Whether you are a brand new doctor or a doctor who’s been in practice for 40 years, managing staff has always been one of the most complex elements of having a successful practice. I’ve seen skilled physicians practically do surgeries with their eyes closed and yet struggle on a regular basis when it comes to managing their staff. That’s because, unlike surgery, dealing with people is not a science. Let’s take communication, for example, which is a huge part of management. It has principles, but it does not have a regimented set of exact procedures and so even if you do something the same way each time, you can expect a variety of outcomes depending on who you communicate with. Everyone is wired differently. In this article, I can give you (at the very least due to space restrictions) the abridged version of what that class might be like, if one indeed did exist. Consider this the Staff Cliffs Notes but I can tell you, in reality, there are no shortcuts, so pay very close attention and get all the added information you can afterwards to follow up. You may not think so right now…but you will need it.

**Chapter I: About the Course**

There are three very important learning objectives of this course:

1) Realize that the staff you choose can make or break your practice and as such you should take your selection process very seriously. Don’t rush through it. Hire people with the expectation that they will stay with you until you retire, then treat them right so they do.

2) Communicate with your staff regularly and train them well. They are not mind-readers and you cannot expect anything from them that they don’t know or were never taught.

3) Learn how to maximize their productivity by delegating. If given the opportunity and the right tools to perform, they can significantly contribute to the revenue of the practice.

**Chapter II: Preview into Chapter Summaries**

**A) Recruiting** – When placing your ad, don’t concentrate as much on “skill;” you can always teach the right person how to do something. Look for someone with a good personality and attitude; a people person, self-motivated, secure and accountable.

**C) Orientation and Training** – Review policies, practice vision and goals, job descriptions and expectations. Teach them about the podiatry profession, the podiatrist – they will be spokespeople to your patients. Telling is not teaching – they will only learn it and apply it if they understand it. Provide them with healthy feedback and encourage their growth.
D) Scope of Practice – Since a podiatric medical assistant has no formal scope of practice, you are ultimately accountable for everything they do. Make sure you delegate only those tasks that (after training) you are confident they can perform. There will be some tasks you’ll feel only YOU are capable of performing; however, think twice. If properly taught, there is plenty they can learn and do in the way of patient care, competently, without crossing any lines. Learn and memorize this…it is possible for you both to simultaneously, generate revenue for the practice.

E) Retaining Staff – Lack of appreciation is the #1 reason most employees leave their jobs. Offer “thank yous” often, but be sincere and be specific. Be honest, be fair and above all, be an example for them. Think of someone you enjoyed working for…then be that person to your staff. I always appreciated a former boss of mine who said, “Lynn I will never ask you to do anything I wouldn’t do myself.” It said so much about his character.

Chapter III: Analysis

The bottom line is that when you opened your own practice, you not only acquired the title of “Doctor”… but also of “Boss.” That doesn’t have to be a dirty word and dealing with employees does not have to be as difficult as it is made out to be. In essence, it’s dealing with human behavior; a skill you should master for your employees, your patients, your family, your life! Employees want to be properly managed, but not micro-managed. It is not your job to make sure they have fun at work; it IS your job to create an environment that allows them to have fun and want to come back every day. When your staff enjoys what they do, they will be proficient at it and when they are proficient at it, the rewards bounce back to you.

Chapter IV: Critical Learning Points

- Hire the best people you can; good staff is priceless.
- However you treat them, you can expect to be treated in return.
- You can’t change personalities; you can only change the way you influence them.
- Salary should be fair and match the job description… Keep in mind you get what you pay for.
- Providing challenge and reward for employees will create a positive learning environment.
- You can’t have a successful practice without a good infrastructure.
- Before firing someone, consider that they are not properly matched to their job description and try repositioning them.

Chapter V: Study Help

A) Consider visiting other podiatry offices and observe staff in action. Ask them questions, learn their value.
B) Visit the www.soshms.com website and facebook page for tips and guidelines.
C) Join associations, attend lectures (bring your staff!), read blogs, sign up for newsletters, research the many available resources that will help develop your management skills.
D) Take a one day management class…then take it again every year until you “get it!”
E) Have fun! Life is so much better when we take the time to laugh and enjoy all that it offers.

For more information on the services that SOS can offer to you and your practice, please email info@soshms.com to set up a FREE 30 minute consultation. We want to help optimize YOUR practice success!