

Mutual benefit

How the role of treatment coordinator helps develop the individual and benefit the practice.

The role of the treatment coordinator cannot only improve practice revenue and customer service; it's also a great career move for team members who feel ready to elevate their professional career to the next level. Carol from Natural Smiles Dental Practice, in Northampton, is a perfect example of this.

Natural Smiles is a private practice, as well as high quality dental treatments, the practice also offers facial enhancement services. The team consists of two dentists, including principle dentist Bhavnish Waghela, two dental nurses, a business consultant, and Carol, the treatment coordinator.

Having been involved in dentistry for 21 years as a dental nurse, receptionist and, more recently, clinic manager, it had got to the stage where Carol was ready to face the next challenge in her career. Bhavnish was certain he did not want to lose a valuable member of staff, so when the issue of progression was discussed he suggested a new role for Carol, the treatment coordinator.

Carol explained, "After Bhav suggested this new venture, I did some research to find out what it was all about. Laura Horton was recommended to us and she worked with us for two days in January 2011.

We haven't looked back since. The role, which I really enjoy, has made so much money for us. I generated £340k by the end of 2011, and I've smashed my target this year.

"I started off as a treatment coordinator for just two days a



Carol from Natural Smiles Dental Practice.

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week, but to offer more flexibility for our patients, I'm now available all week and work my clinic manager position around the TCO role, because this is more important and it's what is bringing the income in. Implementing this role has worked really well for us."

Already having an excellent knowledge of dentistry and patient care, it was a case of Laura teaching Carol how to ask the right questions to get the right information from the patient and put them at ease.

Carol said, "Laura was brilliant. I would absolutely recommend Laura Horton Consulting Services. It was definitely worth it. I've now got my own office that is designed as a patient consultation room. Here, we go through the treatment process, discuss budgets and fees, and then ask the patient what they would like to do next. Around 99 per cent of patients go ahead with treatment, and I follow their procedures right through.

"It's all about giving the patient choices. They can either see me or see the dentist and pay a consultation fee. Most will come and see me, which is great as it allows the dentists to focus on the clinical side. I had one patient sign up for £25k worth of treatment after coming in to see me on four separate occasions, but he wouldn't be able to do that with a dentist, as it's a waste of surgery time. Whereas when they come to see me, it's not wasting my time.

"What's great about the training is that we were able to adapt what Laura taught us to our working style, and what worked for us and the practice."

Being located on a main road Natural Smiles has a lot of potential patients walk by every day, now the practice boasts a TCO they can make the most out of any casual enquiries. "If I'm not busy, I can see a person straightaway and patients really like this," explained Carol. "All our patients enjoy our personalised service. They know that if they have a problem or any questions, they can just ring up and speak to me, and if they're still not happy, they can come in and we can have a chat over coffee. I think it's reassuring for the patient to know that they have someone there who can answer their questions without disturbing the dentist."

Team-based approach

Bhavnish added, "Implementing this role helped us change and develop the practice from a general practice, to a more advanced treatment-based practice. As patients spend more money, we must offer that extra level of customer service, and Carol is this dedicated customer service person. The role has improved our turnover dramatically financially; it's improved our profile, in respect of the kind of treatments we are doing; it's improved our customer service; and it's also improved our treatment uptake too."