

# Fulfilling Your Practice's Needs With Employee Engagement



**Do you have practice management questions? See page 258 for more details.**

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As with any service-based organization, employee engagement is critical to the success and profitability of your dermatology practice. Engaged employees are more likely to enhance patient satisfaction because they are consistently committed to doing their best, and intangibles such as a positive attitude, enthusiasm, and a good mood contribute to a better patient experience and a better outcome for your practice. Engaged employees are more likely to understand a patient's needs, are more innovative in their work, and are 6 times as likely to recommend their practice's services than employees who do not feel engaged at work.<sup>1</sup>

The fulfillment of a practice's mission, vision, profitability, and sustainability heavily depends on employee engagement. When asked, most practice managers readily reply that their employees are their most valuable asset; however, statistics over the last decade indicate that less than half (45%) of US workers say they are satisfied with their jobs, and even fewer (as little as 30%) say they feel engaged.<sup>2</sup> As a practice manager, it is your responsibility to ensure your staff is satisfied; the success of your practice depends on it.

In some cases, the practice's culture may be negatively impacted by poor leadership or a lack of commitment to the practice's mission and vision, while in others, employee engagement may be lacking simply due to

wrong assumptions. For instance, when hiring a new employee who is technically proficient, a practice manager might wrongly assume that the candidate also believes in the mission of the practice, including the level of service and satisfaction the practice promises its patients, as well as the practice's vision and long-term goals. As time passes, the gap between what the practice manager assumes to be true of his/her employees and what is actually true can grow even wider if there is no engagement.

Developing an office culture that fosters employee engagement requires your practice's mission statement and vision to come down off the wall and become a living part of your office environment. Hiring decisions should be made not only based on a candidate's ability to perform the technical duties of the position but also on his/her ability to identify with and live out the mission of your practice. Accountability expectations, job descriptions, performance evaluations, and compensation should be tied into the practice's mission statement in such a way that all employees understand both how their performance propels the practice toward its goals and how their role is tied to patient outcomes and satisfaction.

Recognizing and thanking staff members whose performance embodies a genuine and continued commitment to the mission of the practice and customer care is an effective way to demonstrate the level of engagement that you desire from your employees. Creating an environment where staff members are encouraged to be innovative in improving the patient experience and working conditions of the office not only will have a positive impact on employee engagement but also will provide a direct emotional connection between your employees and your practice.

Practice managers often incentivize productivity with monetary compensation while overlooking nonmonetary rewards; however, nonmonetary rewards (eg, public recognition, certificates or letters of appreciation, handwritten

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## PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

thank you notes, additional paid time off, opportunities to advance or receive continuing education, opportunities to contribute in a unique role or as part of a leadership team, increased autonomy) can be intrinsic motivators that contribute most to employee satisfaction and engagement. Intrinsic rewards also are much more likely to cause your employees to identify themselves with the brand of your practice.

Creating a culture of employee engagement takes time and effort, but there is no question that the results will be more than worth it for your patients, your employees, and the overall profitability of your practice.

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