

## Practice Makes Perfect

In the first of three articles Susan Cook, Practice Manager, Normanby Family Dental Practice, discusses her journey towards gaining a professional practice management qualification.

I have worked as Practice Manager at Normanby Family Dental Practice, Middlesbrough, for the past 7 years. We are a very busy practice with a team of 21, including 7 dentists, providing NHS and private treatment to over 15,000 registered patients.



Although I consider myself to be highly competent, with responsibility for the smooth running of the practice on a daily basis and the management of the staff, the recent economically challenging and compliant times have proved to be somewhat stressful. For a number of years I have held a personal desire to develop my career by gaining a qualification in practice management as I felt this would improve my professional status, including salary, and give me a greater understanding of practice management.

I researched several courses and even considered taking a management qualification outside of dentistry, then one day I received a leaflet from the Northern Deanery Directorate of Multiprofessional Dental Education, offering a Level 4 Professional Certificate in Dental Practice Management in conjunction with The Dentistry Business. The course is modular, totalling 9 days spread over a 12-month period, and this suits both myself and the practice principal, as I only need to have one day off each month. The course covers every element of running an efficient profitable practice, and what's more, is accredited by The University of Chester, which means I am studying for a recognised, transferable qualification making it the perfect solution.

I hadn't studied for many years and did have some self-doubts; would I be able to understand the business theory, would I like the course, and would it be value for money? However I have recently completed the first of the three modules, and although I have found the work quite challenging, it has also been highly rewarding. During the first module 'Planning and controlling a dental practice', we gained an understanding of the current state of dentistry, including the legislative and regulatory framework. We are also started to understand how to create our practice vision and strategy, including monthly budgets and KPI's.

The Dentistry Business team are excellent. Carl Parnell BDS and Lester Ellman BDS are both dentists with NHS and private experience, and Sim Goldblum has extensive business experience outside of dentistry. These highly regarded professionals make learning the art

of practice management fun. It's not all books and theory; we have enjoyed many creative practical exercises using plastic cups, cardboard and Sellotape! The team are approachable and friendly, making it easy to talk about specific practice issues, and they have helped me solve any problems. Carl, Lester and Sim are also available by phone or email to answer questions about assignments, or any other aspects of practice management, and I have found their support very useful.

I still have two further modules 'Managing people and developing teamwork' and 'Creating a service-led dental practice' to complete over the next 6 months, however the course has been excellent helping me to improve the daily performance of the practice and raise my professional status. I will let you know how I'm getting on with module two in my next article.

For more information about the Dentistry Business Level 4 & Level 7 Accredited programmes visit [www.thedentistrybusiness.com](http://www.thedentistrybusiness.com) or phone Sim on 0161 928 5995