

DC Institute's Associate Development Program Successfully Uses Agile, Traditional Methodologies

DC Institute

Best Unique or Innovative Learning and Development Program

August 2020



Company Background



DC·INSTITUTE

Furthering Excellence in Dentistry

Company-at-a-Glance	DC Institute
Headquarters	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Year Founded	2016
Employees	Six
Global Scale	Canada
Customers/Output, etc.	Customers are dental-care professionals across Canada; services offered are continuous dental education, learning and development.
Industry	Healthcare
Website	www.dcinstitute.ca

Budget and Timeframe

Overall budget	\$150,000
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	Six
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	Six
Number of contractors involved with implementation	One
Timeframe to implement	11 months
Start date of the program	Oct 29, 2019 (pilot)

Business Conditions and Business Needs

DC Institute is the educational provider for dentalcorp, which operates more than 425 dental practices across Canada, in every province and in one territory. Through growth and natural attrition, the company onboards approximately 90-110 new dentists (associates) every year; some of whom are fresh graduates from various dental schools, while others have significant work experience prior to joining dentalcorp.

Prior to the launch of the Associate Development Program, onboarding of new associates was an informal process conducted in the practice and facilitated by a more senior dentist or practice manager. With no formal program or process, the onboarding experience varied dramatically with each new associate, causing dissatisfaction and disengagement, and ultimately leading to a higher turnover.

There was also significant variation among the senior dentists facilitating the onboarding experience at the various practices in terms of their ability and/or availability to provide mentorship and coaching. DC Institute conducted needs analysis, which revealed that new associates require hands-on guidance and skill development from a mentor so they can improve their clinical skills and build confidence in performing clinical procedures.

dentalcorp required a solution that would:

- Improve the onboarding experience for new associates
- Result in lower turnover and higher engagement of associates
- Close skill gaps and increase confidence levels of associates when performing common dental procedures

Dentalcorp required that the solution be:

- Modular, to fit the various needs of the onboarding audience; and
- Delivered virtually or regionally to ensure better use of support resources while avoiding travel costs.

dentalcorp is a rapidly growing company and has been named one of Canada's Best Managed Companies for the last six consecutive years. The onboarding program for associates needed to be scalable to support the company's continued growth, and demonstrate its core values: Integrity, Innovation, Collaboration and Excellence.

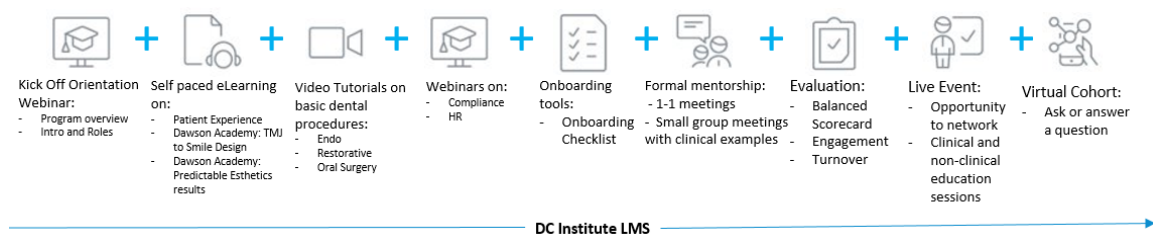
Overview

To ensure fit to the business needs, as well as scalability and sustainability of the training solution, a modular approach was chosen, relying on a variety of delivery methods and technologies, including:

- Self-paced eLearning (tutorials and traditional self-paced)
- Virtual webinars
- Mentorship (1:1 and small groups)
- Live instructor-led educational events
- Social Learning based on the Docebo Coach and Share® platform

All program elements are accessible through the DC Institute Learning Management System (LMS):

Figure 1: DC Institute Learning Management System



Source: DC Institute 2020

The overall program was designed to meet the following business objectives:

Talent Management Goals

- Accelerate new associate time-to-capability and practice acclimatization
- Establish an immediate relationship with, and foster loyalty to, dentalcorp
- Build employer brand as a leading workplace
- Nurture internal champions in the network

Practice Goals

Increase case acceptance rates by empowering Associates to deliver:

