



Ask *the* experts

Every month **PPD** puts a selection of everyday 'practice posers' to a rotating panel of experts...



➤ **SARAH BUXTON**

Sarah Buxton is dental specialist employment solicitor. She works in the dental team at LCF Law which offers an array of services including buying and selling practices, expense share, partnership and shareholders agreements, incorporations, employment, associate agreements, NHS disputes and regulatory issues. Please visit www.lcf.co.uk for further information.



➤ **MAC KOTECHA**

Mac Kotecha (FCA) is a chartered accountant, chartered and certified financial planner who deals exclusively with dentists and has been established for over 30 years. He offers accountancy, taxation and payroll services in addition to invaluable advice on practice management, buying/setting up a practice and other dental issues. www.specialistdentalaccountants.co.uk



➤ **SIMON HOCKEN**

Dr Simon Hocken, a founding partner of Breathe Business, has helped more than 800 dental principles define and realise success in their professional and personal lives. He was a dentist for 20 years, set up three practices and is a formally trained coach and mentor. He is co-author of the book Moonwalking for Dentist – a practical guide for those working within the industry www.moonwalkingfordentists.co.uk



➤ **AMY ROSE-JONES**

Amy Rose-Jones is the marketing manager at Dental Design Ltd, the leading design and marketing agency for the dental profession. With more than 10 years of dental marketing experience, Amy has a passion for driving businesses forward through a unique blend of design and marketing skills. www.dental-design.co.uk





BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS

Q I'm worried we are going to have a bad winter and I want to know what to do if my employees can't come into work?

Sarah Buxton responds:

A Winter is almost here and the weather is turning, bringing with it the increased chance of rain, wind and snow. Bad weather is often a reason used by employees for failing to attend work. There are many genuine reasons why employees may be prevented from getting to work by extreme weather conditions which can cause road closures and public transport delays or cancellations. How then do you as an employer or practice manager deal with this?

Firstly, you should develop a strategy now for dealing with the potential disruptions to ensure continuity and patient care when a significant proportion of the work force is absent. It should also be considered whether or not staff are to be paid when they are prevented from getting into work by the weather and how and who is to keep in contact with the staff during their period of absence.

One of the most frequently asked questions is whether an employee has to be paid when they fail to turn up to work due to the bad weather. In answering this, it's important to ascertain whether or not there is a contractual right for the employee to be paid if they cannot attend work. The answer will depend on what is in the employee's contract of employment, whether there is a policy in place to cover this situation and whether there is an implied right resulting from how you've dealt with such situations in the past. .

If it states in the employment contract or policy that employees should be paid, then this should be adhered to. If there is no contract or policy in place expressly setting out the position and there is no consistently applied common custom in place then the starting point is to ascertain whether an employee has a right to be paid for absence as a result of weather conditions. In doing so, you should consider from the outset that deducting pay may harm morale but conversely to pay an absent employee may lead to resentment of those who have struggled through the weather to get into work as they may feel their efforts have not been recognised.

What are the alternatives? If an employee is unable to attend work, you may wish to offer them the opportunity to take the absence as paid annual leave. If an employee doesn't want to take annual leave and either they or you are reluctant to class it as unpaid leave, you may wish to consider asking the employee to make up the lost hours on other days.

You should also bear in mind that all employees (irrespective of length of service) have a right to take a reasonable amount of time off because of the unexpected disruption or termination of a dependant's care arrangements, for example bad weather may cause a school to be closed or for child care arrangements to be unavailable. If this is the case, an employer cannot force the employee to use up their paid annual leave entitlement and must place them at a detriment as a result of exercising this right.

The key is to have a policy setting out how you will deal with adverse weather disruptions. Decide whether employees will be paid if they cannot make it into work and that the policy is applied consistently thereafter.

Contact

Sarah Buxton





BICYCLES AND TAX

Q Can I give my employee a bicycle without them incurring tax on it?

