

Narrator: Welcome to 'Beyond Bitewings', the business side of dentistry, brought to you by Edwards and Associates PC. Join us as we discuss how to build your dental practice, optimize your income and plan for your future. This podcast is distributed with the understanding that Edwards and Associates PC is not rendering legal accounting or professional advice. Listeners should consult with their business advisors before acting on any of the information that is shared. At Edwards and Associates PC, our business is the business of dentistry. For help or more information visit our website @ianassociates.com

Robert: Hello, and welcome to another episode of Beyond Bitewings. In today's episode, we will be talking about how to keep your employees happy.

Lynn: Finding quality people right now and retaining them is tough, very tough in this environment. So, whatever tricks we can come up with,

Ash: Right.

Lynn: I'm willing to listen to.

Robert: Well, I guess during my day and age, it was just pay me more.

Ash: That's still stands true to some degree. I mean, with apps such as Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and Indeed out there, people are very easily able to compare what the market salary should be in their position.

Lynn: Right.

Ash: As long as you're within that range, you are covered in that department, but people are looking for other things that you can't really see from those apps. And I feel like that's something that we should be discussing about today because a lot of our listeners may be reading books or set in their old ways of how to keep their employees happy and that may not be the case anymore.

Lynn: They need to evolve that thinking,

- Of course.

- is what you are saying.

Ash: Yes.

Robert: Even I had to do that because I was really shocked when I found out that our employees valued time off more than additional pay.

Lynn: Right.

Ash: Yeah. In fact, I think there was this article that I read where working from home, aside from just the COVID factor, especially for people that have long commutes, the way they're looking

at it is, for every hour that they're saving in commute time per day, they're equaling that to a pay bump of \$10,000 a year.

Lynn: Oh, interesting.

Robert: Okay.

- Wheels are turning.

- Yes they are.

Robert : Being the accountants we are.

Lynn: Yeah. So, yeah, we're in the accounting industry. And so we know that the people that we're looking to hire are really keying in on the remote work possibility because we can work remotely, right? We have all the technology in place and we don't need to be sitting at a patient side to do our job. And since we're all introverts, we just say, "Thank goodness for that." But obviously that's not what dental office employees are gonna be looking for as their primary benefit. So, then I can't really switch gears and think. So, then what do they want?

Ash: Number one thing that I have here on my list is assistance with childcare.

Robert: And I hear a lot of complaints that, you know, some people say, "Well, I can't afford to work" "because it's not even covering my childcare", or, "It's barely covering my childcare."

Ash: Right?

Robert: Or I can't find anyone for childcare. That's the one now. What do you suggest people do to mitigate that concern?

Ash: So, one thing that can be done is a group of companies together can get in touch with local daycare centers and come up with some kind of a group plan where the rates would be cheaper for these employers to pay. And what they can do is on their payroll, they can match a certain percentage of whatever they're paying through the payroll to that daycare center. So, that's one option.

Lynn: Very creative.

Ash: That's the era we were living in. You have to be so, so creative.

Lynn: Yes.

Ash: The other thing could be a direct compensation. The employee comes in, you know, when they fill out the form and they say they have kids that are minors that need daycare assistance, or that need to be in daycare because she's here working or he's here working, at that point in a small percentage or a flat amount can be paid out to them as part of their compensation.

Robert: Well, and there is a Dependent Care Assistance program that you can institute through your payroll company for up to \$5,000 a year, where it's tax-free with the exception of payroll taxes, if it's paid for reimbursement of childcare cost.

Ash: So, it's not just helping out your employees, but also there's some tax benefits there. There are.

Lynn: For the employees, yeah. Okay. That one seems fairly reasonable.

- Right.

- I can get on. I can see that. I can get on board with that.

Robert: I think one of the other things that a lot of people seem to be looking for that I keep reading about is culture. And that's something you don't see on a resume. You know, that's not possible, but new employees are looking for a certain culture in a business or in a practice, you know, how do they determine what that's going to be like? Whether they're going to fit in or not?

Ash: That's actually an excellent, excellent question. And a lot of times, you know, employers think that it's a one-way street where they think we need to evaluate this potential employee when they're applying, if they fit into our culture.

Lynn: Right.

Ash: But one thing you have to keep in mind is that the employees are doing the exact same thing. And one way to kind of depict what your culture is like, is through the resources that are out there. So, if you have a LinkedIn page for your company, make sure the description in your bio mentions all those things that are in addition to the services that you're providing. So, you'll notice that a lot of companies are mentioning if they're very actively involved with humanitarian work, 'cause that's important to a lot of employees. They want to know that the company that they're working for is also helping out the community. Mention other things, like for instance, if a company offers half-day Fridays, we can promote a healthy work-life balance.