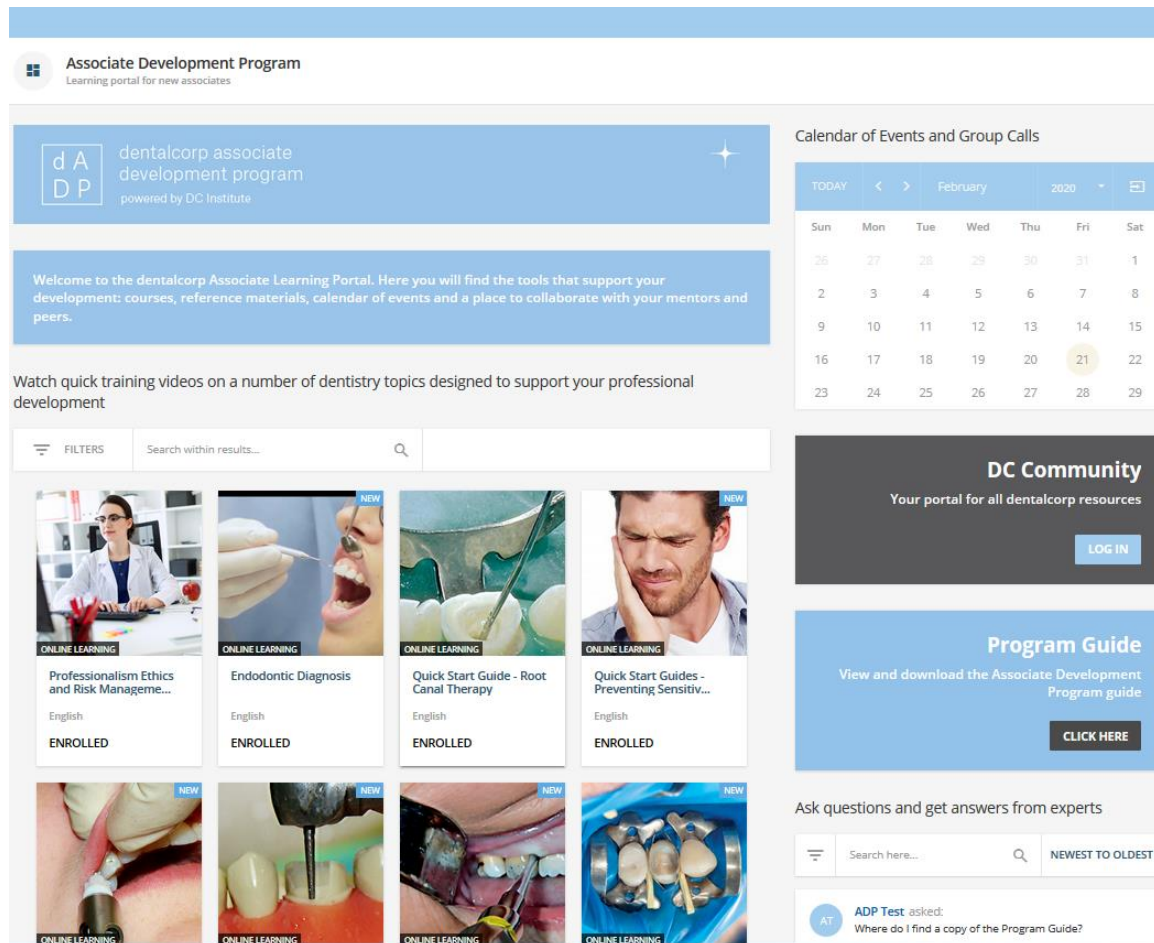
- An outstanding patient experience
- Professional Development goals
- Build the confidence and capabilities of dentists
- Establish a culture of mentorship and networking
- Strengthen clinical and leadership skills of dentists

In addition, each element of the program had specific learning objectives that were aligned to overall program goals. For example, the webinar on Professionalism, Ethics and Risk Management had the following learning objectives:

- Describe moral duties and obligations of a dentist toward his/her patients, professional colleagues and society
- Define how the term “fiduciary” applies to dentist/patient relationships
- Define the term “informed consent” and how it should be applied in dentistry

The program was piloted in October 2019 with 41 participants and six Regional Partner Mentors (RPMs): tenured dentists known for their experience providing mentorship to newer associates. To make all program elements easily accessible to all participants, a custom landing page was built in the DC Institute LMS:

