

6 Strategies to Improve Dental Practice Management

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Modern day dental practices recognize and understand the importance of ensuring seamless practice management. However, the changing dynamics of the new patient care systems not only present a challenge to dental practices in optimizing care delivery, but it also highlights the need for effective systems and work process conducive to the new market space. The best way for dental practices to meet these challenges head on is by implementing a few important strategies to ensure smooth running of their practice, optimized care delivery, and a steady growth rate.

Ensure Effectiveness of Work Process and Systems

Quality-based management is an important aspect of optimizing practice management. Assess the different work processes and systems used in your office and check their effectiveness and output/productivity potential. Dental practices don't have the luxury of running ship with unlimited resources. You need to know at all times what is working and what needs to go or be changed. For example, a particular high-end scheduling system/tool might be an idea fit for a bigger office, but its effectiveness might be lost in your practice if your patient flow is on a smaller scale. You may want to explore options that are better suited to your patient flow and consider investing at a future date or as and when your practice starts pulling in greater traffic. The best way to ensure effectiveness of your systems is by matching your requirements with tools and processes that offer maximum efficiency within your setup and sit well with your expense account.

Plan Your Inventory Management

Inventory management plays a critical role in optimizing the running of your practice. An optimized inventory system not only helps in ensuring that you are not piling on items that are not useful or outdated, but more importantly it helps ensure that you have the products/ office supplies and medical supplies that are absolutely essential and used in day-to-day care delivery. Appoint a person to take charge of the inventory system; you don't want too many people involved and run the risk of double or multiple ordering of items and supplies.

Manage Your Dental Practice Budget

In addition to planning and implementing practice marketing goals, dental brands also need to implement realistic financial goals. You need to know at all times where your money goes, what your earning resources are, and the different opportunities available to you to increase practice profit margins before implementing a financial management system. So assess how your inventory, new patients flow, investment in systems and technologies aid or impact your budget. Once you have the complete picture, you will be in a position to implement a financial plan for the future without suffocating your current cash pool. Furthermore, a budget in place can help you take advantage of future practice growth opportunities be it setting up a new office, or expanding the current one, or even to introduce a new line of services.

Upgrade your Scheduling System

Efficient scheduling impacts your practice and staff as well as your patients. Long wait hours at the dentist's office or rescheduling can be extremely stressful to all parties involved. So if you are using an outdated or ineffective scheduling system, it might be a good idea to make the switch to a system that improves patient scheduling. With a robust scheduling system/tool in place you can optimize patient time, reduce stress for both your staff and attending dentist(s) and also create time to include new patients or attend to additional patients. Furthermore, it speaks well about your practice if patients find that scheduling is seamless at your practice.



HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR DENTAL PRACTICE MANAGEMENT



INTRODUCTION

Practice management is an important aspect of running a successful dental practice. The strategies that you plan and implement to improve the management and general functioning of your practice will have a direct bearing on your practice productivity and profitability.



ANALYZE PRACTICE SUCCESS



Identify and quantify success metrics such as - number of new patients, your collection rate, average pre-patient production, percentage of accepted cases among other things.



Create realistic goals for each of these metrics.



Set up systems to collect and analyze data for each metric.



Use deadlines as performance motivators and benchmarks.

MONITOR ACTUAL PERFORMANCE

Once you have your metric monitoring systems in place, the next step is to monitor results on a regular basis so you know you are close to or actually hitting your targets.



Another advantage of regular systems monitoring is that it allows you to identify problem areas and make system modifications or take corrective steps to counter potential problems.



REVIEW ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY



Review front-office/administrative protocols and look for ways in which you can further improve and streamline operations.



Clearly define work responsibilities and match responsibilities with the correct employee based on their strengths and abilities.



Set performance goals for your staff and encourage teamwork - not only does it help push one brand ideology, but it can also ease work place stress.



Document all procedures and protocols and review it periodically.

PERIODICALLY REEXAMINE PRACTICE SYSTEMS

- ▶ No system is completely future proof - changes in staff/employees, technologies, evolving marketing space, etc. are all variables and they will impact your system.
- ▶ Maintain productivity and profitability by periodically (every two or three years) reexamining your metrics and protocols/practice systems.
- ▶ Make necessary changes to work-processes when necessary and upgrade your technology and management systems as and when the need arises.



Offer Flexible Financial Options

The most effective way of increasing case acceptance is by providing your patients with a wide scope of financial options. Case acceptance rate falls when it comes to cosmetic dentistry or other high priced dental procedures such as implants. However, if you can make payment options more attractive with options such as third-party financing or half up-front and the balance after treatment plan, patients will be more open to going ahead with the procedures.

Focus on Delivering Exceptional Customer Service

Today's patients carry a huge sense of entitlement and expect excellent service. They want to feel cared for and experience exceptional service in all their interactions with your dental brand. Scrutinize your patient journey from the moment of discovery to consultation. Look for loopholes or areas of potential improvement – something as simple as better scheduling or easy flexible financial plans, or even a polite staff can tip the scales in your favor. Better and improved brand interactions is the keyword for delivering quality customer service.

Conclusion

Improving your dental practice management is a continuous process. It takes time, practice, and patience to get things in place first and have your practice running seamlessly day after day. At times you may be required to make mid-course changes that can have an immediate impact on your practice bottom line or the way you run your office. However, if the change can lead to measurable practice improvements in the future, then it makes sense to explore the idea further. Modern dental practices need to be open to change and continuously look for ways to optimize practice management as a way to improve and grow their practice brand.

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