

Be Prepared for the Long Haul: What Dental Industry Leaders Say About the Current Economy

Laura Jamison
PRACTICE MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

You've noticed, haven't you? It seems that the world is evolving very quickly in the field of customer service. In connecting with 20 different businesses over the last month, it seems that 19 now have made a solid commitment to excellent customer service. Airlines, hotels, cable providers, you name it. They have learned that you must treat the customer in a way that exceeds their expectation not once, but every time.

There is a formula for this. It is $E = R^5$. Effectiveness = having the right person, doing the right thing, in the right way at the right time for the right reason.

USA Today is quoted on Feb. 9 as saying education and healthcare will be the two fields growing in this economic generation. Good news for dentistry! But while the economy is going through its readjustment phase, it is important to know that things may never be the same. To get past the fear, it is necessary to take action now.

Dr. Michael Cohen of the Seattle Study Club recently invited me to teach a seminar, *Appointment Scheduling Concepts*, to graduate students specializing in periodontics and prosthodontics. However, the students were not the only ones learning. He shared with me the following observations:

Form a bond – Patients develop a bond with their dentists and wish to see that continue. This means taking time to thoroughly examine and pres-



Choose to be
impressive! People
seek and crave
higher levels
of service.




ent treatment plans. Dentists who see patients on their own appointment schedules for a first-time examination will win in this economy. Performing a quick examination in the hygiene chair on the new patient, creates a missed opportunity to build a trusting relationship. Choose to be impressive! People seek and crave higher levels of service. In the initial relationship, patients may not be able to say “yes” to a treatment plan in full, but when the timing is more conducive, the patient will remember you. So, as a back-up system to the new patient exam, have a strong hygiene program in place.

Market your skills – Dentists who continue to expand their services,

and are effective at marketing those services, will thrive. Once the patient has a relationship with your team, they prefer to remain in your office for as many procedures as possible. Expand your services by learning new skills and techniques. Implant dentistry, teeth straightening, conclusive diagnosis and treatment planning skills, and CAD CAM technology are all examples of ways to improve your confidence and offer patients what they want. Too many dentists do not develop verbal skills that are important for presenting treatment plans. Many dentists are also uncomfortable with the concept of marketing in general. Now is the time to dedicate your team to communicating effectively.

Scheduling is vital – The system for appointment scheduling is very important. When a day is unstructured, loose, or filled with hated procedures, we all feel the dissatisfaction of the dentist. Techniques to prevent this folly include template scheduling, chaining appointments from one to the next, performing a variety of procedures each day, utilizing a 10-minute increment and designating an appropriate number of columns on the scheduler to the number of treatment rooms. Verbal skills play a key role in guiding patients to the times of day that you prefer to see them. If you are asking, “When would you like to come in?” you’ve lost control of the system. It is better to ask, “Since this procedure is intricate, the doctor reserves time

Please see ECONOMY, 41



Energize Your Practice

LINDA MILES TEAM BUSINESS CONFERENCE

Presented by Dr. Rhonda Savage
& Teresa Dobbins

Lido Beach Resort • Sarasota FL
April 24-25, 2009

Conference Topics include

- Dynamics of Communication/Teamwork
 - Leadership • Behavioral Styles
- Scheduling/Increasing Case Acceptance
 - Collections & Insurance • Marketing
 - Broken Appointments
- Improving the Hygiene Department
 - Dealing with Difficult People
- Verbal Skills: “Do Says” & “Don’t Says”

**Why postpone success?
Make this the year your
practice takes off!**

“This will be one of the most influential courses I will attend (& continue to attend) over the next 30 years. I am amazed!”

– Dr. Bradley A Purcell, Charlottesville, VA



MILES
& Associates

Call 1-800-922-0866

www.DentalManagementU.com



PACE
Program Approved for
Continuing Education

Approved PACE Program Provider. 1/1/2008 to 12/31/2011
FAGD/MAGD Credit Certificate of completion will be provided.


ECONOMY from 39

first thing in the morning. Would you prefer Monday at 8:30 a.m. or Tuesday at 9 a.m.?” Is your schedule lighter than it used to be? No worries. Compress your schedule temporarily (work a four-day week, or shorter hours four days a week) and commit some of your newfound time to continuing education. You can add the hours back to your schedule when it makes more sense, but don’t be surprised to find that you have managed to be more productive in less time.

During a recent symposium of the Midwest Implant Institute, fellows Dr. Mark Iacobelli and Dr. Rob Heller and I were in agreement on these tips:

Go back to the basics – Unplug from all of the extraneous junk. Systems insure consistency. Consider evaluating phone enrollment, inter-office communication, financial options, delayed treatment follow-up, preventive maintenance and marketing. If you would like an optimistic, but practical, objective analysis of these systems, hire a consultant.

Your team is the only asset that increases in value – This is not the time to moan and groan about the people you have working for you. Unemployment rates are higher than 6 percent, which means the market is fertile with smart, willing, ambitious and nice individuals. I call them SWANS. An employee with a bad attitude in your office is to your detriment. If you have an employee that isn’t grateful for her job, look for someone new. Attitude is a choice.

Finally, Dr. Woody Oakes of The Profitable Dentist, my interviewer for the audio CD, *Driving Dentist Series*, agrees with me to stress the value of **knowing your numbers**. During any economy, the numbers allow you set goals for yourself, establish whether your expenses or other practice indicators are unstable and, most importantly, how to change course and do something differently. Make business decisions objectively or subjectively. Use the numbers. Your choice. 

For more information on the dynamic programs Laura has to offer, check testimonials and program content information at www.jamisonconsulting.com. Tools for hiring, training and marketing can also be ordered by contacting Laura Jamison at (800) 637-3947.