

# The art of decision making

**JANICE CHARLTON** offers some top tips to help you make more effective choices within your business...

**D**ecision making is part of building a successful business, but all too often smaller businesses end up standing still because they do not take effective action and instead get caught up in the day-to-day minutia of simply keeping things going. Dental practices are often guilty of this, but the reality is that keeping things as they are can be understandable when there are so many factors that affect your decisions.

Good practice leadership requires taking actions that will impact on your business, your team, yourself and your patients. You need to consider the risks, the rewards, ethics, you have compliance and regulation to contend with, and you may even have an NHS contract to think about, too. There's a lot going on. However, ignoring crucial choices and sugar coating reality is not conducive to running an effective business, which is why it is vital to learn the art and skill that is required for suitable business decision making.

Here, I have put together some of my top tips for helping to boost your decision-making abilities, which can be perfected over time just by simply practising these ideals everyday.

#### Face decisions early on

It can be easy to get carried away with the next big project, a post-graduate course, or even just the day-to-day running of the practice. However, if something requires your attention try to deal with it sooner rather than later to avoid it becoming something detrimental to your business. Often, small issues that are pushed to one side because a decision cannot be made end up being larger problems that then require rash choices.

#### Create an atmosphere for discussion

As I've mentioned, decision making can be tough, and the saying 'two heads are better than one' certainly rings true, so make the most of the people working within your business. Create an environment where your team feel confident and supported enough to voice their opinions and make sure that you listen to them, too. Other people will see things from different aspects and taking various points of view into

consideration will help you to form a well-rounded decision.

#### Think positive

For many, the reasons for stalling when it comes to making required change lies within the element of risk. Of course, to make a measured decision you need to bear all of the risk factors in mind, but focusing too much on this can hinder business progression. Instead, assess the worst-case scenarios and build your decision around having a back-up plan in place. Once you have understood – and planned for – the potential elements of jeopardy, you can then concentrate on the rewards. Each decision you make should have a positive impact on your business, so ensure the benefits will be worth any potential challenges that may stand in your way and remain focused on your goals.

#### Stray from the plan

Most of us like to create action plans and we often place a lot of emphasis on these in order to allow us to come to our decisions. However, more often than not, things don't always go according to the initial strategy due to the simple fact that we cannot predict the outside influences that may impact on our own ideals. Start to think away from the original tactic, analyse it, go against it, question it, and try to break it. This is not about being negative, instead it allows you to think in a more fluid and lateral manner when you really need to, helping you to overcome challenges that are thrown in your way. By doing this you will feel more equipped to face problems, thus helping you to reach your business decisions more effectively in the first place.

#### Look for outside help

There may be a multitude of decisions to be made within a dental practice, but there is also a wide variety of suppliers and organisations who can offer valuable advice that can aid your final choices. For example, the dental press is full to the brim with informative articles that can help you to see things from other angles and perspectives, while you should also never underestimate the knowledge of your dental

product reps, who can advise not just on the latest technologies, but also cost-saving tips, too. At Patient Plan Direct, our business development managers are on hand to help you boost your dental plan performance, providing vital advice that can help to take your business to the next level.

#### Learn from failure

Every decision we make comes with the risk of failure; at some point we have all made errors of judgement and we will make more of them during the course of our lives. However, it is important to try to forget the mistake and instead remember the lesson that can be learnt from it. This can teach us not to fear making further errors, as well as new ways of doing things that can then help us to make our business decisions more effectively. Sometimes simply making a decision, whether good or bad, is the vital step to nurturing change, improvement, and growth.

It is often the case that too many dental practices stand still because they don't make effective decisions and implement the important and necessary changes that will help the business to move forward and succeed. Carrying out the day-to-day practice routine and not looking at the overall picture can become detrimental to your business. At Patient Plan Direct, our highly skilled team are on hand to help you develop your business through the effective use of your patient membership plan. Our business development managers will carry out in-practice training and help you make important decisions regarding the right type of plans to introduce that will benefit both your patients and your revenue. With the lowest fees on the market at just £1.20 per patient per month, which includes worldwide dental A&E insurance, administering your plan through us might just be the easiest decision you'll ever make, whether you're launching a plan for the first time or switching from another provider. ■

#### About Patient Plan Direct

Patient Plan Direct offers a low cost, simple, flexible and practice-branded solution to running patient payment plans, with a focus on delivering first-class support and expert advice to ensure you reach your plan objectives. For more information please visit [www.patientplandirect.com](http://www.patientplandirect.com), email [info@patientplandirect.com](mailto:info@patientplandirect.com), or call 0844 848 6888.

#### About the author

Janice Charlton fully understands the challenges of running a modern dental practice, she has vast practice management experience and is also a qualified dental therapist. She has supported hundreds of dentists and their teams across the UK in successfully establishing dental plans within their practices, whether offering a plan as an option to private fee per item, or considering a move out of the NHS.