Lynn: Right.

Ash: So, these kinds of resources help the employee determine whether the company offers things that are important to a working culture for them. The other thing, and this is actually more prevalent amongst new hires is word of mouth. If your employees feel good working there, guess what? They're going to tell their friends and family that, "I love my work", this is what they do. And from that person, other people are also gonna know. So, the spread is actually happening within that same industry.

Lynn: Okay. That surprises me.

Robert: And then, I know there are also companies out there, independent companies that will help you determine whether that person's a match,

Ash: Absolutely.

Robert: through personality test or a personality trait assessments or something like that. Do those things really work?

Lynn: I highly recommend those kinds of services. They've been an invaluable tool for us. Best team we've ever had, once we started implementing those types of resources. I just can't really recommend that enough because you know who you're getting before they start, before they ever come into your office. You know what their traits are gonna be and how they're gonna operate under certain situations.

Robert: You know what to expect.

Lynn: You know what to expect, you know what motivates them, you know what turns them off, you know what kind of training and leadership and role modeling they need and what they respond to. So, really gives you a big advantage from the front end.

Robert: And are these services expensive?

Lynn: Yes.

Robert: Well, but are they really, when you take into consideration the cost of turnover?

Lynn: Right. No, it is way more expensive to train and to hire, hire and train a new employee. And there are costs that are hard to quantify, but lost time and training time and all of those things, it is always more expensive to hire a new employee than to retain a current employee, provided that employee is not causing a toxic environment. That's game-changer.

Robert: And I think based on our experience, I think that even the fee that we pay, I think, it's still less than you would pay an agency if they were placing someone with you.

Lynn: Right and I think I've heard the same thing from my dental clients, but you just don't get quality people from those agencies. If you do, you're lucky. If it's worked out for you, that's great. It has never worked out for us, has never worked out for any of the clients. I've asked specifically. It's always better when you find them through traditional methods, rather than an agency in my experience.

Robert: Well, I know another thing that I've read about a lot of acts that you've got on your list is mental health concerns.

Ash: Oh yes. That's a big topic. It has been for a while, just that right now, it's out there in public knowledge that this is something that shouldn't be taken lightly. It should be taken into consideration, not just for employers, but regarding maintaining a healthy working environment. Because, specifically with COVID, you know, people have gone through a lot, things that maybe like someone from my generation, we haven't been through before. Being under lockdown for so long, you know, cooped up. And it just, your mind runs amok, basically.

Lynn: Well, it's not a healthy environment. We were not meant to be alone and isolated. And it's wreaked havoc. Depression rates are through the roof compared to what they were. And so it's a real thing. It's not something that should be sloughed off or taken lightly. It has to be addressed. And it's good that they're seeking help, but what can the employer do?

Ash: That's a very, very good question. So, there are actually several things that an employer can do. Let's talk about some of the easier things where it's not really going to cost you anything.

Lynn: Okay.

Ash: The number one thing would be to make sure that the environment, the working environment is inclusive.

Lynn: Okay.

Robert: In other words, a lot of times, various businesses and companies, they have a tier system where you have the upper Robertagement people that will never talk with the people that are below them. And what it does is especially, if you have a portion of your employees working remotely, there's a disparity, there's no harmony, there's some synchronization, basically.

Lynn: Right.

Ash: So, when you try to, let's say actively have certain types of procedures in place, such as maybe having a meeting twice a month, or some of the upper Robertagement people checking up on all the employees, they feel like, okay, they're on equal plane. And earlier, when I was talking about being in a lockdown, our mindset has changed. A lot of us have actually become what they're calling 'over thinkers', if there is no open channel of communication, that person who's not in the know, they have a lot of things going on in their head.

Lynn: They do.

ASh: And they don't know where this is gonna go. And a lot of times they make certain moves where it wasn't really needed.

Lynn: Right. They make assumptions and scenarios in their head. If they don't know the answer, they're going to assume an answer. And it may not be in your interest. It may be, "this isn't the place for me", when in reality, all they had to do was find out.

Ash: Yeah.

Lynn: But it shouldn't be on them to find out, it needs to be on everybody to be communicating,

Ash: Absolutely.

Lynn: and have some open roads there. So, you're saying, simple conversations will mitigate some of that.

Ash: Yeah, just twice a month, check in with everyone. So, maybe someone on your team that's more vocal, is conversational, can go up and check up on everyone, just find out what's going on. Doesn't have to be work-related. Just, what's going on in life.

Robert: Well, I think that's really the responsibility of the business leader to initiate that. And, you know, so in a dental office, it'd be up to the dentist to, you know, sort of, talk to each employee during the course of a month or a week or get to know them a little bit better and make sure that they're, you know, mentally healthy.

