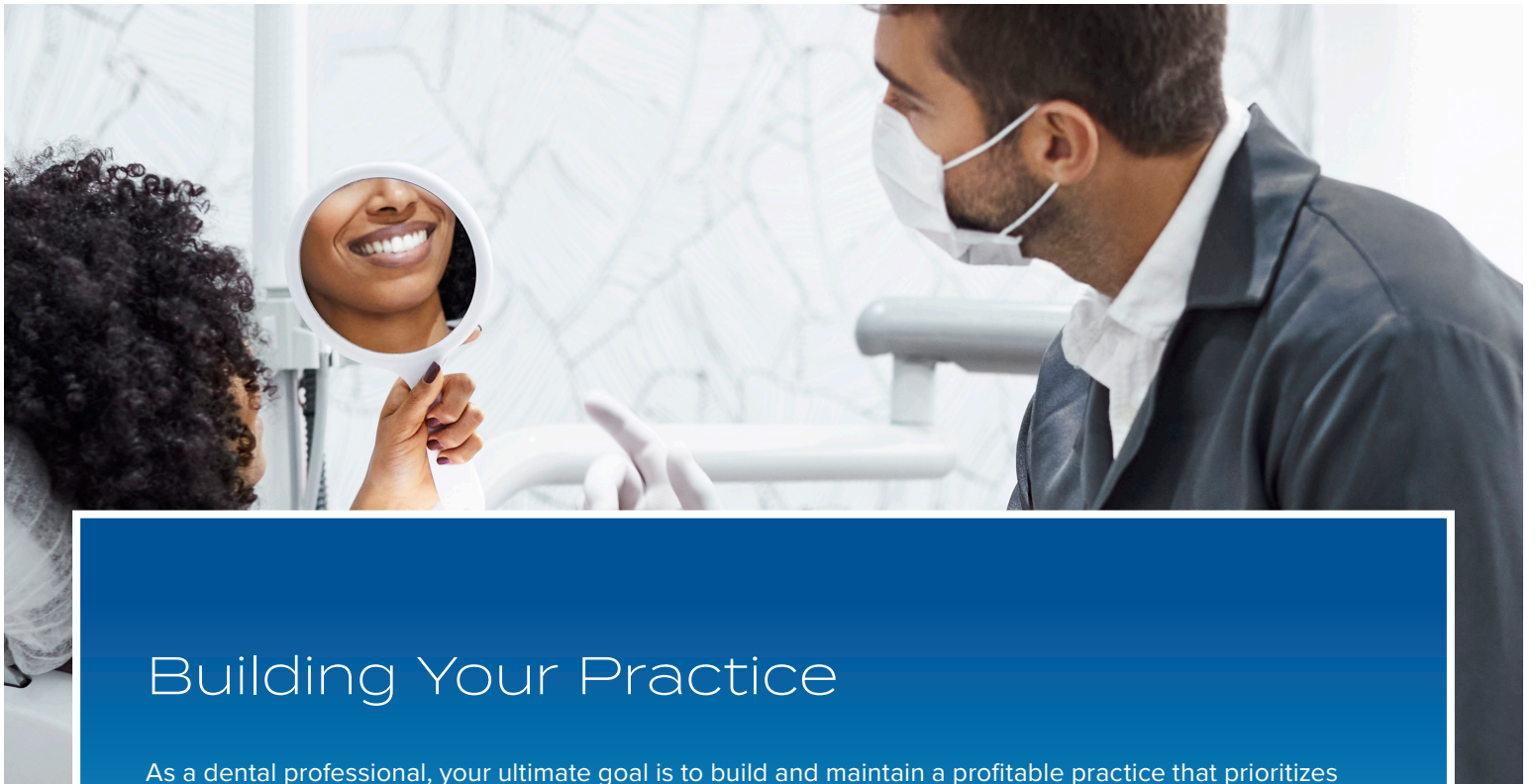


# Building Your Practice:

A Guide to Dental Practice Management





# Building Your Practice

As a dental professional, your ultimate goal is to build and maintain a profitable practice that prioritizes patient care and outcomes.