Figure 2: Associate Development Program



The screenshot shows the 'Associate Development Program' learning portal. At the top, it identifies the program as a learning portal for new associates. A banner for 'dentalcorp associate development program' is powered by DC Institute. A welcome message states: 'Welcome to the dentalcorp Associate Learning Portal. Here you will find the tools that support your development: courses, reference materials, calendar of events and a place to collaborate with your mentors and peers.' Below this, there is a section for watching quick training videos on dentistry topics. A search bar with filters is present. The main content area displays four 'ONLINE LEARNING' cards, each for a course: 'Professionalism Ethics and Risk Managem...', 'Endodontic Diagnosis', 'Quick Start Guide - Root Canal Therapy', and 'Quick Start Guides - Preventing Sensitiv...'. Each card shows it is in English and 'ENROLLED'. To the right, there is a 'Calendar of Events and Group Calls' for February 2020, with the 21st highlighted. Below the calendar is a 'DC Community' section with a 'LOG IN' button, and a 'Program Guide' section with a 'CLICK HERE' button. At the bottom right, there is a section for asking questions and getting answers from experts, with a search bar and a 'NEWEST TO OLDEST' filter. A question is visible: 'ADP Test asked: Where do I find a copy of the Program Guide?'.

Source: DC Institute 2020

To support the program, DC Institute developed and implemented a multi-faceted communication strategy, targeting multiple stakeholders in the practices, including Practice Managers and Clinical Practice Leads.

Special attention was paid to the evaluation criteria of the pilot program. The following components were closely monitored and evaluated:

- Retention
- Engagement
- Production
- Balanced scorecard

At the time of this Case Study, the program pilot is still running, therefore not all the evaluation components have been measured and analyzed (e.g., additional time is required to measure retention and engagement). However, early pilot indicators (confidence levels and feedback from RPMs) demonstrate that the program is achieving its business objectives, specifically around bridging the clinical skill gaps, increasing

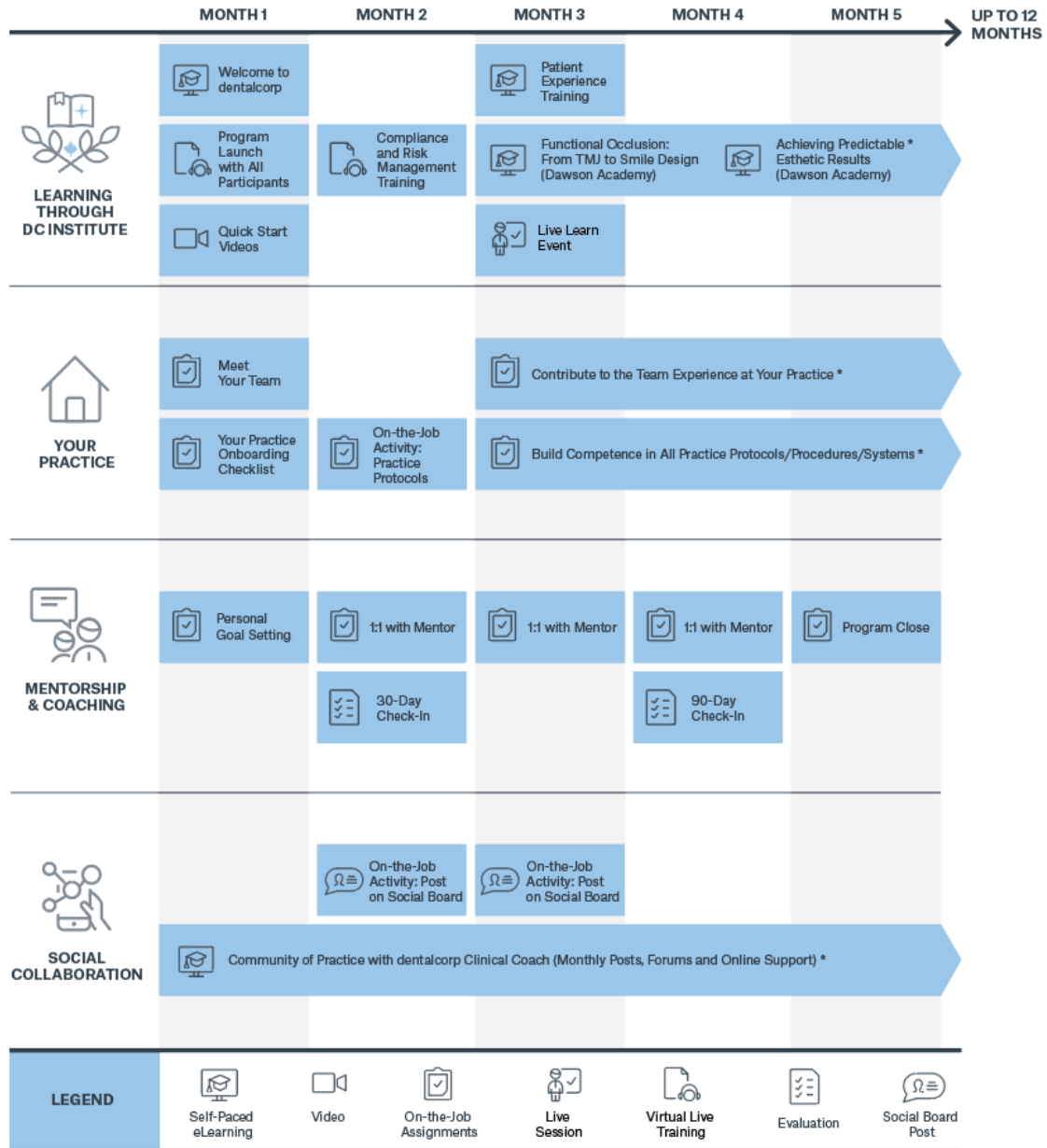
confidence in performing certain dental procedures and increased engagement. In addition, feedback is gathered from participants and their mentors by the project team on a monthly basis, and participants and RPMs report that the Associate Development Program delivers significant value-add to the onboarding process.

