

# Sharing the same goal

At last year's Dentistry Awards, Absolute Dental swept all before them by claiming the Best Team and Best Practice awards for their region, South West & Wales. Here they tell *Dentistry* magazine what that success has meant to them

It's one thing knowing what makes a good team, it's another putting that knowledge into practice and actually making it work.

Emma John, practice manager of Absolute Dental in Devon, is in no doubt as to what the secret to good teamwork is. 'Clear leadership,' she says, eager to follow with more detail. 'You need to be honest, share very clearly your vision with the team. Accept that not everyone will share the same beliefs and values as you do – however, keep your focus and don't allow them to cloud your judgment. Not every decision you make will be an easy one, but to procrastinate and not make one is not going to move the team forward.'

It's an attitude that has served the Absolute team well, resulting in a motivated workforce and, ultimately, satisfied customers.

When asked what her and her team enjoy most about working in a dental practice, Emma is quick to invite answers from her colleagues.

Dental nurse Diane says: 'I enjoy the contact with different people, both clients and colleagues. I appreciate

how we can change a patient's pre-conception of how dentistry can be.'

Fellow nurse and radiographer Sophie said: 'It's the friendly atmosphere and good relationships between the dentist and nurses that I enjoy. Everybody is approachable. I like the different stages in making dentures and love seeing the end result as they can make such a difference to a patient's life. I love seeing the patient delighted with the results.'

Clinical director Rhodri, Emma's husband, remarked: 'The strength of the team and smooth running of the practice allows me the freedom to do what I do best and concentrate 100% on delivering excellent dentistry and complex treatments.'

Dentist Ruth added: 'I appreciate the opportunity to make people smile and being able to care for my patients in a great environment supported by the best team.'

And as for Emma: 'I love business development, planning, setting new goals for myself, the business and the team. Feeling excited at the challenges that lie ahead both on a personal level and for my team.'



## An unforgettable night

This close-knit cohesion that the team operates under made it an extra special evening last December as they could all celebrate together when their name was read out during the awards ceremony at the Athena in Leicester.

'We were delighted,' Emma said. 'We had experienced an unusually difficult year at Absolute, faced several challenges and the business had undergone some significant changes. The team kept its focus however and came through bigger and better than ever before. The awards came at a perfect time to celebrate all we believed in.'

And becoming double winners was the last thing they expected. 'We were competing as part of a huge region, South West and Wales,' Emma adds. 'We secretly hoped that we would be successful in one of the categories, and believed we were worthy of winning, however we were completely surprised to win both.'

And the patients – the beneficiaries of Absolute's effective teamwork, of course – were delighted to hear of the practice's double success.

'Our patients always seem very proud of us and we want them to feel that they belong to Absolute, so they too share in some of our success,' Emma said. 'Many of them seemed as delighted as we were.'

It was Diane who put the portfolio together ahead of the entry deadline for the awards. She told *Dentistry*: 'The nomination was limited to 1,000 words, which was easy to write as there was so much information available that I wanted to share with the judges.'

'I additionally had a variety of testimonials from our clients who have enjoyed the Absolute experience. The team here were also very happy to include personal statements as we feel lucky to be involved in such an exciting team.'

## Training boost

Winning at the Dentistry Awards always provides a perfect



Party time: The team celebrate after their double success at last December's awards ceremony

opportunity for a practice to impress potential future customers by showcasing their victory, not just with a certificate in the waiting room but also in practice newsletters and the website.

But in Absolute's case it has also boosted another side of its business. Emma told us: 'Absolute Dental is unique in many ways, one of which being that not only are we a dental practice but we also deliver training to both reception teams and nurses on a national level. The award has highlighted the training side of things fundamentally and raised our profile considerably in this area.'

Indeed, Emma, working with Diane, runs Absolute Dental Training, a business resource that delivers in-house bespoke team training through a series of workshops, training days and seminars. With teamwork being at the forefront of Emma's workplace philosophy, it's no surprise that the courses are proving a worthwhile resource for dental teams.

'All too often a dental team is made up of individuals working very hard but remaining isolated in their own particular field of work within the practice,' she says. 'The links between the team members are often underdeveloped or missing and the failure to integrate systems into work practice can be counterproductive. Without effective systems a team often loses sight of its vital need to communicate and as a consequence they are not able to realise their own personal potential or to share in the success of the practice.'

'Absolute Dental Training focuses, nurtures and develops the whole dental team, although the emphasis remains with those working at the front desk. Our training examines and identifies areas requiring improvement and inspires the members of the team to commit to team action.'

It's clear that everyone in the Absolute Dental team is pulling in the same direction, from the top of the business to the bottom. This is reflected in the relationship between Emma and Rhodri. Both have been chasing the same goal for some time, as Emma explains: 'We both knew from quite an early age that this was the profession we both wanted to be in, albeit that we were interested in very different areas of dentistry. So we always had an end in mind whilst at school and university.'

'Of course there have been numerous hurdles to deal with over the years, but we have always had a very clear focus of what we ultimately wanted to achieve.'

'I believe there is a very clear link between success and having a passion for what you do.'



Back to work: The Absolute Dental team at their practice in Devon



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