

A Reason to Smile!

News and Ideas For General Dentists

Compliments of



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Practice Ideas: *Sharing Expectations*

Sometimes it's difficult to figure out how effective your appointment confirmation "machine" is working, or what to do about it when it isn't.

One method is to keep a running column of your "scheduled" appointments at beginning of each day for a month. Then, in another column, write the days actually billing, and calculate the difference. If your schedule is holding, and you see your share of "last minute" patients and emergencies, the actual amount billed should always be greater than the scheduled.

Reminder cards should be sent no more than two weeks prior to the appointment, and a reminder call should be made the day before. If your staff is leaving a message or voicemail, they should let the patient know that time has been reserved specifically for them, and firmly request a confirmation callback to let you know they'll be keeping the appointment of not. If that call is not on your answering machine the morning of the appointment, call them again before 9:00 a.m.

A lot has been written about charging patients for missed appointments, but the most successful method has always proven to be a clear expectation they will show on time, and

your firm commitment to get them in and out quickly and efficiently...a mutual respect for each other's time.

When your patients understand that you and your staff take managing their oral health seriously, they'll make that appointment.



The Bottom Line: *ABCs of Choosing Suppliers*

Choosing a supply vendor is much the same as choosing where to buy groceries...there are essentially two approaches.

The first is called **Cherry-Picking**. Basically, you go from store to store, buying the things that are cheaper or better from each one. It requires a substantial commitment of time up front to research each store's products, along with the additional travel time involved. The pay-off is that you get exactly the quality you want, and generally save money on individual items.

The other approach is called an **ABC Analysis**. You list your purchases over two or three visits, then break them into three categories; A is the items you purchase on every visit, B is items you purchase over 50% of

the time, and C is items purchased only occasionally. You then price a single unit of all A and B items at your three preferred stores, and total the list. Whichever store is cheapest, you buy everything there.

Like grocery stores, supply vendors sometimes have a complicated mix of products and pricing. The Cherry-Picking approach generally costs more, but gets you exactly the products you want. The ABC analysis saves you the most money, but sometimes forces you to compromise on quality.

Either way, it is important to re-evaluate your pricing at least once each year with your account rep. You might be surprised by the "deals" that suddenly appear.

Dental Stocks ⁵² Low ⁵² High

Colgate Symbol	79.22 CL	63.75	81.00
Patterson Symbol	32.48 PDCO	28.32	40.08
Amer Dental Partners Symbol	19.98 ADPI	17.62	29.50
Dentsply Symbol	43.40 XRAY	42.57	43.45
Henry Schein Symbol	59.10 HSIC	57.92	59.33
Nat Dentex Symbol	14.23 NADX	13.01	20.95

Hot Off The Press

Dr. Dr. Carol Buffington, who practices general dentistry near Charleston, WV, is leading an effort to pass legislation demanding that school districts require a dental screening before students can be admitted to school each year.

According to Dr. Buffington, 40 percent of children in West Virginia have never seen a dentist. His motivation is to increase overall oral health, and help West Virginians keep their teeth as long as possible.

Following an extensive study that determined children under 3rd grade had substantial oral health problems, California passed a similar law that went into effect January 1, 2007.

Several other states are considering or proposing laws mandating oral health screening prior to enrollment.

Source: *The Charleston Gazette*

The Quote "When you come to a fork in the road, take it" Yogi Berra