

## PodCast for 8-7-2017

1. **Check your dental practice's pulse: 4 trends to track.** Half of 2017 is gone. Do you know how your dental practice is performing? If you haven't been keeping track, here are four trends you need to check into in order to do well the rest of the year.
  - a. **Is production 10% higher than at the same time last year?** Take a look at your production for the first half of this year. How does it compare to 2016? If it has increased by 10% or more, that's a good sign.
  - b. **Are collections 95% or higher?** Don't throw away money. Train your team to collect fees, including co-pays, at the time of service. Contact patients who owe you money with a series of three phone calls, three emails, and three letters over nine weeks. Most patients will pay once they see your practice is serious about collecting money owed.
  - c. **Have you received a referral from at least half of your patients?** Most patients are happy to refer if they know your practice is accepting new patients. Of course, your customer service must be exemplary. If it's just OK then your patients won't be excited to tell their friends and family about you.
  - d. **Is the hygiene schedule 90% full for the next 90 days?** Your hygiene schedule is a barometer of your future production. If your schedule is only at 50%, then it's time to reactivate inactive patients, reschedule patients who canceled, and ramp up your marketing efforts.

If your practice is doing well, continue to build on your success. If your office has struggled in the first half of this year, use these four benchmarks to make some positive changes. December is still a long way off, but the adjustments you implement in the next few weeks can have a big impact by year's end.

2. **Improving the dental patient experience one text message at a time-** Surveys have shown that patients, including dental patients, prefer to communicate with their health-care providers via text. This is more convenient for today's smartphone-carrying patients, and leads to reduced no-shows.
  - a. **The days of depending on postcards and voicemails for appointment reminders** might not be over just yet, but they're coming to a close due to the rising popularity of text messaging as a communications channel for many dental offices and health-care providers.
  - b. **Respondents read 82% of their text messages within five minutes**, versus opening only one in four business emails.
  - c. **Nearly half of those surveyed (47%) stated they would react negatively** if a company did not offer SMS as a communications channel.
  - d. **Missed appointments** have a big impact on a health-care provider's revenue. On average, about 10% of dental appointments are no-shows.
  - e. **Maximizing schedules and minimizing operational costs**—SMS has also been shown to optimize appointment schedules and staffing. Offices with waitlists have the ability to text patients with last-minute openings, which allows patients to fill appointment slots, and the staff on hand stays busy during what could have been a down time.
  - f. **Keeping patients engaged between visits**—Messaging can play a key part in ensuring that patients continue their at-home care between visits. Smartphone apps such as Text2Floss sends users text reminders to brush and floss, and can send notifications for tasks such as taking premedication before a dental visit.
  - g. **Giving patients a choice of communications methods** (phone, direct mail, SMS, etc.) gives them the flexibility to interact with their dental office in the way that feels most comfortable to them.

3. **10 ways to stay in touch with your dental patients-** There are 8,760 hours in a year. You see your dental patients for an average of three of those. How can you help them remember your office the other 8,757 hours of the year?
- Social media**—Active social media pages are a must. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest are excellent ways to engage your patients.
  - Freebies**— Give away free items imprinted with your office name, website, and phone number to patients at their appointment. These can include toothbrushes, magnets, calendars, pens, and lip balm.
  - Cards**— Send to your patients “Thank you for your referral or special occasion cards. People appreciate getting an old-fashioned, handwritten greeting card via snail mail.
  - Phone**—Pick up the phone and call your patients.
  - Letters**—Send out letters for incomplete treatment, congratulations on completed treatment, welcome to our practice, and thank you for your referral.
  - Newsletter**—Send newsletters to your patients. Include sharable content, dental health tips, recipes, community news, office happenings, dental education, and special offers.
  - Emails**—Email topics can include dental hygiene tips, office happenings, continuing care reminders, and special offers. Be sure to ask and record the email addresses of your patients.
  - Website**—Keep your website fresh, easy-to-navigate, and attractive. Include videos, information and photos about the doctor(s) and team, community events, special offers, the ability to schedule appointments online, FAQs, dental services and education, office hours, directions, social media pages, contact information, and whatever else you feel is important.
  - Patient appreciation events**—Host a fun event for your patients, such as in-office Patient Appreciation Days or open house events.
  - Community involvement**—Become involved in local health fairs and charity events or sponsor a local sport team. when you and your team participate in community events, consider wearing t-shirts that clearly identify (advertise) your office, and give away a lot of imprinted gifts.
4. **Splintek Inc. introduces Intra-Nasal Sleep Inhaler with lavender to improve deep sleep-** The Intra-Nasal Sleep Inhaler opens the nose to increase airflow and delivers a sustained-release lavender scent to help improve sleep.
- Opens the nose by 58% to increase airflow and deliver a sustained-release, relaxing lavender scent. Lavender lowers serum cortisol levels, which reduces stress and anxiety and increases relaxation. Lavender improves quality of sleep by increasing slow-wave sleep (deep sleep), which aids in mental performance, memory retention, and restoring energy.
  - The Sleep Inhaler is reusable for up to 10 nights of continuous comfort. The lavender crystals are drug-free, allowing the Sleep Inhaler to be used in conjunction with medications. It can be purchased in the sleep section at select CVS Pharmacy locations.