No matter what stage you're at, there are essential steps you can take to enhance practice efficiencies, improve marketing initiatives and prioritize protocols for optimal patient and staff well-being.

Discover the key steps to take to build the foundation for a successful practice or augment your existing practice protocols.

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# Develop an Efficient Team

Everyday efficiencies are necessary for ongoing profitability for your practice. There are some straightforward steps to take to help keep your team organized and motivated—and help your practice grow.

## **IDENTIFY LEADERSHIP**

The dentist is viewed as the leader in any dental practice, making it imperative that you step into the role and work on encouraging staff to be engaged, enthusiastic and professional in support of practice growth. Work toward achieving a goal or implementing a new process; you should be the one keeping progress moving forward.<sup>1</sup>

## **LEAD BY EXAMPLE**

The entire team looks to the dentist for guidance and reinforcement; ensure that any goals you encourage your staff to achieve, you also are involved in achieving. If you want more referrals for your practice, you should be actively engaging patients and supporting the referral program.<sup>1</sup>

## **DEFINE EMPLOYEE ROLES**

Setting a thorough workflow and organization chart will help define roles and responsibilities, which will identify who is in charge of each specific task needed throughout the practice. This will ultimately improve efficiencies—while eliminating redundancy and waste.<sup>2</sup>

## **SET COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS**

Ensuring ongoing communication between leadership and other staff members will maintain the groundwork for success. Determine how certain information will be shared, including new protocols or general staff news. Having a set standard for different communications will guarantee that necessary information is appropriately and accurately shared.



## **EMPHASIZE TRAINING**

Success comes from a well-trained staff that is properly prepared with the knowledge—and tools—to effectively handle all day-to-day tasks. Set expectations in writing for continued education requirements to keep your staff as knowledgeable as possible.

## **BUILD IN SOME FUN**

Employees benefit from a strong company culture. Prioritize some fun within the workplace to ensure your employees understand they are valued and appreciated—and that you're willing to take the time to keep them happy.

Strategizing a well-organized and enjoyable workplace can help to improve long-term retention. This retention, in turn, decreases turnover and the potential cost investment of recruiting and training a new employee.

Successful employee retention is imperative for profitability. Hiring a replacement can incur high costs for recruiting, potential interview expenses, onboarding and training—as well as lost productivity while your practice is short-staffed or during training for the new hire.<sup>3</sup>



## Emphasize Patient Experience

One of the ultimate ways to continue growth as a practice is retaining existing patients—and growing your referral base. Quality customer service helps assure this.

### Set Your Practice's Goals

The first step to successful customer service is determining your goals. What do you consider to be successful customer service?

- Are you prioritizing efficiency in your practice treatment times?
- Are you ensuring patient appointments are taking place on time?
- Have you curated a relaxed and welcoming environment?

Whatever they may be, setting the goals of your customer service efforts is the first step to success.

## Create a Consistent Experience

Patients should know that each time they communicate with any members of your staff, they will experience the same exceptional level of care. Otherwise, they may reevaluate if they are interested in continuing to return.

Consider developing a loose script that helps guide front desk staff on how to approach phone calls. This can include standard questions to ask when a patient calls in with a select issue or concern. By creating a uniform experience, patients will know what to expect each time they interact with your practice.

You can also consider doing the same for whenever a patient checks out. For example, set standards for your front desk staff to align with that include completing the below:

- Ask for feedback on the patient's appointment
- Inquire with any follow-up questions if an appointment had a negative or exceptionally positive experience
- Confirm there are no additional concerns or needs from that appointment
- Schedule any follow-up appointments
- Tell the patient to have a nice day or provide another friendly closing to the interaction

By taking the time to develop standards for the patient experience, your patients will confidently know what to expect from your practice.

