

The Dirty Dozen – Twelve Challenges Every Dental Office Faces

Front Office Rocks - The Leader in Dental Front Office Solutions and Training



It is that dreaded phone call five minutes before the patient is due to arrive to the office. Everyone who works in a dental office knows what I am referring to....the "I can't make my appointment today." The number one fix to eliminating this schedule impacting phone call is have the patient pay for their appointment prior to scheduling treatment. Whether you ask for a third, half or all of their out of pocket amount, asking them to pay before you give them the appointment will ensure that they are on board and will show up to the appointment. Someone who pays will find a way to overcome their fear and show up.

Training Opportunities: How to Handle Cancellations, Consultations, Treatment Planning, Discussing Money



Is your schedule like a roller coaster ride? One day, the office exceeds the daily goal and the next day it barely makes enough to pay the bills. In order to set and reach goals, you must make sure the goals are achievable. Next, make sure everyone on the team not only knows what the monthly and daily goals are but how the office compares to those goals throughout the month. The goals are set for the office to achieve and similar to a score in a game, if the team doesn't know how the office is doing, they won't know if they are winning or losing. The team who knows the score throughout the game will work more closely to achieve a winning outcome.

Training Opportunities: Doctor Schedule, Hygiene Schedule, Unscheduled Treatment, Understanding Scheduling, Patient Control, Planning, Discussing Money



When gossip and drama sneak into a dental office, it is like poison to the office culture and the team. It is vital that everyone who shows up to work each day knows they need to leave any and all drama at home. When everyone shows up to the office, it is like they are walking on stage about to give an amazing performance to the audience, our patients. There is no place for drama in the office. When your team keeps drama out, the office runs smoother and the result is happier patients.

Training Opportunities: Staff Management, Team Building

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There is only one thing that we can guarantee when it comes to the daily schedule in a dental office - it never runs like it was planned to run. There are always hiccups in the day, whether it is a patient running late, a clinician running behind, or an emergency must be seen. Since this happens on a daily basis, the best thing to do is to plan for the unplanned. You must establish a policy for how to handle these issues when they arise and then communicate and follow that policy.

Training Opportunities: *Understanding Scheduling, How to Handle Cancellations, Doctor Schedule, Hygiene Schedule, Unscheduled Treatment*



Production is the focus of most dental offices and while goals must be met, if the office only focuses on production and doesn't take time to meet with the team, your office will never grow, there will be very little improvement or forward momentum created. Meeting and communicating with the team on a regular basis is how you are going to solve issues, establish new guidelines, communicate with one another and grow as an office and as a team. Meetings don't will not happen without planning for them – put them in the schedule and then don't move them. Commit to your team through a regular meeting schedule and make them happen!

Training Opportunities: *Staff Management, Patient Control, Next Day Review, Morning Huddle*



No matter how many times you remind patients what they owe; they seem to forget when it is time for them to actually pay. Getting a patient to pay, however, is important because they received a service and your office is not a non-profit organization or a bank. Making sure that you have people on your team that understand the importance of getting a patient to pay, as well as have them comfortable asking them to pay is vital in making sure this happens with every patient.

Training Opportunities: *Consultations, Treatment Planning, Discussing Money, Patient Accounts, Billing Patients*

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The importance of hygiene with patients begins at their very first appointment with your office. If you have a patient that has not been to the dentist in a few years and they are now a new patient to your office, once they get their dentistry done, when do you think they plan to come back to the dentist again? Likely, it will be a few years, just like the last time. From that first appointment and at every subsequent appointment, it is important to stress the importance of their regular recare to keep them stable and healthy. It is so important each time you speak with them about their hygiene appointments, there is a sense of importance and urgency, not an attitude that it is “just a cleaning.”

Training Opportunities: How to Get Patients to Schedule, Hygiene Schedule



Hand offs! Each and every time a patient is moved through the office, one person should be in charge of them while managing a successful hand off to the next person. Hand offs are the transfer of a patient from one employee to the next and the vital piece of it is the transfer of information. When your team communicates clearly and effectively from one employee to the next about that patient and information gets transferred effectively each subsequent employee can their part to get the patient to schedule. Communication is key - what does the patient need next, the importance of the patient’s treatment plan and other key data.

Training Opportunities: How to Get Patients to Schedule, Confirming Appointments, Consultations, Treatment Planning



“Are you accepting new patients?” Do you want to just say, “Of course – Always!” The majority of dental offices always want more new patients. There are two key components to improving your number of new patients. First, make sure you have marketing that works and gets the phone to ring. Monitor your marketing and make sure the phone is ringing. Next, assess how well your team is converting those phone calls into new patient appointments. If the phones are ringing but the patients are not scheduling, you need to quickly shift focus to training the front office team. Every potential new patient that calls in but does not schedule is a direct reflection of training of the employees answering the phones and how well they are doing.

Training Opportunities: New Patient Calls, Reception Organizations & Management

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You likely spend more time with your dental family than you do your own family. Dental offices can be high stress environments - the schedule may be getting out of control, the day is getting chaotic, or the opposite which is trying to make the office grow with limited results. There should be some fun added to the mix or the entire team will end up frustrated and stressed. Play games, have an office goal with a reward at the end, do monthly pot luck, get creative. Look for ways to lighten the mood and have a little bit of fun. A team that is less stressed and enjoys their job will be one that works harder for the end goal.

Training Opportunities: *Staff Management, Team Building*



Do you review your numbers on a regular basis? Offices should be trained to know what to look at or they just don't want to see how bad it is. In order to know where you are going, you have to start by looking at where you are now. Get help. Have a sales representative from your dental supply company come in and show you what numbers you should be looking at or bring in your accountant to help you see how your practice is doing. Figure out where you are and then you can determine a goal and how to get there. Tracking daily, weekly and monthly goals leads to success.

Training Opportunities: *Understanding Scheduling, Doctor Schedule, Hygiene Schedule, Billing Patients, Doctor Expectations*



Training is an investment in your team and ultimately your office and future. Taking time to train, much like having meetings seems counterproductive to most dentists and dental offices, however if you were to survey the most successful dental offices, this is the key category that is overlooked. Investing in training and then taking the time to make sure you and your staff are getting the necessary training will help your office from making the same mistakes, over and over, while expecting different results.

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