



every new employee at 30, 60, and 90 days after hire based on a set of benchmarks specific to his or her position. These written evaluations ensure that the new person has learned and internalized all the relevant tasks in the allotted time frame.

To develop a training program, it is first necessary to identify trainers in every department including billing, marketing, front desk, and ophthalmic assisting. Each trainer is committed to both teaching new employees and tracking their progress. If employees do not meet the established benchmarks, the introductory period is extended one time, from 90 to 180 days. If the employee is still unable to meet the set benchmarks in a satisfactory manner within that time, he or she is terminated.

In addition to the training that takes place in the first 90 days, at Matossian Eye Associates we assign every new employee a mentor for his or her first year. The mentor's role is to shepherd the trainee and to help the new employee feel connected to the team. Because mentors are asked to do more work, we reward them financially with a bonus every quarter during their yearlong mentorship. Once new team members reach the 1-year mark, they are generally well integrated into the staff.

Training is important not only to make sure that employees execute all assigned tasks correctly, but also to ensure that their contributions help maximize the practice's revenue. A well-trained, efficient scribe, for example, can help improve patient flow so that more patients can be seen in a day. If just one additional patient is seen per day, on average, an additional \$40,000 of revenue can be generated for the practice over the span of a year (Figure 1).

Training also helps to ensure that employees are asking the right questions for coding and reimbursement purposes. If technicians have not been trained properly (Figure 2), they

could be missing clues from patients to proceed with point-of-care tests. Asking a patient, "Do you have dry eyes?" may elicit the answer, "No, my eyes are tearing all the time." Rephrasing that question to, "Do your eyes feel tired? Does your vision fluctuate throughout the day?" may elicit a positive response, empowering the technician to proceed with dry eye testing. Tear Osmolarity (TearLab) and/or Inflammadry (Quidel) biomarker testing must be performed before any drops are instilled into the eye. Not only can this information help the eye care provider diagnose the patient's problem, but it can also boost revenue.

**WELL-ROUNDED EMPLOYEES**

In addition to learning their own roles, employees need to be exposed to information within the entire practice for them to feel part the team. Whether someone is working at the front desk, in billing or marketing, or as an administrator, spending time with retina, oculoplastics, glaucoma, cataract, and contact lens specialists helps them become better informed; in turn, they will be able to answer patient questions more accurately and embrace the overall mission of the practice. At Matossian Eye,

we also invite staff to observe live surgery—although some employees pass on that option.

As I alluded to earlier, training benefits not only new employees but also those who have been with the practice for years. For established employees, we call this *staff development*. We dedicate 1 hour each week to staff development and everyone is invited, from the front desk staff to billing, marketing, administrative, and surgical staff.

Coming together to talk about topics ranging from a new medication, to a new procedure, to customer service tips, helps gel the staff into a cohesive team.

Contant emphasis on training also encourages employees to seek certification within their fields (see *Support Certification* for more information).

**MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

Often, people enter midlevel management without having had adequate exposure to management or leadership training. Putting a person into a management position without the requisite skills can be a recipe for dissatisfaction for both the manager and his or her reports.

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TRAINING SCHEDULE														
Staff Member	Screening	OCT	VF	Optos	OPD-III	Cassini	Doctors Allergy	LipiView	Tear Osmolarity	KOWA	Laser Setup	SJO	Omega Quant	IPL Setup
AM		x		x	x	x		x	x		x			
AC	x	x			x			x	x		x	x		x

Figure 2. A training schedule can help to ensure that a technician is familiar with all relevant testing.



## SUPPORT CERTIFICATION

Certification can boost employee skills and help them maintain high standards. Helping your employees attain the relevant credentials can be a worthwhile investment. These include not only the familiar ophthalmic technician, technologist, and assistant certificates, but others for the front of house and back office:

- ▶ COA: certified ophthalmic assistant
- ▶ COT: certified ophthalmic technician
- ▶ COMT: certified ophthalmic medical technologist
- ▶ CPSS: certified patient service specialist (for front desk staff)
- ▶ OCS: ophthalmic coding specialist (for billing staff)

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We help guide our new managers by providing skills training. At Matossian Eye, we have a monthly midlevel management meeting where we discuss leadership topics.

At these meetings, we also review the results of anonymous employee surveys that give us an idea of what our staff members are thinking. If a problem is raised in the survey, we commit to addressing it in the best way we can.

### IT'S ALL SMALL STUFF

To succeed, you *need* to sweat the small stuff—and, after all, it's all small stuff. Make sure your employees are up to snuff and positively represent your brand by taking the time to teach them what you want them to do and how to do it. Identify your trainers, teach leadership, allot adequate time for staff development, and maintain realistic expectations. It's all an investment in building and maintaining your dream team—and one that can be well worth the effort. ■

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