



Schenck
Health Service Solutions

BETTER PEOPLE. BETTER RESULTS.™

Serving the Dental Industry

Hot Buttons

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Staff Incentives and Compensation: The Start of Dynamic Customer Service

A dynamic office team will create dynamic customer service! A dynamic team understands the importance of dealing with patients in a manner that creates an atmosphere of outstanding care and business success. Every member of the dental office team must be prepared to perform at the top of his or her game at all times. Even though the dentist hired talented staff, has stayed current with advances in dentistry and technology, has the latest and greatest techniques, uses the latest materials and has implemented modern equipment, that does not guarantee practice success and growth. Being sure the team is ready for each day's tasks, having a winning strategy, and making certain the dentist is the leader and motivator of the team, will create the atmosphere for dynamic customer service.

Let's backtrack and examine what makes the team ready for the daily tasks, how they come to have a winning strategy and ways the dentist exhibits leadership and motivates the staff.

The patient is the center of the universe. If that is the basic premise, it can be assumed that the practice has a successful customer service program. That program must include significant training, planning sessions to prepare for any circumstance and/or eventuality that may occur, and the use of standard operating procedures by all individuals on the team. These three elements—training, planning and developing and implementing standard operating procedures—help create the dynamic team. In the process of training, planning, and developing operating procedures, the staff builds relationships with each other that makes them ready for patient contact and practice building. Top notch dentists, hygienists, assistants and office managers do not make the practice. Patients do! So, what brings patients to the practice? What readies the team for the day's work? Who is responsible for the growth of the practice?

What brings patients to the practice?

When it comes to attracting new patients, you may have only one chance to make a good impression. Patients evaluate their decision to become a patient when they walk through

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Fraud Seminar Schedule

Need help with transitioning your practice? Call us for a complimentary copy of:

Closing, Selling or Retiring from a Dental Practice: A How-To Guide for Successful Transitions

Hot Buttons is published monthly and is available to clients and friends of Schenck Health Service Solutions at no charge. For name and address corrections, or to receive the newsletter electronically, please call Anne Dlugopolski at 800-236-2246, extension 1167, or email anne.dlugopolski@schencksolutions.com.

All dates for events are subject to change; please call for confirmation. All articles in this newsletter are general in nature; we urge you to contact us for personal advice before you act.

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your door and reflect on what they see and hear. You and your staff have a wonderful opportunity to “be the best you can be” by ensuring that your customer service includes prompt response to a request, pleasant phone manners and courtesy, answering simple questions, and the willingness to follow through with requests. Along with a welcome packet, their reception at their first visit and their initial exam will all show current and prospective patients that your practice is committed to quality customer service and exceptional dental care. They will have the comfort of knowing they made the right decision in choosing your practice. Through actions, you let them know you want them as patients. For established patients, follow through and communication will make or break a relationship. The behavior of the staff and the philosophy of the practice will speak louder than words to exhibit the value you place on each patient and your willingness to “go the extra mile.”

What readies the team for the day's work?

The first priority for the whole staff is to work on building a strong relationship which will spill over to the patients. And, how is this done?

If you have ever worked with a “well-greased” staff, it may take some thinking as to what made it click. There are many intangibles that go into a smooth functioning staff. It may be difficult to identify the steps that were taken and/or the secrets that led to their success. But, there are some common threads that flow through successful teams. These include:

1. Hire the right person for the job.

In a successful team, you can be sure the right people were screened and hired for the job. If, for example, a patient misses his appointment, the team member making the confirmation calls is the responsible person and has to

explain what happened. Say she explains that the phone was busy when she called the first time, and she forgot to call back. But, your standard operating procedures include a daily check-off list that includes confirming appointments directly with the patient two days prior to the appointment. The cost to the practice of this missed appointment is high and may be unrecoverable. To prevent this from happening again, it has to be dealt with immediately. The dentist or office manager should hold the employee accountable. There is no need to scold, but review the facts, determine if she understands her role, restate that she is to review the checklist at the end of the day, complete it if it is incomplete, and discuss any questions she may have about expectations for future behavior. Blame may not be productive. Looking for solutions to the situation will offer the opportunity for the staff to address any modifications to the checklist. This will ensure that they all understand the confirmation standard. Additional training may be necessary. Is this is the right person for the job?

Although it may take a little longer at the hiring stage, hiring the right person for the job is better in the long run because the person hiring the potential employee will know that that person has the same ideals, work habits and willingness to learn as does the dentist and other staff members. You will know that they will blend with the philosophy of the practice. Hiring the right person for the job will confirm that they will make an important contribution to the spirit and relationship of the staff. It will remove the necessity to dismiss them after costly training when it is learned that they do not live up to the expectations of the practice or the assurances they gave when promoting themselves at the time of hiring.

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2. The dentist is the leader and motivator.

The dentist should be up front with the staff regarding his/her expectations and philosophy for the practice. These expectations may include:

- encouraging everyone to use common sense
- letting the person hired to run the business of the practice run the practice and not micromanage it
- pointing out that each employee is to do what they were hired to do
- exemplifying respect for each other
- encouraging them to excel in what they do
- recognizing creativity
- fostering ownership of the practice
- contributing to their continuing education and training
- rewarding them accordingly

In this manner, the dentist exemplifies leadership and motivates the staff to “be the best they can be.”

