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Stop Blaming "Lazy" Staff for Your Recruitment Crisis

The real reason your job ads aren't working (and what actually attracts great team members)

If you're reading this, chances are you've got unfilled vacancies in your practice. Again. You've posted the same job advert three times, interviewed a handful of candidates who seemed promising but disappeared after two weeks, and you're starting to wonder if there's anyone left who actually wants to work in dentistry.

Here's the uncomfortable truth: it's probably not them. It's how you're thinking about them.

The Great Generational Disconnect

Most dental practices are unknowingly writing job ads and creating work environments for people who no longer exist. You're recruiting for the employee of 1995 while trying to hire the workforce of 2025.

That "perfect candidate" you have in mind – the one who'll work any hours, never question processes, and stay for 20 years – is based on Baby Boomer work patterns. But 75% of today's workforce are Millennials who change jobs every 2.6 years, and Gen Z who'll walk away from any role that doesn't offer growth, flexibility, and mental health support.

This isn't a moral failing. It's market reality.

What Today's Dental Professionals Actually Want

Gen Z dental nurses and hygienists aren't lazy – they're strategic. They grew up watching their parents' job security evaporate and entered the workforce during a pandemic. They want regular feedback (not annual reviews), clear progression paths, and yes, flexible working where possible. They'll outwork anyone if they feel valued and see a future.

Millennial dental professionals aren't job-hoppers because they're uncommitted. They leave because they're not growing. They want to understand how their role contributes to patient

outcomes, they want professional development opportunities, and they need to feel their work has meaning beyond just filling appointments.

Gen X team members are your hidden gems. They're independent problem-solvers who thrive with autonomy. Stop micromanaging them and they'll run your practice better than you thought possible.

Why Your Recruitment Isn't Working

Look at your last job advert. Did it mention "experience required," "flexible candidate needed," or "immediate start"? You've just eliminated 70% of your potential applicants.

Today's candidates are reading between the lines. "Experience required" = "we don't train or develop people." "Flexible candidate" = "we need someone to cover all our staffing gaps." "Immediate start" = "the last person left suddenly and we're desperate."

Instead, they're looking for ads that mention "full training provided," "professional development opportunities," "supportive team environment," and "work-life balance respected."

The Practices That Never Struggle to Recruit

I work with practices that have waiting lists of people wanting to join their teams. What do they do differently?

They've stopped advertising jobs and started advertising careers. Their job ads mention mentorship programs, training budgets, and clear progression paths. They talk about their practice values and what kind of patient care they're proud of delivering.

More importantly, they've designed their work environment around what today's workforce actually needs:

- **Regular feedback cycles** instead of annual reviews
- **Flexible working arrangements** where clinically appropriate
- **Professional development budgets** and protected learning time
- **Mental health support** and genuine wellbeing initiatives
- **Clear career progression** with defined steps and timelines

Retention: The Real Secret Sauce

Here's what most practices miss: recruitment is expensive, but retention is profitable. Every time someone leaves, you lose 6-12 months of productivity, spend thousands on recruitment, and put extra pressure on your existing team.

The practices with stable teams aren't just good at hiring – they're brilliant at keeping people. They understand that your 25-year-old receptionist needs different management than your 55-year-old practice manager, and they adapt their leadership style accordingly.

They know that their neurodiverse team members (around 1 in 30) aren't being difficult – they just need slightly different support to deliver exceptional results.

The Bottom Line

Your recruitment crisis isn't about a shortage of good people. It's about a shortage of good understanding of what good people want in 2025.

Stop trying to find employees who'll fit your 1995 workplace model. Start building a 2025 workplace that attracts the incredible talent that's out there waiting for someone to understand them.

The practices that make this shift don't just solve their recruitment problems – they become the places everyone wants to work. And in today's market, that's not just nice to have. It's business-critical.

Ready to transform your recruitment and retention strategy? Book a free 15-minute Leadership Leak Call to discover what's actually driving talent away from your practice and how to become the employer everyone wants to work for.