

Building Your Business by Building the Dentist/Patient Relationship

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In the business world, many companies struggle to find ways to build relationships with customers, or prospective customers. Relationship marketing, as this is known, can yield substantial profit over the long term. Such connections will form naturally between dental practices and their patients, but making the dentist patient relationship strong and productive requires a conscious effort and a certain amount of skill on the part of you and your team.

Building a Foundation of Trust and Value

To ensure that your patients remain satisfied with your practice and the services you provide, you cannot expect that your professional skills and your team's efficiency alone will make a suitable impression. In today's competitive, financially challenging and "noisy" environment, you and your staff need to actively engage and cater to patients.

Part of this relates to clinical quality. Patients may not be able to judge this very well, but you can make the right impression—e.g., the front desk coordinator mentioning what an excellent dentist you are, or social media posts praising your great new imaging technology. However, practice-patient relationships are primarily founded on excellent customer service and personal attentiveness.

If patients can feel confident entrusting their oral health to you, knowing you'll watch over them and only recommend what you believe is best for them, the relationship will thrive. And if they also *like* you and your team members and feel that they are sincerely liked in return, even stronger bonds will form. You bring this about by getting acquainted—the way new friends do—from the beginning. That's why it's important for your scheduling coordinator to not only "take care of business" during new patients' first call but also gather personal facts. Noted and communicated to other team members (including you), these will serve as the basis for friendly rapport-building conversations whenever patients call or visit your office.

Not Taking Patients for Granted

In today's dental market, every patient is precious... and so is your limited time with each of them. Use scripting to guide team members in making interactions more meaningful. In formal and informal ways, ask patients how they feel about their experiences at your practice. Encourage your hygienist—who probably spends more time with patients than anyone else on your staff—to take the lead in relationship building. And use patient appreciation events and drawings to reinforce how much you value their commitment to your practice. In short, do everything you can to convince patients—from their very first visit to your practice—that you not only care *for* them but also care *about* them.

Author



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