

“Every practice should be offering free initial consultations; this shows integrity”

Gain new patients in one call

By Laura Horton

Have you telephoned your own practice lately? How was the phone answered? Were you listening to endless ringing before a member of your team answered? Did they tell you who you were speaking to, or did you have to guess if you did not instantly recognise the voice?

I advise you to call your practice regularly, even if you are in the surgery, to see how well your team are doing. Ask yourself: how much is the average new patient worth to the practice? The answer to that depends on the types of treatment that you are marketing. If you are currently advertising teeth whitening, then you will be looking at an average of £300 per patient. If you are advertising Invisalign, then you will be looking at an average of £3000 per new patient.

My recommendation is always to place a ‘two ring policy’ in the practice. No matter what, the phone has to be answered on the second ring – no excuses. This is the first impression that a new patient has of

your practice. All consumers expect the telephone to be answered within three rings so make yourself stand out immediately – ensure your team members pick the phone up within two rings!

I am always asked “what if I am with a patient and the phone rings?” My answer is that the patient you are with can see that you are busy. The person on the phone does not know what the team members are doing. All you have to do is excuse yourself, answer the ringing phone, and take a message. This way the patient calling is aware that you have acknowledged him or her. When a message has been taken, the team member must inform the patient when the call will be returned – and

must keep this promise.

Sharpen your listening skills

Another way you may be losing new patients is by being in ‘tell mode’, rather than exercising your listening skills. It is important to be interested rather than interesting. When you listen to the new patient by asking them open ended questions, it demonstrates that you care about them. You will also stand out from other practices they may have called before you.



This is how a typical new patient phone call occurs:
TM – Hello, dental practice
NP- Hello, I would like to know the cost of whitening
TM- OK, there are two ways you can do this, one costs £300 and the other £500. If you want to know if you are suitable you need to come in and see Dr Smith and the cost is £30 + x-rays

Create an impression

What level of perceived value does this type of response provide? The answer is none whatsoever. This happens daily in dental practices everywhere. Why would a patient want to part with money to see a dentist when the phone call is not professional, or not creating a great first impression because it is the same as the three previous practices this patient has called? The biggest way you are losing new patients is by not offering free of charge initial consultations. Every practice should be offering free initial consultations; this shows integrity. No new patients would want to spend their hard earned money when they don't even know if they will like the practice or even be suitable for any treatment.

Offering free of charge appointments does not have to cost you money. You can utilise a knowledgeable team member to undertake these appointments.

I invite you to look at your system for new patient enquiries, to ask your

team to work out what the average new patient is worth to the practice. Then begin to offer and advertise free initial consultations where a team member has time to listen to your patient. That way you will find out exactly what they want from you so you can meet their expectations. This is how each new patient enquiry will become a gain rather than a loss.



Laura Horton is a leading Treatment Coordinator trainer. Laura has worked in dentistry for 13 years and has great enthusiasm for

Treatment Coordination. In 2008 Laura left her full-time practice management role and has since successfully trained and placed the TCO role in dental practices throughout the UK. To find out more about Laura you can visit her website

www.laurahortonconsulting.co.uk or email her at laura@laurahortonconsulting.co.uk

Lights off. LEDs on!

PEOPLE HAVE PRIORITY



Help us support 505 Children's Villages!
120 Years W&H



Be lightyears ahead: with innovative LED technology in innovative products such as the Synea Turbines, the new Alegra contra-angles, the new surgical instruments or our new piezo sclaeer, Pyon 2. From now on work in daylight quality and look forward to longlasting lightsources that outshine everything else.



People have Priority! W&H supports the humanitarian organization 505 Children's Villages. Get involved! Further information at wh.com