## Get to Know Patients

Providing patients with a personalized experience is another beneficial way to promote retention—and make them feel valued and welcomed. This can include encouraging staff to retain key facts about the patient through conversation with them, including hobbies, then adding these facts into the patient's file. That way, anyone who serves the patient will have those insights and be able to provide customized and strong customer service.<sup>4</sup>

## Build a Patient Referral Program

Providing top-notch patient care and service supports the development of a strong patient referral program, which is another pillar of effective customer service.

A referral program can be simple. You can request that a patient recommends your practice to a friend verbally or through a written referral card. Then, if the friend does visit your practice, you can reward your patient with a discount on a service or a gift.<sup>5</sup> You can also reward the new patient with practice-branded gifts, like coffee tumblers or dental products.

This not only entices new patients—but it also serves as a reward and thank you to current patients, showing your gratitude for their ongoing support.

In all, emphasizing customer service throughout all aspects of your practice will help encourage patient loyalty, as well as attract new patients.

For an established dental practice, more than 70 percent of new patient growth should come from internal patient referrals.<sup>5</sup>



# Optimize Marketing Initiatives

Marketing is a foundational key to continued growth for a dental practice.<sup>5</sup> By enhancing marketing initiatives, practices can reach new audiences and target potential new patients.

The cost per acquisition for a new patient can range from \$150 to \$300, but a new patient then spends an average of \$700 to \$1,250 in just one year.<sup>6</sup>

## Complete a Competitive Analysis

Start by taking the time to complete a competitive analysis to determine how your competitors are marketing their practices. This insight helps ensure you're marketing in the most beneficial way possible. For example, you want to avoid promoting a special price for a service at your practice that is significantly higher than what another practice may currently be promoting.

**This competitive analysis can include:**

- Website, including blog content
- Online reviews through Google or Yelp
- Social channels, including Facebook and Instagram
- Emails or newsletters
- Print or traditional marketing

By auditing what others are doing, you can find areas to stand apart from the competition—and establish your practice as a more trusted option.



## Perform an Internal Audit

Your internal audit can evaluate much of the same information as your competitive analysis; however, it should be focused on the perception of your practice and the marketing your practice is doing. In general, you should work to determine the goals of each marketing tactic, then identify if that tactic has achieved those goals.

**You should also consider reviewing the below:**

### **WEBSITE**

- Is all of the information on your website updated?
- Are there any new services that can be added?
- Are there any outdated services that can be removed?
- Do you have any patient testimonials you can add?
- Can you be creating educational resource content for patients?

### **ONLINE REVIEWS**

- How are people rating your practice?
- If there are complaints, are they consistently around the same issues?
- What do people find special about your practice?

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

- Which channels are most engaged with?
- Which types of content do people seem to enjoy the most?
- Are there opportunities to expand on how you're managing social media for patient retention and recruitment?

**Remember:** Negative reviews can be learning opportunities. Ensure you respond to them appropriately—then implement internal changes to help address anything that may cause an unsatisfactory visit.

Failing to respond to an online message can decrease customer advocacy by 43 percent—but a reply can increase customer advocacy by 20 percent. Make sure you are auditing your channels to ensure you're providing needed support for your patients.<sup>7</sup>



## EMAIL

- Does your practice have an email strategy?
- How large is your send list?
- Does your existing send list need to be updated?
- Are people opening and clicking through your emails?

## IN-OFFICE COLLATERAL

- Is the branding uniform on these materials?
- Does the information need to be updated at all?
- How are people using these materials?
- Are receptionists or front desk personnel sharing these materials with patients?

## DIRECT MAIL

- Does your send list need to be updated at all?
- Is there a clear return-on-investment for this tactic?



By answering some of the above questions, you can start to find gaps and opportunities in your marketing strategy and enhance it moving forward to best engage current and prospective patients.

## Determine Your Marketing Plan

By taking the information from your audits—both competitive and internal—you can identify next steps for your marketing plan.

Decide what you want your marketing investment to be, whether monthly, quarterly or annually. From there, you can work to determine which tactics and initiatives make the most sense for reaching the goals you've set for your practice while staying within budget.

