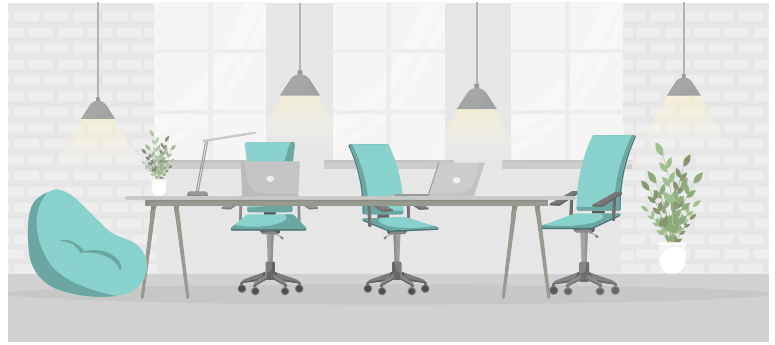


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LCP Dental Team Coaching (formerly Julie Weir & Associates) is recognized as the premier consulting firm specializing in pediatric dentistry since 1996.

Dynamic Workspace Habits That Work

Have you found it is challenging to be as productive as you would like in your workday? Do specific tasks take you or your team longer than they should? It can be frustrating to feel you are not being as productive as you could be, especially if you cannot identify the reason. You may attribute your or your team's insufficient focus to limited capabilities or a lack of knowledge. As we shared in our March article, it may just be that you have not identified your or your team's Working Genius' and how to tap into each person's gifts effectively. Once you have realized your team's Working Genius and utilized their strengths to elevate each individual's productivity in their role, it's time to take it to the next level and evaluate if your workspace is working for you or against you.

There are many reasons your workspace could be impacting your productivity. As you walk through your environment, your mind recognizes cues to previously encountered situations and automatically responds. A cue is a piece of information your senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch recognize in your environment that triggers your brain to predict a reward. The cues you continuously experience prompt your brain to form habits. There are many ways our brains use cues in our day-to-day lives to obtain rewards, whether it is achieving the reward of attention, appreciation, acknowledgment, money, or thousands more. When I wake up (cue), I want to feel alert, so I drink a cup of coffee (reward).

Habits are a routine or practice performed regularly that has become an automatic response to a specific scenario. Our brains are wired to form habits as they provide us with shortcuts to solutions for situations we have previously encountered. Nonconscious habits eliminate the need for our brain to analyze every problem we face as it creates a mental note of, "if this...then that". For example, if you feel anxious and you learn that spending 10-minutes listening to your favorite music helps you feel relaxed and refreshed, your brain remembers it has solved this problem in the past, and now when you feel stressed or overwhelmed, you automatically crave your favorite playlist. According to Jason Hreha, a behavioral scientist, "Habits are simply, reliable solutions to recurring problems in our environment."

The environment where you work could have cues that limit your productivity instead of boosting it. In *Atomic Habits*, James Clear states, "Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behavior." Your behaviors depend on the environment around you, and it is important to work in a space filled with productive cues. Many doctors and team members work in a space that they did not create, and therefore the area is not adequate for them. In other words, your workspace could be making it easy for you to become distracted or lose focus. Are the cues in your workspace that evoke productivity easy to ignore or just not there? You may need to redesign your workspace and make positive and productive signals more obvious. To create a purposeful, productive workspace, consider employing the following tactics:

- **Vision Boards:** The most powerful sense you have is your sight, so use it to your advantage. Do not keep your goals in your mind or tucked away in a notebook; bring them into the light by creating a vision board. Create boards for your team that support the office culture or a goal you are working to achieve. Include a visual of the reward to be given when the plan has been accomplished. If you have a goal for increasing new patients in your practice, add the number of new patients you want to reach as well as the marketing steps you and your team will take to achieve this goal; add photos of gifts you will deliver to referring offices, pictures of school functions and farmers markets where you will hand out promotional items, and inspirational quotes. Encourage each team member to add something to the vision board to help motivate and inspire them to buy into the goal. Create a vision board for your workspace specific to your goals with inspirational and motivational quotes to look at when you need a boost.
- **De-clutter your workspace:** When your desk is clean, organized and everything has its purposeful place, you have designed a stable environment where you can be more efficient and a place where productive habits are easier to form. When your space and mind are clear, you may feel less anxious or overwhelmed, and when stress levels are low, you are likely to be more productive.

- **Reduce interference:** Create a space with limited distractions. Place your office phone on do not disturb when working on tasks that require more tenacity, set office hours with your team, close your office door, keep your cell phone in another room. You may not realize, every buzz on your phone, every time you hear the office phone ring, even if you do not answer, it causes you to lose focus, and it can take up to 20-minutes to reclaim it.
- **One space, one use:** Your workspace is your workspace; if your desk is used only for work, the chances of you becoming distracted is reduced. Do not eat lunch at your desk, check social media on your cell phone while at your desk or use your work computer to check social media or personal emails. When your desk is utilized for only work tasks and projects, you eliminate nonproductive cues.
- **Create Zones:** Rearrange your space and create zones for different tasks. An ample workspace is not necessary to be creative. The left side of my desk is where I will read articles and research; the right side is where I will position my monitor and keyboard to write clinical notes and respond to and send necessary work emails. The table behind my desk is where I will review payroll reports. If you need time to exercise the Genius' of Wonder and Invention, find a space other than your office that is not associated with reports and schedules. Find a larger space in the office or outside that sparks your creativity. If you need to work in your Genius of Discernment, that could be another zone in your workspace or practice. If you need to work in your Working Genius Frustration, find the time where you can work side by side with someone who has that as their Working Genius. Remember one space, one use.
- **Block Schedule:** We may emphasize being available and keeping commitment with our patients or others. We neglect ourselves and then wonder why life is out of balance. Put the oxygen on yourself first. Be proactive and plan the day for efficiency and productivity by creating a block schedule for yourself. Do not let uncertainty or emails run your day. Appoint certain times of day to perform specific tasks such as checking emails and office hours for team members. If your emails come as notifications on your desktop, turn those off to allow for uninterrupted focus productivity. Administrative team members should choose times when the phones are slower to call insurance companies.
- **White Boards:** Set priorities for each day and write them on a whiteboard in your office. Add only the top 3-5 items you must complete that day or week on the board. When you get distracted or find yourself not knowing what to do next, check the board as a reminder of your priorities.

“Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behavior.”

James Clear



A cue sparks every habit, and you are more likely to notice discernable ones. If you wish to form more productive work habits, make the cues obvious in your workspace. Use vision boards, whiteboards, and different areas in your office to your advantage. If you want to eat healthier, add a fruit bowl and nuts to the counter of your breakroom and fill it with fresh produce weekly. Healthy snacks can benefit you and your team as opposed to the habit of grabbing something quick and easy, which is typically processed. High sugar foods that can cause

you to lag later in the day are replaced by the positive visual cue of the fruit on the counter. If you are building a new office, take time to reflect and understand the necessary flow and design your space to work for you instead of against you. Avoid associating circumstances of habits together. As discussed earlier, if your desk is used for multiple nonproductive purposes, such as eating your lunch, and you do not currently have a breakroom, include one in your new office. Be the architect of your environment and create a dynamic workspace that works.

**“The biggest room in the world
is the room for improvement.”**

Helmut Schmidt

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