

A New Front Desk Team Member: Building Unity From the First Hello

by *Becky Gerber*

As we collectively tighten our belts during these ever-changing economic times, there is a bright side to cutting back. Proven methods to save thousands of dollars annually do not need to compromise the quality of care or erode employee relations. In fact, one of the easiest—and hardest—systems to improve is right under your nose. It may even enhance your practice's image.

Your employees can be the secret to unifying your purpose and image as a dental care provider.

One of the biggest practice enhancements comes from having exceptional employees and clearly stated standard operating procedures in place. John Boudreau once said, "Selecting qualified employees is like putting money in the bank." Once you have the proper people in place, the next critical step is to train them well.

A strong training program must clearly instruct employees on practice protocols while providing a foundational overview of dentistry. Although

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proper training can be challenging—especially when a new hire lacks dental experience—prioritizing attributes such as a strong work ethic, adaptability, and excellent customer service skills can make someone an ideal candidate for the front desk.

Even experienced employees must acclimate to your practice. Policies, procedures, philosophy, and history—along with daily, monthly, and yearly goals—must be clearly communicated to ensure consistency and confidence from day one.

If you are creating your own practice procedures manual, a helpful approach is to begin with the new patient experience. Walk the new employee through the process from start to finish by following a patient through an average appointment—complete with a written treatment plan, financial arrangements, and a breakdown of their plan benefits. Front office procedures should be taught by the office manager, while back office techniques are best delivered by the lead assistant.



*What They
Say about Trojan*

*Office Manager,
Oakland, CA*

“The best part about the staff at Trojan is the consistency of being thorough. I never worry that things aren’t being handled accurately.”

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

-John Quincy Adams

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This creates clarity, consistency, and respect between departments.

Guide the new employee in meeting and greeting patients and managing phone calls positively and professionally. Emphasize customer service skills and effective communication with the clinical team, reinforcing the importance of being the welcoming face and first impression of the practice.

Provide simple phone scripts for common situations such as emergencies, new patients, returning patients, delays, and cancellations. When needed, role-play these scenarios. Stress the value of a positive attitude, professional verbiage, and an understanding that patients have varying comfort levels with technology.

Next, familiarize the new hire with front office equipment and the location of standard operating procedure guides. This includes manuals for training, emergency procedures, HIPAA, OSHA, and human resources. Offer a detailed overview of computerized systems, practice management software, and integrated front office tools.

It is equally important for the new employee to understand the

practice's culture. Review the office website and social media, including doctor and associate profiles, backgrounds, and services provided. Conduct a tour of the treatment areas and explain the procedures performed in each space. Focus on the top 10–20 services completed daily, using software tools or educational videos as needed. Encourage the employee to develop relatable “word pictures” that help patients better understand recommended care.

Many practices rely on outsourced services for insurance billing and benefit verification. Even so, it is essential that billing associates learn office policies and procedures before interacting with patients. Unity depends on everyone understanding how the practice operates and communicates.

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Ultimately, increasing profitability begins with clarity - clarity about goals, expectations, and how the practice intends to achieve success. Nearly every successful organization shares one thing in common: a unifying mission.

Most employment challenges stem from a lack of clarity or commitment to that mission. When a practice is unified, something powerful happens. Unity does not require eliminating differences; rather, it means coming together *because* of those differences and striving toward a common purpose.

A team can accomplish far more together than it ever could alone - but only when unity is intentional.

Becky Gerber has been a leader in the dental consulting community for more than 4 decades. In 2006, she started the Academy of Dental Practice Careers, a training institute for dental front office professionals. In 2013, the insurance courses were launched online to reach students nationwide. Recently, Portland, Oregon, has become the new site for the corporate office of the ADPC. Through the years, Becky has collaborated and worked with some of the biggest consulting names in dentistry.



FMI: <https://www.dentalpracticecareers.com>

Read more from Becky Gerber


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From Trojan's *Dental Business Today*, April of 1990



Thoughts for Today

Finding Fault

We hope these words from a Promise of a New Day will give you something to think about.

He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help.
... Abraham Lincoln

Our negative judgements of others very frequently inform us of our own shortcomings. In other words, what we dislike in others are often those things we hate about ourselves. Much better than criticizing another's abhorrent behavior is a decision to look inwardly at our own collection of traits and attitudes. Our desire to criticize, to pass judgement, offers an excellent mirror of who we truly are. And the image we see reflected can guide our movements toward becoming healthier, happy individuals.

We can feel a bit of gladness for what our negative reactions are able to teach us—but we must be willing to learn from them. How exciting to contemplate that every hateful moment actually is offering us a positive opportunity for change.

It's human to find fault, and we shouldn't be overcome with shame. However, we hinder our own personal growth every time we quickly criticize another rather than rejoicing that we've been given an additional opportunity to move closer to the person we're being called to become.

Today I'll look beyond others' faults and recognize my own.



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