

## What Makes an Associateship Work?

The decision to hire an associate is often a difficult one for the dentist and, perhaps, his/her family. The reasons run the gamut from personal/emotional through technological. The technological issues, including practice statistics, staff retention, shared practice management, physical facility and layout, business systems and such, can be worked and generally agreed upon. The emotional issues are much more difficult to address. However, there is no choice except to work the personal/emotional agendas of the dentists involved. Successful associateships *feel* good. Both the junior and senior dentists enjoy peace of mind and a sense of security that comes from having the right person with whom to practice.

Dr. Peter Wylie, a consultant providing advice on business partnerships, suggests a simple exercise for the dentists to help clarify the emotional level of the relationship between prospective associates/partners. He calls his method TRAC -- Trust, Respect, Affection and Confidence.

Think about your prospective associate. Rate him/her in each of these categories according to your perceptions:

1. Trust 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  - If score I gave is less than 10, why?
  - What does the Dr. have to do to get a 10?
  - Do I believe the Dr. could/would make those changes?
  
2. Respect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  - If score I gave is less than 10, why?
  - What does the Dr. have to do to get a 10?
  - Do I believe the Dr. could/would make those changes?
  
3. Affection/Likeability 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  - If score I gave is less than 10, why?
  - What does the Dr. have to do to get a 10?
  - Do I believe the Dr. could/would make those changes?
  
4. Confidence 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
  - If score I gave is less than 10, why?
  - What does the Dr. have to do to get a 10?
  - Do I believe the Dr. could/would make those changes?

The thoughtful answers to these questions will allow the dentist(s) to decide if this is a professional with whom associateship/partnership seems feasible. If so continue discussions; if not, tactfully end them.