Design of the Program

The uniqueness of the program lies in the fact that, traditionally, onboarding of new dentists is done exclusively face-to-face in a host practice by a more senior dentist and a practice manager. This approach results in very mixed onboarding outcomes. Depending on the strength and mentoring abilities of the onboarding hosts, the associates receive different information and are provided with varying opportunities for skill-building. This program ensures a consistent onboarding experience of new associates to reach the previously identified business goals: lower turnover, higher engagement and faster progression to clinical competence.

DC Institute invested a considerable amount of time and effort into needs assessment, understanding the gaps in knowledge that make it challenging for new dentists to ramp up and the skills that new dentists require, beyond their credentials, to treat their patients. A series of focus groups with associates of varying levels of experience was conducted and resulted in the identification of very specific clinical and non-clinical skills or knowledge required to succeed as a new associate. Examples of such gaps were treatment planning and communication, crown preparation and root-canal diagnostics.

The program and its components were designed in close collaboration with RPMs. High-level program design can be illustrated using the following graphic.

Figure 3: High-Level Program Design


Source: DC Institute 2020

The following elements were designed to support program objectives:

- Video tutorial (Welcome to dentalcorp)
- Seven Quick Start Guides (instructional videos) containing tips and best practices on various dental procedures (e.g., crown preparation)
- Compliance and Risk Management Webinar

Patient Experience eLearning

Live learning event with four instructor-led sessions on clinical and non-clinical skills and knowledge:

- Wellness
- Treatment Planning and Communication
- Oral Surgery
- Single Tooth Implants
- Four virtual training sessions between RPMs and their associates in small groups
- Outlines used for guidance during 1:1 calls between RPMs and Associates in their small groups
- Various communication and evaluation tools

DC Institute used both traditional and agile methodologies to build the program and its materials. Agile methodology allowed DC Institute to create, deliver and refine learning solutions in real-time. A rigorous and comprehensive set of evaluation tools ensured that the program met the original program objectives.

Delivery of the Program

The pilot cohort of the program, with 41 associates and 6 RPMs, commenced in October 2019. Communications, calls, and presentations with stakeholders (practice managers, clinical leads, operations and HR business partners) started several months prior to the launch. Immediately after the launch, participants received access to the self-paced eLearning and tutorials available through the DC Institute LMS.

The first 1:1 calls between RPMs and participants commenced two weeks after program launch. Immediate feedback was solicited and demonstrated that participants found the calls and program materials to be of value.

Learners participated eagerly in 30-day and 60-day small group video conference calls with their RPMs, where they could ask questions, exchange feedback and work live cases, demonstrating their newly acquired knowledge.

