



# Motivate and Manage Your Staff to Succeed in This New Economy

By Kathy Parker, Dental Staffers, LLC

Even with the \$787-billion recovery package signed into law on February 17, 2009, the dental industry is feeling the impact of declining employment figures. As individuals lose their jobs, they lose their dental insurance, which has resulted in a 50% drop in preventive visits. Cancellations are increasing as patients are postponing elective cosmetic and dental work until they have dental coverage again. In fact, even needed treatment is being postponed as long as possible. So, staying on top of dental trends in this new economy is basically good business for you and your staff. What is your key to success and how are you motivating your staff to succeed? The answer is to keep

everyone's morale high. Your staff wants satisfaction and compensation, and your patients want value for their dollar.

In this new economy, dental practices must find innovative ways to make dental care pleasurable for patients and staff. Creating a contemporary environment will transform your practice from a traditional dentistry practice into the new age of spa dentistry. There has never been a better time to transition your dental practice. Let your passion motivate and guide you through the journey.

Along with your excellent dentistry, start offering free services to your patients when they arrive. Catering to the patient

will help eliminate many of the reasons patients were avoiding dental care. Creating and providing a positive ambiance will have your patients looking forward to their next visit! Train your staff to be friendly and supportive. The dynamic atmosphere at your practice should be professional, but also relaxed and comfortable.

When your patient calls for an appointment, does he or she get a recording or a competent staff member? Do your emergency patients have to wait for an appointment, or do you give them preferential treatment and get them in right away? Does your staff use the "stay today" approach, i.e., if there is a cancellation and your staff

**From left: Mary Giannattasio, recruiter for hygienists and assistants; Kathy Parker, CEO and recruiter for dentists; and Kimberly Davis, recruiter for office managers and receptionists**



can pull a patient from hygiene that needs treatment to fill the schedule?

Does your practice have that dental office smell? Use special aromas for aromatherapy to change the atmosphere and induce relaxation upon your patient's arrival. Your receptionist should double as a hostess, to greet and offer water when your patients arrive. Have a bowl of apples at the front desk. Offer CD headphones with choice of music to drown out the sounds of the dental treatment. Invest in a low-cost massage recliner to help relax your patients. Use heated neck cushions during dental treatment. Offer flavored lip balms if the patient's lips are sore from being stretched, and sugarless gum to take away any dental after taste. Play soothing music and keep the television off. Your front desk should be clutter free, with a warm and pleasant décor. Your staff should cater to your patients in a new atmosphere. Offer a Dental Buck Referral Program for family and friends. This can all be done within your marketing budget, and your patients will do the marketing for you.

With the mortgage crisis and unemployment rates rising, we are receiving more and more telephone calls with applicants telling us they need to work because their hours and days are being cut. Before cutting hours in your practice, ask your staff if they can do more. Along with the morning huddle, the dental team should meet weekly to discuss positive strategies to help keep the schedule full. This is a team effort, with the front desk, dental assistant, dental hygienist and dentist knowing the schedule each day. Support each other every day to stay on track with this positive way of thinking.

Every staff member should rethink their efforts and be proactive to keep the schedule full and generate new patients. At the same time, you are modernizing the atmosphere, go back to basics and revisit and prioritize each staff member's patient service skills. Revisit telephone skills, verbal skills, case presentation skills, scheduling skills and financial arrangement skills. Become the energizer bunny, roll up your sleeves and do what is necessary to expand your practice. Promote your practice internally and

externally, and patients will respond. Keep in mind that not everyone has lost a job, and there are still thousands of people who still have profitable careers. So, plan ahead, as winter is over and everyone is coming out of hibernation. Have your staff start a direct mail marketing campaign for a spring and summer cleaning special. Make it happen, and the results will surprise you.

Recognize the individual on your staff that goes the extra mile with a strong work ethic. These are the employees who come in early, stay late, work weekends and complete additional work. They are even willing to cross-train to prove that they are committed to the tasks at hand. Trim the budget by eliminating the slackers. Strength is most imperative for managing during troubled times. If you do eliminate the slackers and need additional help, don't hire full-time employees; use temporary help to fill in the gaps.

The temporary staffing industry (TSI) has recently assumed a significant role in this labor market. It is not just for short-term coverage like maternity or surgical leaves, or to provide cover between hiring potential full-time employees. For many, temping is the only dental work that can be found during this recession, providing a paycheck to help pay bills until there is a recovery!

Many of my dental hygienists and dental assistants who have had their permanent hours and days cut are turning to my agency, **Dental Staffers**, for temporary jobs. They are picking up extra days to fill the gaps in their work schedule. It sometimes lands the outstanding temporary dental hygienist or dental assistant a permanent job. Dental employers are adding temporary workers well in advance of permanent employees. Temping agencies like mine have proved to be efficient organizations for mediating the costs of workforce flexibility. Temporary jobs are the best and most logical way to find a job during a recession. It is also a good way for dental practices to test drive candidates before making long-term commitments.

For more information on temporary employment, call Dental Staffers toll free at 1-866-366-8258. ■



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