3. Pay the staff well.

Many unhappy staff members feel they are underpaid and/or overworked. The old adage holds: you get what you pay for. To have an enthusiastic staff with good working skills and a work ethic that fits into the practice philosophy, a competitive wage has to be offered. Setting mutual goals, encouraging their fulfillment, discussing ways to back up each other, assigning accountability to all team members, and setting deadlines and offering an incentive when they are met are all ways that goals are accomplished and everyone feels an ownership that spills over to patient care and practice growth. Paying well creates happy employees who are committed to success.

In addition, offering incentives for going beyond the usual creates ownership and success. There are a couple of important rules to follow when implementing an incentive system. These will drive results rather than expectations that may not be met, according to an article published in the April 2006 *Dental Practice Report*.

1. Implement incentives when team overheads are at a sustainable level; typically 20% to 25%. *In other words, analyze before initiating. When conditions are financially feasible, put incentives in place.*
2. Base the system's payout conditions on the behaviors the doctor asks the team to track. *Work with the team to set the behaviors and timeframe in which the goals are to be accomplished.*
3. Make quarterly changes to behaviors and practice goals. This precludes stagnation. *This allows for adjustments and development of new goals. However, allow the time agreed upon to reach the goals before changing them.*
4. Encourage teamwork by ensuring the system treats each team member with equal value. *Nothing destroys team efforts and participation faster than when a member of the team feels slighted or that others are favored.*
5. Pay only when growth occurs. Develop a tracking system for recording progress.
6. Arrange for an independent third party who can be called upon when necessary to preserve the integrity of the system.

(Italicized comments are mine.)

In today's job climate, it is not sufficient to offer the going rate of wage. To compete with other employers, benefits should not take a backseat. Good employees will go where the best benefits are offered. States may have certain benefit requirements that have to be met. But in addition to those, some common benefits include vacation pay, sick/well pay, paid holidays, medical/dental benefits, short and long-term disability, funeral leave, personal days, investments, a pension plan, continuing education classes, and health assessments. Consideration should be given to offering any combination of these that can be sustained by the practice.

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Who is responsible for the growth of the practice?

The staff needs to feel part of the practice, not that they are just going to work every day. They want to have an investment in the success of the practice. When they do, they know that working together makes a great impression on their patients. They want their patients to return to the practice over and over again, they want their patients to tell others about the practice, they maintain a great attitude and working relationship. They speak well of the practice during work and after hours. They respond quickly and cheerfully to patient needs and they use problem-solving skills to resolve issues. Together they reap the benefits of their efforts.

A team that exudes kindness, ownership, success, confidence, the feeling of liking their jobs and their workplace, and knowledge in their field will continue to draw patients and be ready for each day. They will have a winning strategy and work together with the dentist to succeed and grow the practice. Everyone carries loads of pride and thrives in the success.

In summary, the characteristics of a successful, dynamic team include:

- Build relationships among the staff and with patients
- Train the staff
- Plan for eventualities and develop alternate plans
- Establish standard operating procedures that everyone uses
- Hire the right people
- Look for solutions to problems
- Express expectations
- Create a practice philosophy
- Compensate well

- Offer incentives for reaching goals
- Offer benefits
- Create an atmosphere of success
- Acknowledge that everyone is responsible for success
- Speak well of the practice
- Maintain a great attitude
- Work as a team

EagleSoft Users Group Meetings

We've been asked if the Patterson EagleSoft Users Group meetings would qualify for the required continuing education credits for license renewal for hygienists. Unfortunately, the EagleSoft Users Group meetings do not qualify for these credits.

According to Section 2.447.055 of the newly created statute, the following continuing education requirements are identified:

During the 2 year period immediately preceding the renewal date, the person must have taught, prepared, attended or otherwise completed 12 credit hours of continuing education:

- relating to clinical practice of dental hygiene
- that is sponsored by a local, state, regional, national or international dental, dental hygiene, dental assisting, or medical-related professional organization.

For a complete copy of the statute go to <http://drl.wi.gov> and select the Health Professionals | Dental Hygiene | Education | What's New link.

For more information on the EagleSoft Users Group meetings, please see page 6.

Frequently Asked Legal Questions

The Wisconsin Dental Association, with assistance from attorneys at Michael, Best and Friedrich, LLP, located in Milwaukee has answered some of the most frequently asked questions directed to WDA staff. Included here are several of these questions and the answers.

Q. Am I permitted to report suspected child abuse if I observe symptoms during my treatment of a patient?

A. You are not only permitted, but required by Wisconsin Statute 48.98(2) to report suspected instances of child abuse or neglect. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) also permits that disclosure, since 45C.F.R. 164.512 authorizes disclosures “otherwise required by law.”

“Abuse” is broadly defined to include physical, emotional and sexual abuse. “Neglect” means “failure, refusal or inability on the part of the parent or other legal custodian for reasons other than poverty to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.”

