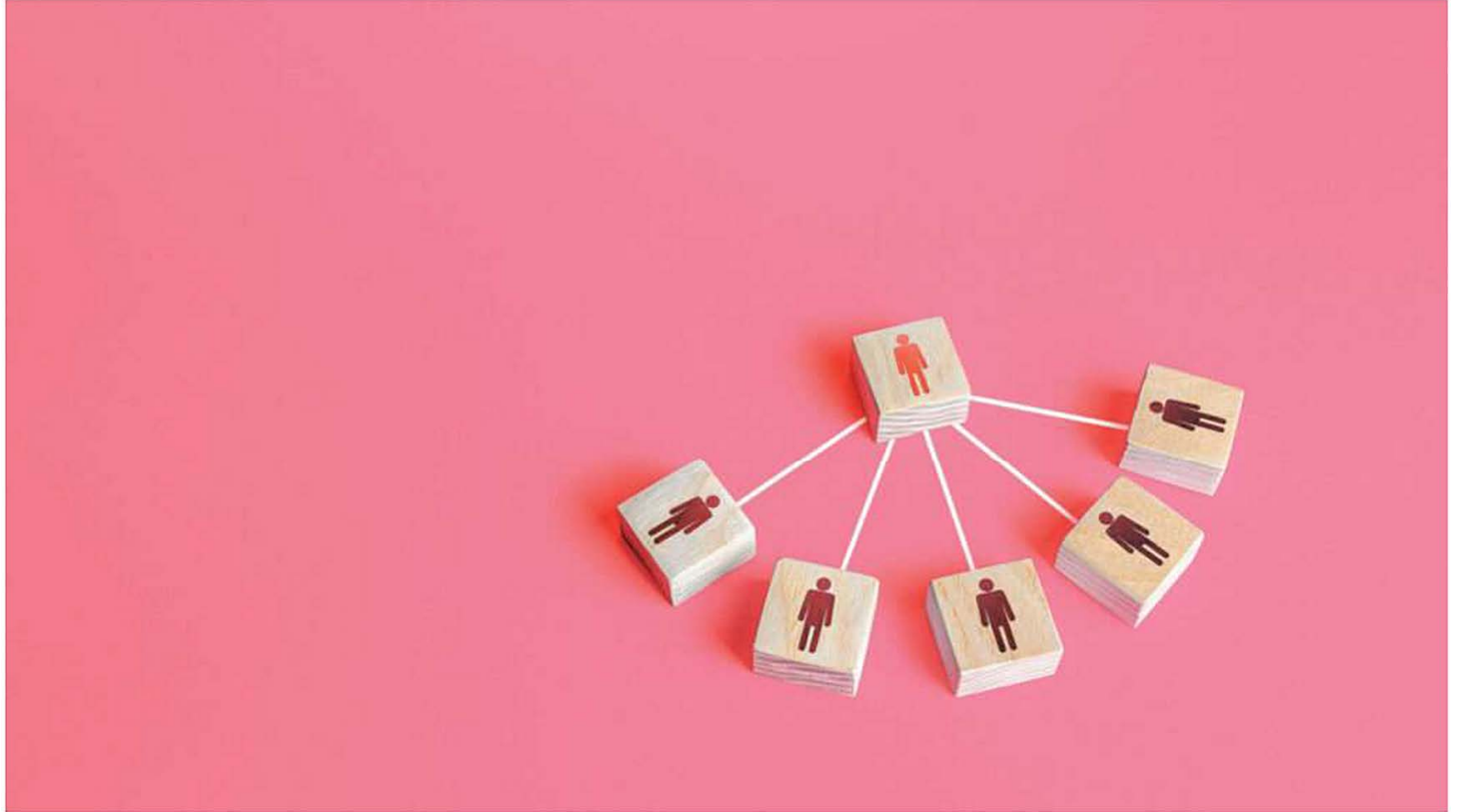


Delegation: The Art and Freedom of Letting Go to Grow Your Practice

11/01/2023 by Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing



iStock

O, Canada, how we have grown with small- and mid-sized businesses! As per the BDC, organizations with 99 or fewer employees account for 98% of businesses in our country. Almost 750,000 fellow entrepreneurs reportedly contribute 52% of our GDP. Taking an even deeper dive, dentists account for upwards of 24,000 of those sector-specific professionals. One of the best ways that your [practice can grow](#) and stand out from the rest is with healthy management through delegation.

