



HEARTLAND DENTAL

BUILDS A FOUNDATION OF INNOVATION

Learn how a Regional Director of Operations and a Regional Manager of Operations from Heartland Dental have embraced new technology in their region and developed a culture that supports ongoing innovation.

Todd McKnight, Regional Director of Operations (RDO) at Heartland Dental, isn't one to shy away from implementing new technology at his offices. "We do a lot of testing in our county in Oklahoma," McKnight reveals. "What got you here won't get you to the next phase. We want to try new things and develop new items."

Along with McKnight's Regional Manager of Operations (RMO), Michelle Ameen, the two Heartland Dental leaders are strong proponents of not only trying new technology, but also leveraging it.

While sitting down with Call

Box's Director of Consulting, Katie Lorenc, on a recent episode of [Call Box Dialed In](#), McKnight and Ameen share their best practices for creating and promoting a culture of innovation among their teams.

ENSURING A SOLID FOUNDATION

Over the years, McKnight has learned that technological innovation is best rolled out and supported when he has a strong foundation. Having the right resources from an operational and personnel perspective allows McKnight to confidently enact change and bring innovation to each of his offices. Once the

fundamentals are in place, McKnight can then fine-tune his strategy as needed. Furthermore, McKnight understands that having the right team is critical to properly carrying out innovative strategies and attaining results.

"Change comes from needing the invention," McKnight states. "That's where new inventions come from. When we have struggles, we're willing to think outside the box and try new things. I'm able to do that because I have a strong team I trust and put a lot of trust into."

Armed with the resources to support innovation, McKnight

is able to lead the charge in testing new technology. With the foundation of support built by Heartland Dental and his own team, McKnight is well-positioned to try innovative systems.

ACHIEVING BUY-IN

One of the most challenging pieces of organizational change is garnering buy-in from teams. Without buy-in, however, most great ideas will never see the light of day. When implementing new technology and enacting change at his offices, McKnight takes an all-inclusive approach that allows everyone on his team the opportunity to speak his or her mind. McKnight values his team's opinion and takes everyone's input seriously.

"My philosophy is that everybody has a voice," McKnight says. "We're all in the seats we're in because of our skills and what we bring – we all have value. So I believe that as we have discussions, we all need to voice our opinions and have the debate. Everyone can talk about it, and then when we leave the room, we have one voice. We come to a term in here; we might argue about it and have discussions, we might be really tired from

it, but when we leave, we're all going to be on the same page and have buy-in. If you don't have a chance to voice your opinion, you're not going to have that buy-in. I want everyone to voice their opinion, share their thoughts, and then we can move on."

Ameen agrees with this approach. While McKnight oversees a group of Regional Managers of Operations, Ameen leads seven Practice Managers of Operations. Her method of obtaining buy-in is very similar to that of McKnight's.

"I can roll out something, get their feedback, and work through those thoughts – their feedback – and bounce ideas off of each other," Ameen explains. "They do have more buy-in, just like Todd was saying. I also have to have believability in what I'm saying; they will see right through it if I don't. Having that passion and believability so they actually know it's genuine."

With a top-down approach, Ameen is able to achieve buy-in by being a proponent for the organization's goals and remaining enthusiastic about the ability to leverage specific technology to attain those goals.



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TODD MCKNIGHT

*Regional Director of Operations,
Heartland Dental*

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION

Heartland Dental utilizes Call Box's technology to gain insight into patient calls and optimize phone handling performance. In doing so, both McKnight and Ameen have developed specific processes to leverage the innovative solution and get their teams ingrained in the data. Making new technology a part of their offices' day-to-day ensures the solution is not only in place, but is also being properly adopted.

"With my offices, it's a really big deal for us to utilize this tool because it's remarkable if it's used correctly," Ameen says. "Our PMOs will sit down at least once a month (twice a month would be ideal) with their business assistants, the forefront of the office that are answering the phones. They go over the results, go over the calls. I mean, we're talking

about in front of everybody. So Suzy Q. could be listening to Sandra Doe and be like, *'Oh my gosh, I sound like that? I could've done that better.'* You game plan together, you strategize together. How could we have done that better?"

"I'm a firm believer that people will do the best they can with the knowledge they have," McKnight adds. "People are trying to do their best. What I like about Call Box is it brings in information and data and puts it in a way we can use it. It makes us aware of things we didn't even know, like when our phone is being answered and when it is not. It brings to light things we can now discuss and do better because we know better."

What's more, McKnight and Ameen have developed healthy competition among their offices to achieve both

buy-in and results with Call Box. By setting lofty goals and sharing the hard data provided by Call Box, McKnight and Ameen are motivating their teams to get more involved with the technology and utilize it to see success.

LOOKING AHEAD

Heartland Dental provides the ideal setting for McKnight and Ameen to implement innovative technology and try new inventions. With a strong foundation of support, buy-in from their teams, and an intent to truly utilize the technology at hand (and use it well), McKnight and Ameen have developed a culture that supports change. As the dental industry continues to evolve and give way to more innovation than ever before, the two leaders are poised for success when it comes to new technology.

