



# BusinessBite

*Practice Management Information for Implant Dentists*

## **Success in the New Normal**

**By Bill Blatchford DDS**

Dentists and their patients keep waiting for some sign this economic downturn will be over. Now nearly three years into this scourge, let's declare this as the New Normal and get on with life.

People are waiting for the housing market to pick up, waiting to put their practices on the market and waiting to make any big move. I do not want to promote recklessness but moving forward at a respectful pace is what we all need to do.

Your success will come more quickly in the New Normal when you pay careful attention to trust and value. Even your existing patients are looking for value (not necessarily a bargain) and they will buy from someone they trust. Are you consistently building trust by being on time, doing what you promised and delivering a solid value?

The first item on the agenda is to revisit your own leadership and vision. Are you and your team acting with caution and some trepidation? Have you moved away from big and bold? If so, patients quickly pick up on that attitude and will choose to do just the minimal.

Reinvent yourselves. What is your new purpose and how best can you convey your dreams and ideas to your team and patients? Your team needs to know your direction and pace. What is your game plan? Are you going to settle for "just getting by" or will you advance into new territories and keep your mind in the game? Create some excitement with your team. You are the leader.

Profitability, efficiency and treatments offered are part of the new game. What makes you excited and keeps you in the game of dentistry? Many have learned some of the skills of implants but have not placed many. What will it take to have you bring your game to gaining the confidence to implement your new skills?

We find one of the biggest factors causing a disgruntled dentist is having five, six or seven staff members for a single practitioner. When the dentist is in the forest, he/she cannot see the trees. We have stated a practice producing up to about \$1.3M can handle the patients well with three team members. Staff size just seems to grow without any thought of profitability and efficiency. Ask yourself, "how could we schedule with one assistant instead of two?" Work in a dental

office is quiet and when you have layers of people, there is naturally great inefficiency.

Think of having hygienists and assistants schedule, enter treatment, produce an insurance form and collect the money in the back. This allows the person at the front to have meaningful sales conversations on the phone or web without the checkout of the patients.

Work together as a team on hygiene. If hygiene is not as busy as before the New Normal, what decisions could you make to make yourself more profitable? Are you coding what you bill and billing what you code? Are there more services the hygienists can offer? Are you paying for your hygienist to stand by in case someone comes in? Do the 90-day titration of hygiene by looking at three months of schedules to see when hygiene appointments went unfilled. That then, is your present demand for hygiene. Leadership is called for here. Make the decision to staff for your present hygiene demand.

Redefining strong systems will create a more accountable team. What is your daily goal and do you discuss several days in advance in your morning huddle? Everyone likes to move towards and complete the mark. Reinstigate your daily goal and filling your morning blocks with \$3K to \$4K in the Doctor's schedule EVERY morning.

Fill your schedule with full production and full collection patients three days a week. Work on team and their families, your family and patients with needs once a quarter where everyone volunteers to work on everyone.

Thus, your financial systems for excellent collections are to always collect a large portion in advance of the blocked morning appointments. Never tie an appointment with a payment unless you like cancellations.

A big motivator for teams is having a stake in the practice success. Institute a fair bonus they can calculate and the good ones love to bring their best game. A bonus is a motivator, so don't keep changing the rules. We find the best bonus to be based on team percentage, not what your overhead is currently. Overhead is a choice and not something the team has any control.

Practices having the greatest success are those where dentists are continuing to learn and add new skills to move towards a "one-stop shop." The niched practices of the golden years are not seeing as great a success. A highly niched cosmetic practice now has added implants and possibly even IV Sedation certification.

In the New Economy, your job is to reconfigure your practice and recreate excitement. Your team is looking to your leadership to bring a new 'A' game.

*Dr. Bill Blatchford coaches for more net return, more fun and more time off so you can keep practicing well. He is encouraging general dentists to diversify by adding implant skills. Dr. Blatchford is author of Playing Your 'A' Game and his latest book, Blatchford BLUEPRINTS. He also produces monthly thoughts and encouragement by being a member of Blatchford FILES. He can be reached at [www.blatchford.com](http://www.blatchford.com), [www.blatchfordlive.com](http://www.blatchfordlive.com), 1.888.977.4600 and [info@blatchford.com](mailto:info@blatchford.com).*