



No room for doubt

Martin Delahaye explains to Caroline Holland how CODE's management modules give him complete control of his working life

At no time in our interview did Martin Delahaye talk about belief. But reviewing the notes of our conversation later, it was clear that his faith in management structures is absolute, to the extent that it's almost a religious conviction.

He can pinpoint the day exactly when he knew that his Wembley practice had to embark on a process of change. That day was spent in the Royal Marsden Hospital where he was being treated for non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, the form of cancer he was diagnosed with 14 years ago.

He did not want to waste time and decided he would use his hours of inactivity to observe and learn. He wasn't disappointed. He saw the way in which the specialist nurses worked and the thoroughness of their training was obvious. Each knew her or his role and collaborated seamlessly in patient care. He decided he wanted to put managerial structures in place to make his own clinical team as efficient and effective.

There were several important steps on this managerial Road to Damascus. These included a training course, embarking on Investors in People and the appointment of a new firm of accountants. But he is in no doubt that the advice he followed worked supremely well because of the tools he used to support the changes.

Martin has belonged to CODE throughout his career and is Chairman of the Advisory Board. His decision to take apart the Central Dental Practice in Wembley and reboot it with new management systems was the opportunity to use CODE materials. CODE Chief Executive, Paul Mendlesohn, had spent 18 months initially working on the CODE Management Modules and he knew that they were likely to be thorough and practical.

Martin has so far found them infallible. He explains: "The difference between what CODE has produced and everything else is that the CODE modules give you what you need to do. Other guidance explores possibilities but I don't want possibilities, I want action points."

The three additional factors which make CODE's materials invaluable to Martin are that they are always current, they can be customised and they are downloadable. "What I do is download them from the CODE website, adapt them to my practice and then make sure they are accessible to every member of staff. They are a primary resource for me and run everything I do."

One aspect of practice life that has been particularly helped by the Management Modules is staff employment. Martin follows the CODE guidance to the letter and each team member now has a clear idea of their role, regular appraisals and opportunities for training as well as a career development plan.



Central Dental Care
here to make you smile

He has two practices. One in Wembley, called Central Dental Care, where he is a senior partner, and the other is Central Dental in Harley Street, his own domain and a test bed for techniques and materials ultimately transferred out to the larger Wembley practice.

Thanks to the CODE management modules, he runs a tight operation and has a clear understanding at all times of what is being done and by whom. He believes that Central Dental is one of the few practices in the UK where the partners all know the financial position of the practice on any given day.

While Martin works exclusively privately, the practice has a good contract reflected in an NHS footfall of roughly 45 per cent. However, there is excellent take-up of private cosmetic treatments and a lot of in-house referrals to specialists in the team.

On the advice of his accountant, who has been made Finance Director, he has introduced a Board structure to create clear lines of command with each partner responsible for a particular aspect of the Wembley practice. Business personality testing has helped with the allocation of roles so that those who are most alike – and thus most likely to clash – are given areas of responsibility least likely to overlap.

Another development he is proud of is their rapid response to any new finding which can impact the business. For instance, one of the clinicians identified that a material was working less well as a result in the change in formulation and within the day a notice had gone up in the practice announcing a move to a new material.

They constantly look for better and cheaper solutions to every aspect of the practice. Just recently, Martin decided they were spending too much on clinical waste. With the practice handyman, he devised a way of compressing their waste so more went into each bag. This solution was devised and implemented within a matter of weeks.

Martin's appreciation of effective solutions has also led to two initiatives outside his practice of which he is particularly proud. One was setting up www.harleystreet.com, a business to business website promoting referrals to other specialists in Harley Street. The other was working with Medivision to develop 'The Patient Journey to Oral Health'. This is a flow diagram which enables the dentist to give the patient all they need to know about their care and is derived from the treatment plan. 'There was a gap in the market and the Medivision product fills it perfectly'.

He has realised that he gets a lot from involvement in organisations and initiatives which help his colleagues. This means that his support for CODE is ongoing and, based on his gratifying experience, his advocacy of the management modules is unstinting.