

Are your associates unconsciously competent?

As we enter the 3rd financial quarter, it's a great time to engage with your associates and look at any issues, improvements or challenges they may be facing.

As self-employed members of the team, and with HMRC self-employment indicators looming, we often don't appraise our clinician's performance in a way we do with our employed staff.

Visiting many practices has shown me that it is a common, if not, "always one in every practice" scenario, where there is an associate that isn't on board with your patient journey, discounts fees, refers on cases they don't fancy, and sometimes barely generates enough revenue to cover the costs of their surgery.

We too often put up with attitudes or poor work ethics due to being worried about recruitment or employment legalities or we may want to avoid an awkward conversation. In my experience, it's best to embrace that conversation.

I have produced a performer assessment that asks the clinician to reflect on their strengths and

areas for improvement, as well as to understand what the practice expects of them. Asking your associate to use the assessment as a self-appraising tool and then arranging a meeting to go through it is a great, non-awkward conversation starter. It will also give you an insight into where they lay in the realms of conscious incompetence or, hopefully, unconscious competency.

Here are some easy steps:

- Provide associate with a performer assessment document – what do you want to look at? (Or if you would like to contact me, I am happy to share mine with you)
- Ask performer to fill out the assessment
- Arrange a meeting to discuss the assessment results
- Set goals and expectations
- Identify training and development needs
- Give constructive feedback
- Identify how you can support them and what resources they may need
- Establish how the wider team may assist more
- Review
- Review
- Review

Do not waste this opportunity or be put off by a bit of perceived awkwardness and allow heads to be buried, otherwise we might think you are consciously incompetent.

Conscious incompetence is a stage of the Four Stages of Competence, a model that outlines the stages a person goes through as they acquire new skills or knowledge.

The four stages are:

1. Unconscious Incompetence: At this stage, a person is unaware of their lack of skill or knowledge in a particular area. They don't know what they don't know.
2. Conscious Incompetence: In this stage, the individual becomes aware of their lack of skill or knowledge. They recognise the gap between what they know and what they need to know. They recognise their limitations and/or the complexity of a subject.
3. Conscious Competence: As the person continues to learn and practice, they gain competence. However, performing the skill requires conscious effort and attention. They are aware of the steps and details involved in the process.

4. Unconscious Competence: In the final stage, the skill has been mastered to the point where it becomes almost automatic and can be performed without conscious thought.

The term "conscious incompetence" specifically refers to the second stage, where someone is aware of their lack of proficiency in a particular area. This stage is crucial for personal and professional development because it signals the beginning of a journey toward improvement. Recognising one's weaknesses or gaps in knowledge is the first step towards actively seeking to address and improve them. It reflects a level of self-awareness and a willingness to learn and grow. ■

About the author
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Leap into 2024 with BADN

New Year, new start, new President and Executive Committee, new app, new members... there's a lot going on at BADN in 2024!

First of all, we have a new Honorary President – Joan Hatchard; a new Chairman – Michelle Brand; a new President-elect – Preetee Hylton; and a new Treasurer – Ruth Garitty. All took up their posts at BADN's AGM in late November and are looking forward to their two years in office. More info on all the Executive Committee can be found at <https://www.badn.org.uk/NewPublic/NewPublic/Executive-Committee.aspx>.

And, of course, there is our new app which makes accessing the BADN website or reading the British Dental Nurses' Journal much easier when on the move.

Or you can:

- Renew your membership.
- Access Members' Area and BADN Rewards.
- Explore Dynamic News Feed which you can tailor directly to your needs and wants.
- Checkout upcoming events, how to get there, and add them to your schedule.
- Dive into the Resource Library with guides, documents, templates and more.
- Grow your network through our Members directory and in-app messaging.
- Share your knowledge and get involved in different discussions in the Forum.
- Never miss an important update with our Push Notifications

The BADN app is now available for

download on both the Apple Store and Google Play. Current BADN members can then log in using the same username and password as for their BADN member account on the website. Non-members can also use the app with limited access.

- Apple Store: <https://apps.apple.com/app/badn/id6453682869>
 - Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.clowder.badn>
- The providers of our Rewards scheme, Parliament Hill, have recently run a competition for members who have downloaded the app – five members have won a £10 life:style voucher and one lucky member has won a £50 voucher!

In these financially difficult times, we thought we should spread the joy of BADN membership a little – so, now, non-registrant practice managers and receptionists can join BADN as Associate Members, and profit from most of the benefits of membership (www.badn.org.uk/join). Our new(ish) Refer A Colleague scheme means that if current member dental nurses refer their practice manager and receptionist colleagues, both parties receive a £5 credit in their BADN member accounts, which can go towards purchases from our online shop, or their BADN renewal. For more information on the Refer A Colleague scheme, please visit <https://www.badn.org.uk/Member/Refer-a-Colleague.aspx>.

BADN is also supporting the Saving Grace campaign (launched by another publication), whose slogan is "All I Want for Christmas is Fairer Legislation". The campaign is aimed at the GDC, who – once again this year – have been striking off dental nurses (and other members of the dental team) for minor discrepancies in their CPD declarations... Sometimes missing as little as one hour of the 10 required every two subsequent years, or because they have had a real-life event that has prevented them from declaring by the deadline – or sometimes because the GDC won't accept CPD certificates from the NHS because they don't meet the GDC's stringent requirements for CPD certificates. (Even though they are accepted by all other regulators!) Some other associations have apparently declined to support the campaign, presumably for fear of upsetting the GDC – but BADN firmly believes that it is the role of a professional association to do just that when the GDC is in the wrong! You can read more about the campaign, and sign the petition urging the GDC to take a more realistic and sympathetic approach to such minor discrepancies, at <https://www.badn.org.uk/News/All-I-Want-for-Christmas-is-Fairer-Legislation.aspx>, where there is also a link to my article supporting the campaign.

We are also planning to update our systems in the BADN office and – hopefully – introduce Direct Debit payments at some point in 2024. This will make it a lot easier for members to renew their membership. We have been having some problems with the software that collects payments, and plan to change to another company this year, which will also then allow DD payments.

What isn't new in 2024 is that BADN will once again be exhibiting at all the major dental exhibitions – the North of England Show in Manchester on 9 March (<https://dentistry.co.uk/shows/north-of-england-dentistry-show>), Dental Showcase at ExCel on 22-23 March (<https://dentalshowcase.com>), the Dentistry Show at the NEC on 17-18 May (<https://birmingham.dentistryshow.co.uk>) (where we will host the Dental Nurse Forum and the Dental Nurse Lounge), the Scottish Dentistry Show at Braehead on 31 May – 1 June (<https://sdshow.co.uk>) and the London Dentistry Show at ExCel on 4-5 October (<https://london.dentistryshow.co.uk>).

We look forward to seeing you at them! Happy New Year! ■

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