For more information, call (888) 792-0865 or visit [sleepright.com](http://sleepright.com).

5. **3 ways to stay up to date with dental innovations-** It can be extremely difficult to stay abreast of all the technological advances in the dental realm, however, it is vital to keep up. Doing so will ensure that your patients *and* your team have access to the most recent and reliable pieces of information.
- Make it a habit to stay looped in—This is easier said than done. I suggest finding three to four worthwhile sources of dental industry news and carving out an hour or so each month to peruse everything that is going on in the field.
  - Consider investing in new pieces of equipment every few years.
  - Don’t dismiss seemingly improbable ideas—We often read stories about incredible innovations, only to realize that the actual implementation of these innovations might be decades down the line. This

makes it very tempting to dismiss posts about “trending” topics. You really shouldn’t though. Dental technology is progressing at a speed that many would think impossible.

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6. **Bouncing back: How to troubleshoot a high bounce rate on your dental website-** Once you get visitors to your dental website, you want them to stay, learn, and ultimately make an appointment. How do you accomplish this? By learning about your website's bounce rate.
  - a. **A patient’s experience does not begin when he or she walks through your door,** or even calls your office for the first time. It most often begins with a visit to your website.
  - b. **Is your bounce rate too high?** Google defines website bounce rate as the percentage of visitors who leave after viewing only one page. This definition is a bit oversimplified; the metric actually measures several types of user actions. If a person lands on your website and quickly leaves without engaging or taking action, it is a bounce.
  - c. **There are several reasons that the Google Analytics bounce rate may be inaccurate-**
    1. **Bot traffic**—Much of the traffic on the Internet is not human. Bots, some malicious and some helpful, probably account for a significant number of your recorded page views.
    2. **One page websites**—Longform landing pages, and even one page sites, are becoming increasingly popular, especially among dental practices that maintain their own websites. If this design is effective, it gives visitors all of the information they need in one place.
    3. **Unrecorded events**—This is one of the most common issues with bounce rate accuracy on dental websites. By default, very few engagements are counted as events.
    4. **External links**—Your goal is not actually to increase traffic to your website. You want to increase patients in your office, but Google doesn’t know that. If your landing page drives traffic to a third-party patient portal, your social media accounts, or other external links, those clicks are counted as bounces.
  - d. **Some of the most common causes of excessive bounce rates include**
    1. **An unappealing header**—People look at the top of a page first. Your header should catch reader attention but not be too cluttered. This is where your most important elements go, so keep it clean enough that they stand out.
    2. **Confusing navigation**—Another element usually found at the header (or footer or sidebar) of a webpage is the menu.
    3. **Poor visual design**—Creating an appealing webpage is more challenging than it may seem. If the page is cluttered with excess animation, graphics, buttons, forms, and other elements, it can be hard for a visitor to find what he or she needs.
    4. **Technical problems**—Make sure your site loads quickly, works smoothly, and contains no broken links. Busy Internet users quickly lose patience with a malfunctioning website.
7. **5 super tips for productive dental staff meetings-** Not knowing how to run an effective staff meeting can have some negative consequences in the overall health of your dental practice. We’ve found that many offices don’t have meetings at all. Staff meetings, or team huddles, should be useful and routine, not organized as emergencies because someone is upset or a team member has made a mistake.

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  - a. **Agenda:** You should have a logical plan for your meeting and a very good idea of what you’re going to accomplish—in other words, an agenda. Use the meeting to keep employees updated on future plans, policy changes, production numbers, and to conduct group training as needed.
  - b. **Schedule:** Meetings can be held each week or every other week, but they should be at least once a month. Have a standard time to meet and make sure everyone knows the schedule well in advance. The dentist and office manager should always attend, unless their schedules do not permit.
  - c. **No-gripe zone:** Staff meetings are not to be used as gripe sessions. Staff members should never be reprimanded for communicating. However, do not tolerate gossip, rumors, or causing a disturbance in the work area. Encourage staff to share their ideas for improving the practice’s services.