None of the learning elements were positioned as “required” learning. Participants had a choice to participate in each of the elements. The DC Institute team analyzed the data on course completions for the Quick Start Videos. While the data showed an acceptable penetration rate (35% completion four weeks into the program), there seemed to be an opportunity to increase the penetration rate, given that the feedback from the RPMs was that these videos were extremely valuable, especially for new dentists.

The team created a communication plan involving the RPMs with the goal of increasing the number of views of the Quick Start Guides. Two weeks following this outreach, the penetration rate for these elements increased to 52%.

A journal of Lessons Learned was created to ensure that the learnings from the pilot of the program were captured. For example, shortly after the program launch, it was identified that additional communication and regular updates were required to ensure that major stakeholders in the practices (partners and practice managers) are able to support the program when they are working with the new associates.

Completion and attendance of each of the training experiences (including small-group mentor calls) were captured in the DC Institute LMS so that the participants can accurately view their progress and report their training activities to their professional colleges as Continuous Dental Education.

Measurable Benefits

Measurable benefits of the program were closely aligned with each of the talent, practice and development goals and manifested themselves through the evaluation of the following:

- Engagement (based on the engagement survey results pre- versus post-program participation);
- Production (the dollar amount of the services delivered to patients by the program participants vs control group);
- Turnover (the percentage of participants still having associateship with dentalcorp versus non-participants measured one year after program completion); and
- Balanced Scorecard results as compared to a control group (a special evaluation and development tool implemented to support evaluation of the program).

Additionally, the project team collected ongoing feedback from both participants and the RPMs throughout the program, which allowed for quick turnaround and changes to program materials.

Feedback and Level 1 evaluations have demonstrated that participants' confidence of performing basic dental procedures has increased, on average, by 30% as a result of their participation in the related training sessions.

An important evaluation component is the Balanced Scorecard: an evaluation tool that was developed specifically for the purpose of assessing the Associate Development Program. This tool was created to help in the assessment of new dentists based on four specific categories:

- Patient Experience
- Clinical Competence
- Practice Procedures
- Team Experience

At the onset of the program, 37 scorecards were completed for program participants (95% participation) and 11 scorecards were collected as a control group from non-participating dentists. The results were tabulated so that they can be compared with the second round of assessment at the conclusion of the pilot (May 2020).

In a similar manner, the team was planning to collect information on engagement (June 2020) and turnover (October 2020). Additional feedback information will be collected from both participants and their mentors at the end of the program to make changes after the pilot.

Overall

At this stage of the program pilot, it is very clear that DC Institute will continue offering the Associate Development Program to associates who work within dentalcorp practices. Based on the initial findings and feedback from participants, this unique program is closing existing gaps in confidence, knowledge and skills of the new associates.

Due to the comprehensive evaluative components of the program, it will be possible to demonstrate how the program addressed the needs of the business, especially as they relate to the engagement and retention of associates as well as increasing their confidence in performing basic dental procedures. Initial evaluation and feedback are already showing the positive impact of the program.

The pilot served its purpose in further refining specific components and areas of development for each of the audiences that participated in the pilot. For example, experienced Associates indicated that they perceived the Quick Start Guides to be “somewhat basic,” while Associates without significant work experience perceived them to be “very valuable and full of useful tips and best practices.” Similarly, associates with no experience at all perceived one component of the program to be “a bit overwhelming.”

These insights into the specific learning experiences of different audiences demonstrate that future cohorts of ADP should be divided into streams based on their prior experience and interest. Based on these findings, DC Institute considers three streams of the program for future cohorts:

- **Level One (associates with zero to five years of experience)** — To provide a focus on basic hands-on procedures like crown preparation, single tooth implants, basic root canals, etc.

- **Level Two (associates with five to 10 years of experience)** — To provide dentists with opportunities to expand their treatment options when treating their patients with services like implants, orthodontics (traditional and clear aligners) and full mouth design (occlusion)
- **Level Three (associates with more than 10 years of experience who are looking for practice leadership)** — To provide dentists with opportunities to work on their leadership skills and develop as people managers

All the learning components in the program will be structured around these three levels. Therefore, a new intake process should contain an evaluative method (done with the help of the Associate Scorecard) that will allow DC Institute to place the associate into the appropriate stream.

Since the launch of the pilot in October 2019, DC Institute has received a substantial number of requests from other associates who wish to join the next cohort of this program. Without significant advertising efforts, this means that current participants and their Principals are sharing positive feedback to other dentists about the program and its impact.

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