You can also take the information from your audit to finalize your practice's value proposition, helping identify what is most imperative to communicate.

- Do you specialize in a service other practices do not? Or if they do, are they not actively marketing about it?
- Are your costs lower than the competition?
- Do you offer any value-adds with services, like free teeth whitening for new patients?
- Is your customer service notably better than other practices? Do you have reviews to support this?

Decide where your practice shines—then make that the focal point of upcoming or new marketing initiatives.

# Prioritize Health and Safety Protocols

A novel (new) virus, like COVID-19, can emerge at any time—and rapidly spread. Because prediction of the next virus outbreak is challenging<sup>8</sup>, developing stringent protocols that will apply to any virus situation is key.

Dental settings have unique characteristics that warrant special considerations and criteria. Easy steps that practices can take, though, include<sup>9</sup>:

- Display instructions on proper respiratory etiquette, as well as practice regulations
- Provide face coverings for those who have not arrived with one
- Install glass or plastic barriers between staff and patients, as feasible
- Make hand sanitizer that is at least 60 percent alcohol readily available
- Remove frequently touched objects, including toys and magazines, from the waiting room
- Pre-screen patients before they enter the practice; this can be as simple as having them call when they arrive and asking them the questions then
- Ask patients to wait in their vehicles until a staff member is ready to see them

Ongoing focus on health protocols is vastly important for the safety and comfort of your patients. Focusing on these protocols also guarantees your employees know they are prioritized—supporting continued retention and loyalty.

## **SUPPORT YOUR STAFF'S HEALTH AND SAFETY BY COMPLETING THE BELOW<sup>9</sup>:**

- Re-evaluate and adjust sick leave policies to ensure they are flexible and align with public health guidance
- Provide the necessary supplies for staff safety, including face protection and no-touch disposal receptacles
- Adjust office setup and patient areas to allow for adequate spacing, as feasible
- Promote staff remaining at home when feeling unwell or symptomatic
- Properly contact trace staff if a virus case arises to ensure accurate quarantining of applicable employees



Additionally, confirm that leadership and staff members alike are enforcing procedures and policies—especially with patients. Showing a dedication to the safety and well-being of anyone in your practice is key for continued loyalty.

While there are specific situations that warrant unique protocols, everyday safety and health protocols should also be focused on. Make sure you have a clear, up-to-date understanding of the occupational safety responsibilities that exist—including those from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration—and have prioritized implementing protocols to adhere to those.



## Invest in the Right Technology

Efficiency comes from having the right tools for success—and this efficiency leads to profitability.

Consider teeth whitening: **\$11 billion is spent on products or procedures for whitening every year.**<sup>10</sup> This makes teeth whitening a strong value-add for a dental practice; however, it's most beneficial when integrated in an efficient and automated way.

Standard in-office whitening treatments typically include consistent involvement of the staff to remove and re-apply the whitening gel to the teeth. Focusing on an automated technology, though, can improve treatment efficiencies. With automation, less time is needed from the dentist directly because the hygienist or assistant can monitor the patient instead. The change in automation goes beyond improved processes, though; it can lead to consistent outcomes and enhanced patient experiences.

Investing in more automated technology supports your practice in achieving these efficiencies—and that's where the TheraSmile® Whitening system can help.





# Discover the TheraSmile® Difference

The TheraSmile® Whitening system is a uniquely automated whitening technology that dynamically delivers whitening fluid for 360-degree whitening—bathing buccal, lingual and occlusal enamel surfaces of the upper and lower teeth. This effective technology can provide your patients with full hydration of the teeth throughout the entire treatment and offers immediate results.” Plus, when including the MavGuard® gingival guard and ArmorLC® resin, your patients are protected with complete isolation.

Learn how the TheraSmile® Whitening system can help deliver better results for your patients and enhance profitability for your practice.

**SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION TODAY!**



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\*From 1st molar to 1st molar \*\*Post-procedure guidelines must be followed to ensure longevity of results.

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