Ash: Right. Exactly! And then on that note, there's also another thing that you guys can do, fairly simple. Maybe do, once a quarter survey with all the employees and just ask them about what kind of improvements can be made in the workspace. Some of them may have good ideas, some of them may not, but the idea behind it is not actually the feedback, it's actually to let them feel like, they have some control and power.

Lynn: They have some say.

Ash: That they have some say and that's very important. Again, it goes back to the mindset. How they go about their work environment from a culture standpoint.

Lynn: Right.

Robert: When you asked for their opinion, and so you're valuing their input.

Lynn: Right. And you would be surprised some of the things that they want that are minor. That you're like, "I can totally do that". Like, I know in our office, it was asking for a Keurig. It wasn't a big thing. We were like, "yes, we can". "If that's going to make you guys happy," "we can totally get a Keurig." But it's not always these pie in the sky things where you're like, "well, we can't do that". You'll be surprised what they asked for. It's not always huge.

Ash: But you know, we did draw the line at the margarita machine.

Lynn: Yes.

Ash: And then, you know, speaking of such perks, there are certain perks that maybe the employer can implement themselves without even getting the feedback. One of them being a quiet room, a room for meditation, some quiet time and more importantly, just make sure that the drinks that are available there, they don't have caffeine. So, there's tea and other kinds of things, positive affirmation wall hangings, you know, a tablet maybe with some meditation apps, like Calm or Headspace, maybe put a room divider in the same room with a prayer space for the people that are more spiritually inclined. And then a few books which are promoting positive health and mindfulness. You'd be surprised how far these things go.

Lynn: That is a really creative idea. That's not something I would ever have considered.

Ash: And then another easy thing. And this can go from having a small budget to a really large budget, it will really depend on the person who's going to implement this, is a occasion based care packet. I know a lot of companies are already doing it.

Lynn: I have seen this. Yeah.

Ash: Who doesn't like any presents, you know. SO, all of us unemployed comes back to his or her desk and there's a tiny little package there. And when they open it up, it could be something useful in there. I mean, I know early in the year, some of the companies were sending out masks, thermometers, gloves.

Lynn: Hopefully we're beyond that, at this point.

Ash: But you know, these days it could be anything. I mean, stress balls, something. I know a lot of people like using the Pomodoro method of doing their work. So, maybe a ticker clock, a timer in there can go along.

Lynn: Love it. It's wheels are turning.

Robert: Yeah, I don't know what else to say. Interesting!

Lynn: Well, I'm just thinking of what I can implement. What care packages I can get for the office. This is fabulous.

Ash: So, these are some of the non-compensation perks that can go a long way and these are actually things that people look for. Think about Google. I have a cousin who works there and he was telling me that they have this break room called, 'The Caffeine Shot' break room. So, apparently you're supposed to take a shot of espresso before you go in there and then you take a nap. By the time the caffeine kicks in, your 15 minute nap is over, you get up and you go back to work.

Lynn: That is my kind of place.

Robert: I thought maybe the walls were padded and you go to the cafe and go and bounce off the walls.

Lynn: So, nothing better than a 15 minute power nap. I am all for the power nap.

Ash: These days specially, with the market being the way it is, where it's kinda, hard to find employees, to keep them, because you know, you have, as you mentioned earlier, recruiting agencies that are poaching them, your other comrades might be poaching.

Lynn: They are, yeah. The bigger practices are poaching, hygienists, especially left and right. They're getting texts from the bigger practices, shall we say, "Come work for us." There are signing bonuses. There's this and that. But you're saying it's not all about the compensation.

Ash: Correct, yes.

Robert: I think a lot of times compensation is sort of, a temporary thing. You know, you get signing bonus,

Lynn: Right.

Robert: then wow, a month later it's like, "did I really make a good decision?"

Lynn: Right, because that's gone and then there's quotas on your work or the schedule's not full. So, they don't have you come in and not paying.

Robert: May be you don't have as Roberty hours.

Lynn: Right. Yeah. So, it can really backfire.

Robert: In fact, it wouldn't be beyond my imagination for some of the large organizations to pay a signing bonus and then make sure they don't work enough hours, you know, or to make up the bonus.

Lynn: Right.

Ash: So, could happen.

Robert: What else do you have, Ash? Did we talk about this a second one on your list?

Ash: That one's an easy one. So, having a board where the employees or anyone really within the practice are free to write whatever they want and you can call this board 'thought of the day'. It doesn't even have to be a thought. It can be a drawing. It could be anything.

Lynn: We have a drawing of the pumpkin on ours, by someone who cannot draw.

Ash: I could tell it was a pumpkin.

Lynn: That would be me. So, I can say that.

Robert: Well, on one side, we need a drawing, on the other side, we need comments.

