

Philosophies Make a Difference

Your office philosophies define your practice. Your office is separated from your competitors by your philosophies. Philosophies extend into goals, then policies and action. What you believe is the basis of everything you do.

Office Mission Statement

The office mission statement declares your office purpose. The statement is supported by your beliefs and implemented through policies and systems. Through these policies and systems, you become successful.

Meet with your employees to create your office mission statement as a group. Have everyone discuss or write down his or her thoughts. Then merge the ideas into one statement. Be sure to revise or rewrite it when you feel it is necessary – at least once a year to keep it fresh. An example might be:

"Our mission is to practice with integrity and organize to provide clinical excellence and enrich the health and lives of our patients, while giving additional meaning and purpose to our lives. We plan to do this by training ourselves to develop skills and systems to deal effectively with the needs of our patients. We emphasize prevention of gum disease, harmony in occlusion and to use only materials with the integrity to last as needed."

Four Foundational Philosophies

We believe 95% of all the work performed in dental offices is preventable; therefore, we put our primary emphasis on prevention.

- 1) Our main thrust is cleaning the gum crevice daily and achieving occlusal harmony.
- 2) Occlusal harmony ranks close to gum crevice management in our minds as a major factor in dental health.
- 3) When patients can maintain their teeth and gum tissues in absolute health, recommend permanent repairs. Use materials with integrity to last throughout life.
- 4) Take pain seriously. Familiarize the patient with what is going to happen and how it is going to happen. They should be in control of the situation. Relieve the patient of feeling any pain. If you are to be a success, you must develop a method of performing your services comfortably. Pay attention to pre-visit anxiety, injection, analgesia and post-treatment discomfort.

Mental comfort is just as important as physical comfort. Each person should be in control and comfortable with the diagnosis and treatment.

Supportive Philosophies

These supportive philosophies expedite the transition of philosophies into executable procedures:

The Complete Exam

The new patient exam includes a full set of periapical x-rays and a set of hinge axis mounted study models with a centric bite. It includes evaluating bleeding points with a toothpick and periodontal pocket depth charting. It includes a visual examination of the mouth, palpation of the muscle systems and a complete recitation of expectations on the part of the patient with a concerted listening effort on the part of the doctor.

Perceived Value

The patient's perception is an important variable in your practice. Business consultant, Donald Porter, has done a study of what makes businesses highly profitable. He discovered perceived value was the most important factor. Patients cannot judge the quality of the work performed in the same way that a dentist does. But they can judge you on what they observe. Your telephone handling, office cleanliness, receptionist, office regimen, assistant, organization of appointments, payment routine, demeanor (such as caring, patience and attention to detail), interaction with your assistant, integrity in dealing with insurance companies and how you follow up on treatment and disagreements are all things they can observe and judge.

When quality and value are perceived to be significantly greater than your competitors, you can expect to have large numbers of patients come to you. You get more "word of mouth", more satisfied people and more customers willing to pay higher prices. People pay more for the highest attainable level of value. You want your patients' high expectations satisfied. Their perception of value is unsurpassed in assuring higher profits.

Financial Philosophy

The financial arrangement is one of the pillars of practice success. Never work on a patient without a signed or initialed work consent stating the method of payment and the amount. No system in your practice has a more positive effect than the financial arrangement policy. Use of financial agreements can solve up to 90% of your problems. The lack of a work consent form provokes much of patient loss, following only discomfort and disregard of patient wishes.

For routine work, payment should be collected when you do the work. Routine services have routine charges. We perform routine x-rays and cleaning without a financial arrangement (FA). All other services must have a financial arrangement. No exceptions.

The following positions are established with a signed financial arrangement:

- 1) You are certain the patient has been quoted a fee and has agreed to the method of payment. The doctor should have this information to provide the service.
- 2) You never have an unhappy customer saying they did not understand the treatment or cost. If your local finance company is not paid because the patient says their work has not been completed, you can provide a signed contract. This avoids the loss of many patients.