Delegate: To entrust to another, assign responsibility and authority.

How many times has the following scenario occurred to you? You are speaking with a friend who owns a business, perhaps outside the industry. Yet again, they have too much to do and too little time. You tell them, “You hire good people. You surround yourself with capable individuals. Delegate.” Their resistance to this suggestion is palpable. You feel

uncomfortable. When taking a hard look in the mirror, you do not take your own advice. Said friend may even tell you as much.

Yes, we entrepreneurs are notorious for not designating responsibilities to anyone else, no matter how trusted the associate, manager, or employee. Yet, it is essential to the long-term sustainability of your practice to lean into others with niche expertise. After all, you have hired them for a reason. The very art and act of delegating can strengthen your practice in numerous ways, no less in the opportunities to dive into the health of essential functions and operational efficiencies. In assigning responsibilities to team members, you may uncover areas for improvement; perhaps one of your employees has the “wrong seat on the bus.” Your organization may be better suited to moving that person into another role for which they are better equipped.

By making the most of your talent as a consequence of delegating and the process associated with it:

- You free up more time in your schedule to focus on value-added tasks. This is often noted as a benefit associated with outsourcing; however, by its nature, outsourcing certain functions means investing more money in onboarding additional vendors/partners. Using existing talent does not have to cost you a thing, except some initial time upfront. You can then do what you do best: deliver quality dental care. You are not dedicating time that you do not have to rote back-office activities that are necessary but not associated with actively attracting new patients and engaging existing ones.
- You remain an engaged provider. You are fueling your passions by focusing on what you were trained in and love to do. As corny as it may sound, this notion of doing what you are most passionate about feeds into your overall well-being. It likely has a protective effect against negative stress (distress). You bring your best self to work every day because you are not inundated with tasks that stand between you and your relationships with patients.
- The above bullet point also applies to your employees. Reviewing functions and responsibilities and adjusting as needed shows you care about your talent. This feeds into employee engagement. Furthermore, you ensure that everyone on the bus is in the right seat. You may uncover that some employees want to explore other roles or responsibilities. This process is rife for cross-training! You contribute favourably to overall workforce morale by delivering on these employee goals. Productivity soars. Again, fewer missed or “sick” days may be due to minimizing stress at work by supporting happy, motivated employees.

- Happy, motivated employees stick around. They can become your best practice leaders and great “faces” or ambassadors for your brand. With such talent at the helm, patients are also more likely to stick around. They can quite quickly sense discontent and overwhelm within a practice.
- In the same vein, delegation can be just the antidote to flat or declining production. An upswing in clinical time and production naturally supports a bottom-line boost.

Great! Let's do this!

A good starting point for a dental office is to re-review the respective dental associations' Code of Ethics. Identify those functions and responsibilities that can be, ethically, delegated to your team members. For instance, you may not fully empower your assistants or hygienists by allowing them to explain treatment options and hygiene modifications to the patient. Other back-office staff may have more authority to take on additional responsibilities or functions than previously thought. You may find that both technical and support staff are under-utilized.

With an understanding of what can and cannot be delegated, you can go to work assessing team members' skills and experience. You may find there are opportunities for cross-training. These opportunities add the benefit of renewing associates' enthusiasm for the career and organization. They will feel encouraged by this investment and attention to their professional development.

It certainly does not hurt to have redundancies in place. That way, during any transitional periods, you can ensure that at least one person is always available to tend to vital functions and that service to patients and partners does not fall through the cracks. But, far and away, the most important advice we can provide is to communicate, communicate, communicate. You cannot overcommunicate.

Each team member must be aware of respective tasks, responsibilities, expectations, and (as needed) immediate supervisors. Those supervisors must also be mindful of their role in assuring the execution of this process goes off without a hitch. They should act as accountability partners, ensuring their charges and colleagues understand their expectations in perhaps modified roles and are progressing in fulfilling these expanded positions. There must be an open door as employees adjust to new duties – welcome feedback from the team, follow up regularly, and be patient. Much of the act of delegating is psychological. There must be a willingness to let go and remarkable freedom. Give your

employees some grace along the way. Demonstrate your leadership and impart your wisdom freely and generously.

About the Author



Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by clicking <https://www.ekwa.com/msm/> or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.

