

## EP. 48 Interview with Hygiene Team Leader, Erica Fowler

In this episode we learn from Erica Fowler what it takes to lead a hygiene team of 11 people, the importance of a standard of care, and why we can't be scared of failure.

**Q: Tell us a little bit about your practice.**

A: We are located in Lansing, Michigan. We have 11 hygienists soon to be 12. We are growing and growing!

**Q: How did you transition from a hygienist to the hygiene team leader?**

A: The doctors have always been told that they need to have leadership and it was time to submit to that. I was offered the position based on my abilities to move forward with things. I'm a quick start and I like to develop new strategies and they saw that in me. I've been the hygiene team leader for 3 years. We've been with the Scheduling Institute for 5 years and we've gone 5x a couple of times since the practice began and we are going a couple more.

**Q: What are some strategies you've put in place that has allowed your hygiene department to grow?**

A: When I first joined the practice, we had no strategy. It was 'do your own thing' and there was no standard of care. Every hygienist did things a little bit differently. The first thing I implemented was getting everyone on the same page. The triangle of influence became a big part of our exams. We implemented a periodontal program. We created a hygiene department manual and set expectations and gave ownership of different areas of the practice. Along the way there was some big stepping stones and stumbling blocks. That was part of the growth. When you start seeing stumbling blocks that means you are doing something right. It means things are changing and change is what's going to drive everything forward.

**Q: What are some of the numbers you've hit?**

A: The hygiene department itself set a goal for 1.5 M just for hygiene. This year we are going to blow that out of the water. We just broke down the walls and built more opps. We are going to readjust our goals. We are averaging \$135k - \$160k a month in hygiene.

**Q: Do you have trainings in your office?**

A: We have the whole shebang. We've done every training and we'll do them again because things change. We need refreshers every year. We get re-motivated. We start to decline and then we have another training and get excited again.

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**Q: What are some ways you celebrate wins?**

A: We have monthly bonuses based on our individual collections. If we hit our end of year goal, then we get a significant bonus and celebration. We do Dentistry from the Heart. He throws us tailgate parties and party buses to the Detroit Tiger's games. Having a big group function is nice.

**Q: What do you think has been your greatest challenge leading such a big team?**

A: Coming in blind. I knew I had a great ideas and I would keep trying new things. Some things didn't work and we would readjust. Getting more clarity on how to be a team leader will be so beneficial to me. I've been going in blindly, but listening to podcasts and reading articles and just do it. Checking numbers and showing the hygienists their growth is huge. I implemented a hygiene team lead assistant and she is pushing me in different areas that t I didn't see.

**Q: Is there one piece of advice for listeners on what you've learned as a hygiene team leader?**

A: If you have an idea, you need to put it in action, communicate it with the team, and create incentives with new changes. Keep them motivated along the way. If you fail, you just try again and readjust. Don't stop! Sometimes it's hard to keep motived, but have trainings every quarter and move forward with new thing all the time. You can't be scared to fail!