



INSIDE THE PRACTICE

Jay Geier

# The most overlooked way to get new patients—now

**“HOW CAN SOMETHING AS BASIC AS ANSWERING THE PHONE** have such a huge impact on my business?” This is a question we often hear when we start working with clients, especially when emphasizing the importance of scheduling. But it’s understandable. Most dentists never think of how their front desk and phones are so critical to their overall practice success. But the truth is that by overhauling your intake process, you will see incredible results in your new-patient numbers. We’ve seen it happen for thousands of clients.

**Author’s note:** For more information on getting new patients, request a free copy of my latest book, *New Patients Now*, by texting the word “Now” to 86329.

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Getting new patients through the door is only the start of a much larger journey of regaining control of your practice, your cash flow, and your financial future. An effective new-patient intake system allows you to keep pace with the demands of the “new” dental market and leads to enormous success.

### THE POWER OF ‘PATIENT-CENTRIC’

Mastering scheduling is so important because it’s the first time a patient has an experience with your practice. In almost every case, it’s the first impression you make on them. “Patient-centric” is the concept of engineering 100% of your practice around the convenience of your patients—instead of around you and your team. It’s about having a practice that’s easy to do business with.

When you make the shift to a patient-centric process, it pays off. You bring in more new patients, and those patients see that your office is different than any other office. Most importantly, they see that *they* are the No. 1 priority. Satisfied patients will refer their friends and family. On the other hand, if you insist on putting your personal wishes or your team’s conveniences over those of your patients, it will be very hard to grow. This is because patients will simply go somewhere else where they are the No. 1 priority.

You may think of yourself as already patient-centric, but most practitioners are less focused on putting patients first than they think. Practitioners don’t realize how unavailable they actually are. For example, you’re not patient-centric if you can’t figure out a way to get your phones answered by a live person during hours that are

convenient for most people, which is 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Working patients can call before work, at lunch, and after work. Yet, so many practices send calls to voicemail at lunch or they close early a few days a week. Some outright close all day on Friday.

These types of situations happen over and over, and if you’re creating one of them, it’s hurting your business more than you know. You’re living under the unrealistic assumption that you’re such a great dentist that the patients whose calls you miss—the ones who don’t leave messages on the answering machine—will take the time to call back later. But they’re not doing that. Instead, they’re calling other dentists. Your patients do not want to work around your schedule; they want you to accommodate theirs.

Remember, we live in a world that revolves around two principles: fast and easy. The dental profession was a relative latecomer to innovation that leads to convenience. But other industries figured out ways to make everything faster and easier—from meals to oil changes. So now people demand convenience everywhere, including the dentist’s office.

Here’s the bottom line: Your patients will not wait around for you. They will go wherever it’s easy and convenient.

### THE FRONT-DESK FACTOR

Becoming patient-centric and increasing your new patient numbers will involve a commitment to change by your entire office, and that includes you. However, we recommend first focusing on the people who actually pick up the phones and schedule those new patients: the people at your front desk who truly are the patient’s first impression. The goal is to teach them how to get prospective patients across the threshold of the phone call and into your office. This, on its own, will dramatically change the number of new patients who walk through your door and ensure maximum business growth. **DE**