



5 steps to help transform your practice

By Jay Geier, DrBicuspid.com contributing writer

March 29, 2017 -- My team and I recently embarked on a health challenge at the Scheduling Institute. We've done an official weigh-in, brought in a nutritionist to provide an overview of healthy eating, stocked our kitchens with good food options, and have twice-a-week boot camps after work. We are set up for success and ready for life-changing transformations.

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Jay Geier is the president and founder of the Scheduling Institute.

The only things we can't provide, however, are the two things that will ultimately determine the winner or our challenge: commitment and discipline.

Despite efforts to provide all the necessary tools for success, I know that after 30 days, a good majority of the team will have given up because of a lack of immediate gratification or an unwillingness to put forth the effort required to make significant changes. You know the type (maybe you are the type?) who wants a quick fix without a long-term investment.

And just like in our health challenge, there are a good majority of private practice owners who, despite knowing they need to make changes in their practices, will give up when it comes to committing the time, money, and energy it takes for long-term success.

I've been counseling clients for 20 years now, and unfortunately there's simply no magic pill for dramatic long-term practice growth. However, there are several steps -- when coupled with the all-important characteristics of commitment and discipline -- that have the capability of truly transforming your practice. But, just like our health challenge, implementation is up to you. Here are five steps to get you started.

1. Understand the value of new patients

New patients are the lifeblood of your practice. I'm not saying your longtime, loyal patients aren't important. But no matter how aggressive your collections strategy, if you don't continuously add new patients to make up for rising costs and natural attrition, your net earnings will decrease year after year. Without a steady stream of new patients, over the long run, your practice doesn't stand a chance.

2. Invest in training your team

Your team members have the potential to be your greatest asset. And if you play your cards right, they're a secret weapon. Our experience has shown that taking one day off per quarter to train your team substantially increases your results in every area. After all, how can you get the best out of your team members if you don't give them the opportunity to grow?

3. Invest in the patient experience

If new patients are the lifeblood of your practice, then you'd better be sure to knock their experience out of the ballpark. Look at your practice as if you were a new patient. Sit in the waiting room, go in the women's bathroom, and lie back in an operatory chair and look at the ceiling. Better yet, hire someone to do these things and give you an objective critique. Make your practice stand out by investing in the aesthetics of your office as well as new patient gifts, concessions, and comfort menus. Your goal is to get them to want to come back and to refer their friends.

4. Set goals and incentivize

Reward your team members for going above and beyond. Help the front desk team set new patient goals and the hygiene department set production goals. Then offer them incentives as motivation to reach those goals. Incentives ensure that each team member is overdelivering for his or her paycheck and operating in a results-driven way.

5. Don't lose sight of the phones

The great majority of your new patients are scheduled through the phone. If your front desk team is missing or mishandling calls, you are losing new patients -- which means you are losing money. Train your team to know how to turn new patient inquiries into scheduled appointments.

At the end of our 90-day health challenge, we will get back on the scale and be weighed. Those numbers won't lie. They will be the real measurement of our discipline and commitment over the past three months.

For those who buckled down, worked hard, and exercised self-control, there is the potential for a large cash prize (in addition to the benefits of their new lifestyle). For those who gave up? Well, despite their excuses, they will be exactly where they were 90 days ago.

Jay Geier is the founder and owner of the *Scheduling Institute*, a dental training and practice consulting company. For more information on a free upcoming Practice Building Event in Atlanta on May 5, visit www.jaygeierevents.com

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