

Six Essential Elements in Finding the Right Consultant for Your Practice

By Risa Simon, CMC

You've made a critical decision. It's time to change.

You're not happy with the way your practice is running. Production is holding for the most part, but your overhead has increased and you're working harder than ever before. New patients and case acceptance seem to be at a lull. Staff is complaining there is never enough time in a day to accomplish all that needs to be done. You're trying to beat the clock, but you continue to run over schedule. You've noticed that your fuse is much shorter than it use to be.

In fact, you've caught yourself snapping at your employees. To make matters worse, they're snapping back! You'd rather not continue down this road, so at the end of what appears to be the worst day in your practicing career, you write yourself a note: "hire a consultant!"

It would be nice to think that your problems could go away that easily. The fact is that your work has just begun. You must first select a qualified person that will work well with you and your team to get the job done. It's important to realize that the process of selecting the right person can be more important than the actual improvement process. In fact, selecting the wrong person could actually cause more problems — which will cost your business much more than the revenue you perceive you are currently losing. So be certain that your selection process is deliberate and well thought out.

Finding the Right Consultant:

1 Did the applicant ask questions about my business and sincerely try to understand what I am trying to achieve, or are they simply selling me on their services?

2 Will the consultant take the time to analyze my business operations and compare their findings to what I am trying to achieve?

3 Will the consultant see if my goals are ambitious enough, realistic and obtainable?

4 Is the consultant familiar with the software pro-grams and technology I am currently using or planning to implement?

5 Will I receive a written agreement detailing the area of focus, amount of time and number of visits included in the total fee, and the financial arrangements expected? Am I able to cancel my agreement at any time, for any reason providing I've paid in full for all completed work? (The consultant should also embrace this freedom, as no one wants to work with unhappy clients.)

6 Is the consultant willing to learn our “change curve”

and act as a coach in an ongoing relationship to ensure we take the necessary actions to achieve our goals? Will we receive follow-up reports or “punch lists” after each session so we can become account-able for change?

Now that you know the six critical factors for selecting the right consultant, you can move forward with confidence. As you do, be sure to continually monitor your readiness for change. Simply saying you're ready or writing down your goals on paper may not be sufficient enough to ensure a sound return on your investment.

A smart business owner realizes that a commitment to change is only the beginning of a series of events to follow.

Reprinted with Permission. Taken from Simon Says Solutions and the TEAMQUEST NEWSLETTER

Risa Simon is a certified management consultant who has earned the mark of CMC from the Institute of Management Consultants USA which represents evidence of the highest standards of consulting and adherence to the ethical canons of the profession. Risa is also the founder and president of Simon Says Solutions, located in Scottsdale, Arizona. Her firm specializes in a full range of consulting and coaching services & educational seminars. Risa has developed and published several books and videotape programs on team efficiency, customer service, communication and OSHA compliance. Risa continues to consult nationwide and is a featured speaker for several major dental associations, including the ADA. To inquire about Risa's coaching and consulting services call 480-575-9353; email risa@simonsaysolutions.com or visit www.simonsaysolutions.com.