- d. **Training:** Take the time to step back and analyze the practice to determine what areas need improvement and more training. Training should include actual role playing to help build a better practice.
  - e. **Successes:** Drive home that you and the staff are a team that provides a valuable service to the community. A key part of a successful staff meeting is the sharing of patient testimonials. When patients tell team members that their visit to your office was something special, those comments need to be shared with the group because patient compliments are one of the highest forms of motivation.
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8. **Less stress and more fun in your dental practice-** No one likes stress. If you and your staff have high stress levels, there's a good chance your patients are picking up on that. Here are some ways you as the leader of your practice can help change that.
- a. **Take your team bowling-** it doesn't have to be bowling. It could be mini golf, laser tag, or go carts. Participating in a shared activity as a group breaks down barriers and creates a greater sense of camaraderie. Remember, just because you have a staff doesn't necessarily mean you have a *team*. Plan a quarterly event away from the office.
  - b. **Go crazy one day a month-** Pick one day a month to have an in-office celebration. It could be somebody's birthday, a holiday, a special event, or something totally made up. This month could be crazy hat day. Next month could be throwback '80s day.
  - c. **Throw a party once a year-** Your team deserves a party. They're a big reason why your practice is successful. Celebrate the good work they've done all year. The setting can be formal or informal, but you do want it to be something special.
  - d. **Be the motivator-in-chief-** It's not always easy. Your team is looking at you to learn and model their behavior. You have to set the example, even when you don't feel like it. After all, it's your practice, and if you're not happy to be there, why should your team be happy?
9. **Three roadblocks to effective dental team training-** Dentists, who go through such intense training in dental school and keep learning throughout their careers often underrate the importance of properly training their team.
- a. **You keep trying to *hire skilled staffers rather than training them*-** many of these individuals are poorly trained. Others who actually *are* good at their jobs are following protocols that are inefficient or otherwise inappropriate for *your* office. In other words, you're indulging in fantasy if you think you can skip the cost and trouble of providing good training.
  - b. **You think of training as a "once-and-done" proposition-** Training never ends because everything keeps changing ... the team members, paperwork requirements, communications technologies, the dental market, etc.
  - c. **You see no reason to rely on experts for proper training-** Good trainers must be *trained* intensively, and their capabilities must be sharpened and refined through extensive experience. There's room for some do-it-yourself training, but only as an adjunct to a program created and delivered by experts. A dental practice's success as a business depends heavily on efficient staff performance.
10. **Increase collections in your dental practice with the 'Rule of Threes'-** The best way to deal with collection problems is to prevent them from happening in the first place. Carefully define patient payment policies and communicate these policies with patients clearly and often. In cases that involve high out-of-pocket costs for patients, offer and encourage outside financing through a reputable finance company.
- a. **Put collections on your financial coordinator's schedule-** Dealing with delinquent accounts can be frustrating and unpleasant, so it's understandable that even responsible staff members will sometimes put it on the back burner. To avoid this, designate specific times on specific days when your financial manager can concentrate totally on collecting overdue payments.
  - b. **Use the "Rule of Threes**
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1. **It begins with phone calls to patients**, one call per week for three weeks to remind them of their financial obligation and to ask them when the practice can expect payment. To increase the chances of actually speaking to patients, call their cell phones.
2. **Next, send emails**, again, once a week for three weeks. Though the message should not be harsh or accusatory (these are your patients, after all), it should be businesslike and convey the sense that the practice is concerned.
3. **Finally, mail letters**, one every week for three weeks. By this point, the tone should be very formal, to the point of resembling a legal document (without threatening legal action). Each of the three letters should be different, showing an increasing level of “disappointment.”

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**11. Top 10 job benefit trends for dental practices-** Job benefits are an important component of employee retention for any dental practice. After all, staff appreciation can foster loyalty, productivity, and stronger business results.

- a. 71% of employees consider work the foundation of their financial safety net.
- b. 62% of employees say employer benefits are important for financial security.
- c. 50% of employees strongly agree the benefits they receive at work help them worry less about unexpected health and financial issues.
- d. 70% of employees say customizable benefits would increase loyalty to their employer.
- e. Employees continue to ask for a range of solutions, especially more common benefits such as medical, prescription, 401K, dental, life, and vision care coverage.
- f. When it comes to communicating and educating, employees find one-on-one consultation the most effective.
- g. Despite the rise in technology, 60% of employees consult with families and friends when it comes to choosing benefits.
- h. 61% of employees are “extremely interested” in taking benefits with them when they retire or change jobs, and yet only 44% of employers currently offer portable benefits.
- i. Four in 10 employees say retiree benefits are a key reason to stay with their employer.
- j. 45% of employees say they are planning to be with their employer in 12 months, compared to 41% in 2014.

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**12. 5 steps to creating a stronger dental team-** Your team is made up of hardworking professionals who want to help you grow your practice. You appreciate everything they do and know you’d be lost without them, but you also know there’s room for improvement. Simply put, your team isn’t as strong as it could be and it’s holding your practice back.

- a. **Embrace your leadership role**—Your team members aren’t mind readers. Job descriptions make your expectations clear by outlining exactly what each role entails, the necessary skill sets, and how performances will be measured. I recommend you sit down with team members to create their job descriptions.
- b. **Provide training-** When staff members aren’t properly trained it does nothing but bring the practice down, creating unnecessary frustration and leading to inefficiencies. Properly trained team members are happier, more productive, and more confident in their ability to perform their job, and that will lead to a healthier bottom line.
- c. **Don’t ignore staff conflict-** Let team members know they can come to you with problems. When conflict arises, work with everyone involved to find a solution. This will ensure it doesn’t boil out of control and cause major damage to your practice.
- d. **Hire the right people-** properly reviewing resumes, conducting phone screenings, and asking the right questions during face-to-face interviews. The goal is to find the best person for the job, not to get it over with as quickly as possible.
- e. **Don’t give out raises “just because”-** From the beginning, make sure team members understand how raises can be earned and under what circumstances they’ll be discussed. This will keep them motivated to excel in their roles as they help move the practice toward success and profitability.

