

The First Call from a New Dental Patient

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Of all the non-clinical activities in your office, taking the first phone call from a prospective patient may very well be the most critical. Your dental front desk coordinator—or anyone else who may be covering the phones—must be ready to shift immediately into a carefully scripted conversation with several important objectives.

You want new callers to come into your practice in the right frame of mind. You also need to be prepared to provide an excellent New Patient Experience. To meet these goals, here's what the Front Desk Coordinator must be trained to accomplish in the space of just a few minutes:

- 1. Project energy and enthusiasm.** Even on the worst of days at the office, she must rise above any negative feelings to create a strong positive impression of your practice. Language like *"We love seeing new patients!"* or *"I can't wait to meet you!"* sends the right message.
- 2. Gather information... including interesting personal facts.** In addition to the usual patient information, the coordinator should draw out some personal details. These will be documented so you and other staff members can use them to help build a strong practice-patient relationship.
- 3. Find out how callers heard about your practice.** Your marketing coordinator needs to know what strategies are working for your practice. If the new patients have been referred by current patients, asking *"Who can we thank for recommending us?"* sends the message that you really appreciate your patients, both established and new. Following up with referrers to thank them also enables you to learn even more about new patients—to be mentioned when you see them.
- 4. Build value for you, the team and the practice.** Praise for you (*"Did you know Dr. Smith is board-certified?"*), your staff (*"We treat our patients like family!"*) and your office (*"We have an amazing new imaging system!"*) should be interspersed throughout the conversation. This affirms that contacting your practice was a great decision.
- 5. Schedule the first appointment within seven days.** By the end of the conversation, all callers should be scheduled to come in soon for their first visit... before the positive first impression your front desk coordinator creates can fade.

Train your front desk coordinator with scripts to handle this long list of responsibilities. She'll soon be taking new patient calls smoothly and effectively... even if your office is chaotic when the phone rings.

Author



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