If you suspect neglect or abuse, you should report the circumstances to the local county health department, county sheriff or local police department. The authorities may require a subsequent report in writing. Within 24 hours after receiving the report of abuse or neglect, the agency/county is required to begin an investigation. Within 60 days, the agency/county is to inform the reporting dentist of any action taken.

Section 48.981(4) provides immunity from lawsuits to a professional submitting a report, as long as the report is made in good faith. This means that, for the parents of the child (or anyone else) to successfully sue a dentist for defamation or false reporting, they would need to be able to show clear and convincing evidence that you were acting badly (that you had some reason for making a false report—quarrels, personal dislike or trying to pressure a patient to pay a bill come to mind as possibilities).

If lack of dental care is the cause for the concern, the dentist should consider before making the report whether the lack of care equates to “neglect” (i.e. seriously endangers the health of the child). One way to make this determination is to

consider whether an ordinary person (not a dentist) would define the situation as “neglect.” For example, a failure to pay for braces or treat minor caries may not rise to the level of what an ordinary person would generally understand as neglect, while even non-dentists would agree that a failure to deal with widespread or advanced decay, pain and/or oral infection would qualify.

Lastly, you do not need to be the authority that determines if “poverty” is the reason for neglect. The presumption that you are reporting in good faith would protect you even if the subsequent investigation shows that the parents were too poor to prevent the neglect. It is the dentist’s responsibility to report the suspicion of abuse and/or neglect and then let the investigating agency determine whether it occurred and, if so, whether it was excusable based on poverty.

Q. I have been asked by the police department for a patient’s dental records. Should I provide them?

A. Both HIPAA and the Wisconsin statutes protect the privacy of patients’ dental and medical records except in certain limited situations. In fact, the HIPAA and Wisconsin protections are not identical – meaning that in the absence of patient consent, you may disclose records only where such disclosure is permissible under both HIPAA and Wisconsin law (such as the child abuse situation discussed previously).

In terms of law enforcement-related record disclosure, HIPAA is generally more liberal than Wisconsin law – making Wisconsin’s more restrictive limitations the controlling ones. Wisconsin has no specifically authorized provisions for disclosure of records to law enforcement officials other than those related to child abuse. Section 146.82(2) of the Wisconsin Statutes describes a number of instances where records can be given, without parent consent, to different government agencies. You may wish to review those exceptions depending on the situation; however, none of the exceptions would cover a general request from the police.

The Wisconsin provision most likely to apply in police situations is Section 146.82(a)(4), which authorizes you to provide records

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Upcoming Events

EagleSoft Users Group

Schenck Health Service Solutions' EagleSoft Users Groups meet twice a year to provide the latest program updates and enhancements and to share tips on how to best use the software to save you time and avoid frustration.

Dates & Locations:

The sessions start at 8:30 a.m. and will end at 12:30 p.m. The cost to attend is \$20 per person, which includes handouts, as well as coffee and doughnuts.

Friday, September 8

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Madison

4402 E. Washington Avenue (Hwy 151)

Wednesday, September 20

Hilton Garden Inn, Milwaukee

11600 W. Park Place

Friday, October 6

Liberty Hall, Kimberly

800 Eisenhower Drive

To Register:

To register, please call Anne at 920-996-1167 with your credit card information, or mail a check or money order made payable to Schenck SC to: Anne Dlugopolski, Schenck Health Service Solutions, PO Box 1739, Appleton, WI 54912-1739.

Common Sense Strategies for Reducing Fraud Risk in Your Organization

We've all seen articles or heard news stories about employees who've taken company funds for personal use. Beyond the high-profile stories are many that don't make the news--and some who haven't yet been caught. What steps can you take to reduce the risk to your practice? Don't miss your opportunity to learn firsthand how you can protect yourself and your practice.

Dates, Locations and Times:

There is no cost to attend.

Tuesday, September 19

Butte des Morts Country Club, Appleton

8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Thursday, September 21

Pine Hills Country Club, Sheboygan

8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, September 26

Hilton Garden Inn, Milwaukee

8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

To Register: Please visit www.schencksolutions.com/events.

Questions or Comments



Maryann T. Dillon, CAE

Practice Management Consultant

888-556-5580

maryann.dillon@schencksolutions.com

Your Dental Specialists

Mark DeBroux, Practice Management Consultant

Maryann Dillon, Practice Management Consultant

Steffi Ehrlich, Systems Consultant

Vicki Fischer, Systems Consultant

Florian Smits, Practice Management Consultant

Jim Tripp, Practice Management Consultant

Dave Wagner, Practice Management Consultant

Legal FAQs

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pursuant to an order of a court. Thus, if you are requested by a law enforcement agency to provide records, our advice generally would be to respond in a helpful and courteous fashion, let them know you will do whatever you can to help, but then explain your general confidentiality requirement and ask them to identify a specific statutory provision that would allow you to make the records available. If they are unable to identify a specific statutory provision (as we expect will be the case in virtually all situations), you should again let them know you want to help and would be happy to provide whatever they need pursuant to a court order.