



Benefits of Clinical Efficiency and Organization for Dental Practices

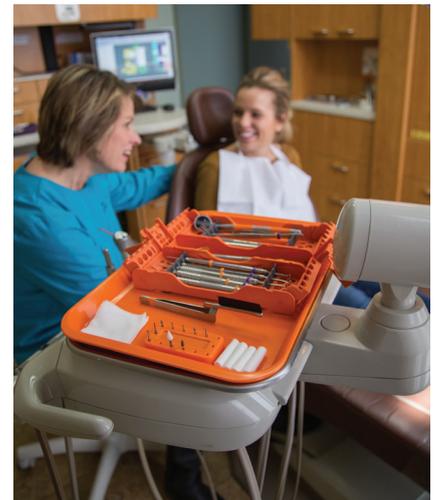
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Efficiency and organization measurably benefit dental practices in both administrative and clinical aspects. **In dental practice management, we know the value of maintaining patient flow.** Reserving and protecting specific time each month for a dedicated team member to manage the recare system is necessary for a full schedule. With a full schedule comes the opportunity to treatment plan and generate positive case acceptance. Similarly, cash flow of a dental practice needs an organized system of accounts receivable follow-up. The negative impact of diminishing returns without follow-up and financial arrangement plans underscores the importance of organizing such business systems.

While there may be less attention and focus on such systems for clinical areas of a dental practice, the value is still measurable. **In my on-site consulting experience as a dental practice management coach, I have witnessed the positive impact in well-organized clinical dental operatories and labs as well as the detriment to those that are less organized.** One example of a practice that was able to make improvements was a two-doctor practice with one newly graduated dentist and one retiring dentist. The new dentist grew frustrated while waiting on materials during procedures to come from another operatory or the lab, holding him back from his full production capacity. The practice had been working with an old system that was established long ago and worked fine for the retiring dentist. The team had been working together for a long time and was limited in their experience of how other dental offices might do things differently.



Remember the story of the roast? The story begins with three generations gathered in the kitchen to prepare the holiday roast. The mother told her teenaged daughter to make sure she cut the end off of the roast before putting it in the roasting pan. The daughter questioned why she should do that. The mother answered for her to ask her grandmother, as it was her mother who taught her. The grandmother answered that their first roasting pan was too small for a full-size roast, so she had to cut the ends off to make it fit. She never questioned why her daughter had followed the same routine.

Sometimes it is wise to question why we are doing things the same way that we always have and if it still makes sense to do it the same way.

The practice I visited prepared a sandwich bag containing the expected materials for each patient and their procedures at the beginning of each day. If the procedure changed, or the bag fell over and spilled the contents, I witnessed what looked like an automotive pit crew as team members left the operatory in search of the needed instruments and materials. Instead, **we introduced a color-coded tub and tray organization system** for procedure set-ups. With this system, they were able to efficiently complete procedures in less time.

In the time they were able to save, they found that **the team could perform at least one additional procedure per day** or see additional patients. The team was **less stressed** since the dentist was less frustrated and able to work again at his natural speed rather than being delayed. The team was able to quickly establish the tub and tray system that decreased room set-up and turnover time. The end-of-day restocking was also **more efficient**, made easier by the color-coding of the system.

The benefits of clinical organization in a dental office are many. Overall practice production increases with as little as one additional procedure per day. As a conservative estimate, a practice may produce \$500 per hour restoratively. If a 45-minute composite procedure is added to each day at \$375 per day, the practice works 4 days per week, and the practice is open 48 weeks per year, **the practice can potentially add \$72,000 more production per year.** Decreased staff overhead can result from fewer end-of-day tasks, as efficient restocking and procedure set-up allow tasks to be completed throughout the day. Team members can use their time in the operatory to increase referral request opportunities and build patient loyalty as well.



Examining your dental practice for potential efficiencies, whether administrative or clinical, can **improve doctor and team morale, patient customer service and ultimately profitability.**