Mac Kotecha replies:

Yes and no! It is possible for you to operate a cycle to work scheme if you employ staff.

The way this works is that you, the employer, buy a bike and the employees have use of it for the main purpose of travel to and from work. The scheme must be made available to all your employees, whether they take it up or not and the actual cycles you buy must be available to all employees.

The main purpose of the bike must be business travel and commuting from home to work and back. If that is the primary reason for the bike, there should be no benefit in kind on it even if the employee also uses it for personal usage. There should not be an automatic transfer of ownership of the cycle built in or relief won't apply.

You as the employer would get tax relief on the bike when you buy it (through capital allowances - the bicycle would count as plant and machinery so you should get the AIA (annual investment allowance) to use against it which means full tax relief).

The employees and you can have an agreement where they do a salary sacrifice so you pay them an agreed amount less every month. This reduces their gross pay, so they only pay tax and NI on the new reduced salary and you only pay employer's NI on the new reduced salary. They don't have to do this though. This does not count towards the amount they eventually pay you for the bike (if they do this).

At the end of the period (minimum 12 months) they can buy the cycle from you for its market value but they don't have to. The price of this must be determined by the table given in HMRC's website at www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/eimanual/eim21667a.htm This states that if a 12 month period is used, the employee must pay 18% of the original price of the cycle if it was less than £500 originally and 25% if it was more than £500 originally. This must be noted on their P11d as a benefit in kind but it will arise in a zero benefit if they pay this amount. The only time it would give rise to a taxable benefit in kind is if they paid less than this.



Contact

Mac Kotecha





PPC VS SEO

Q What are the advantages of PPC over traditional SEO?

Amy Rose-Jones answers:

Good question. We are often asked by clients about PPC vs SEO, and whether they should be pursuing a pay per click campaign, or a SEO program. Nearly as often, we're asked whether there's any advantage to doing both, or if PPC and SEO are mutually exclusive.

PPC and SEO both have the same goal: to increase relevant traffic to your website that converts into new patients. Pay per click and SEO accomplish this goal in slightly different ways with different advantages and disadvantages. Here's a few ways in which PPC trumps SEO:

Speed: PPC advertising is the fastest route to attracting site traffic; a new campaign can be up and running in the same day. For me, this is the most significant advantage. For a new website that wants to hit the ground running, PPC is an obvious solution – same goes if you have a website and it is generating little organic traffic.

Guaranteed rankings: Whether they claim to or not, no company can promise you first place organic search engine rankings. With PPC, you are paying for the privilege of being at the top. SEO ranking factors change so frequently meaning even if you're number one today, it doesn't mean you'll be there tomorrow so it's good to have PPC in your locker.

Targeted: Who wants their teeth whitened? A person typing 'teeth whitening dentist' into Google does! With PPC you can direct people to a landing page (not just a page within your website) that has been custom designed to encourage action, ie for the patient to book an appointment, or at the very least register their interest. If found via organic search, the patient may wind up getting distracted by other elements of you site and ultimately, surf away.

In summary, PPC might be best for your site if:

- Your site is new or generating little organic traffic and you want to start getting traffic immediately.
- Your site is targeting highly competitive keywords.
- Your website was built in a search engine unfriendly platform and you don't want to invest in rebuilding it.
- You have a large advertising budget and want to maximise all traffic channels.
- You want to be able to quickly test keyword and landing page effectiveness.
- You have a promotion that you want to be able to turn on and off at specific times.

SEO and PPC programs do not have to be mutually exclusive. It is very possible to combine both and see the advantages of each type of traffic generation. As a rule of thumb, I'd argue PPC is better in the short term and SEO, the preferred long term strategy – but as I've pointed out, each has their individual merits. ■

Contact

Amy Rose-Jones



PPD has an extensive panel of experts in a variety of fields. If you would like to put a question to us, we'd be happy to get it answered by a relevant specialist. Email your question(s) to: PPD@fmc.co.uk