Lynn: Yes. Critiques, or at least commentary. This is a pumpkin.

Robert: Or what do you think this is? And what does that do? Does that promote mental health or does it just?

Ash: It's just allowing them the space to be expressive because you have to understand one thing, not all huRobert beings use left side of their brain. A lot of people are more dominant on their right side. So, allowing them the space to be creative and expressive.

- Okay.

- Okay. So, it makes the work environment that they actually like versus one that just pays the bills.

Ash: Correct.

Robert: I can see it being a fun activity. It's something different in it, it does give them a opportunity to be, to show some creativity.

Ash: Right.

Lynn: Right. And we're talking dental practices, right. Everybody in our office is analytical and the creativity, let's say, runs thin, but that's not the case in a dental office. You've got all different types. And so I could see that being, you know, valuable there and it's such a tiny thing.

Ash: Yeah, absolutely. And I think they even have paint these days where that can be used as, you know, something you can write on, like maybe dedicate a wall just painted by that kinda paint.

Lynn: Oh yeah, you can paint it with chalk paint or whiteboard paint.

Robert: Right, right, right, right. You know, I can see a dental office also, maybe getting some of their patients involved in something like this, you know, and that would be fun. I mean, it would create something in a practice that not all practices had to offer.

Ash: Right and it's interesting that you actually mentioned that. I mean, if you ever look at the Google reviews of some of our clients that are doing really well, from a review standpoint, you'll notice that the first thing that these people mention of, is how beautiful their waiting room is or what are some of the out of the ordinary things that they're offering there while they're waiting. So, maybe a PlayStation or an arcade machine, or, you know, some of them are very descriptive. It's like, "oh, it's so rustic and farmhousey",

Lynn: So, it's not, 'it was really great dentistry'?

Ash: That Actually comes second or third.

Lynn: Right. Because you can get good dentistry at a lot of different places, but the uniqueness of the environment that you're in, is what makes it not so horrible 'cause you know, nobody wants to go get dentistry, as you all know.

Robert: Make them feel comfortable first.

Lynn: Exactly.

Ash: Right. Right, right, right, right.

Robert: So, when you say what you just said, the vision I get is a fireplace in the reception area.

Lynn: That would make you feel more comfortable.

Ash: The other day I actually found out that on Netflix there's a show, which is not really a show, but all it depicts is a fireplace.

Lynn: Yes. I have seen that.

Ash: I actually thought that was very, very creative, especially for people that don't have fireplaces, like me, I don't have it, but sometimes I wanna hear a fireplace, turn it on.

Robert: It makes a crackling sound.

Ash: Yes, it does. And depending on, how good your surround sound system is, it can feel and sound really, really real.

Robert: Okay.

Ash: Well maybe not the feeling part, 'cause.. But it'll definitely sound very real.

Lynn: I love them. I'm surprised by them, like this is what the employees want, it's weird to me but when you talk about them, they make sense.

Robert: Well, and maybe this is related to the thought of the day board, but we sort of, have a board in our office that's called, 'what if we could?'.

Lynn: What if we could?

Robert: Yeah, and we have ideas, random, anonymous, more or less, ideas that we've implemented a lot of those over the years.

Lynn: That's where the Keurig came from. That's where some change in hours came from. So, yeah, so they're big things and they're small things. And we can't do them all but there's a voice. They have a voice.

Robert: I think we even did, what, the dog at the office day or pet at the office.

Lynn: Yeah, bring your dog to work day. Probably, not okay for a dental practice but we did bring your dog to work day.

Robert: Okay. Great ideas. So, do you promise if I implement all of these, that the employees will be happy?

Ash: Oh yeah, absolutely. I know for a fact that a lot of the perks that we currently have in the office is something that our employees really, really enjoy.

Lynn: That makes me happy because we've worked really hard to make it an enjoyable place.

Ash: Right, and they do definitely see that and understand it.

Robert: All right. Outstanding. Thanks for your ideas today.

- Yes. Thank you, Ash.

- Do we have anything else?

Ash: Sure. No, that'll be all. I mean, unless our listeners can come up with more ideas,

Lynn: Yeah, that would be great. If you could share them, we would love to hear them.

Robert: And how would they do that?

Ash: Of course. Yes. So, feel free to reach out to us via email. The email is info@eandassociates.com and the 'and' is actually spelled out, a, n, d. And we look forward to hearing from you guys. So, till the next time, have a good one.

Lynn: Great. Thank you.

Robert: Thank you.

Narrator: Thanks for listening today. Be sure to subscribe to 'Beyond Bitewings' on your favorite podcast platform. For more info, you can follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, or reach out to us on our website. You can also shoot us an email at info@eandassociates.com.