



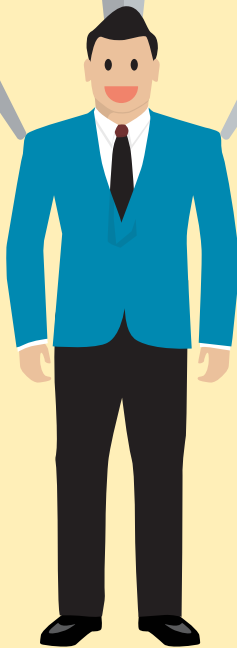
by Jay Geier

Jay Geier is an entrepreneur, educational speaker, business coach and philanthropist. He is best known as the president and founder of the Scheduling Institute, the largest company in the world offering dental office training and practice growth consulting to help dentists increase new-patient numbers, revenue collections and overall business success. For more information, go to schedulinginstitute.com.

Hire a Consultant with Confidence

7 essential questions to ask to help you find the right fit

Many coaches, marketing consultants and companies can help you take your practice to new heights. And while having a large selection is great, it can also make it difficult to evaluate which ones might make the best fit. To make that task easier, we asked Jay Geier, president and founder of the Scheduling Institute, to suggest some questions that dentists should ask when interviewing such service providers—and the types of answers that should indicate a consultant is right for you.



1

“Are your programs and solutions built to address both my professional and personal goals?”

With this question, you’re making sure the consultant understands that just because you want to grow your practice, it doesn’t mean you want to do so at the cost of your personal life. It should be just the opposite—the programs should help you build a successful business while allowing you to live a more fulfilling life outside the practice.

Because here’s what you don’t want: working really hard to achieve your financial goals, only to get there and realize you’re spending even more time at the office, less time with your family and feeling more burned out than ever. What good is making the money, but never being able to enjoy it?

The best programs are structured to create a practice with multiple streams of revenue, multiple producers, and team leaders who drive growth through all employees. The doctor should develop into the business owner and visionary—not just a dentist who feels like her or she has to be “chained” to the business for it to survive or thrive.

2

“Do your programs address the office as a whole—both doctors and staff?”

You can’t transform into an independent practitioner and reach your business and personal goals if the success of the practice is solely reliant on you.

A consultant shouldn’t let you buy into the idea that all the responsibility is on you (or all on your staff). If there are issues that you’re trying to fix, the consultant should acknowledge everyone’s roles need to be addressed because, for true success, everyone needs to be involved in the process. Otherwise, buy-in is difficult to achieve, which leads to flat results.

Plus, one of the most important elements of success is human capital—your employees. They’re also one of the most underleveraged assets within a practice.

The best consultants should help the members of all different practice departments better understand how their individual success depends on the group’s success. Ultimately, you’re striving to put repeatable systems in place that create a win-win situation for both the doctor and their team.

3

“How long have you’ve been doing this?”

If the coach or consultant is going to be imparting advice to you, you want to make sure they have a track record of success. You’ll want to get a strong sense of “been there, done that,” and that they have proven processes that were built over the course of working with many clients. Their goal should be to make sure you don’t make the same mistakes that they’ve already helped all their other clients fix.

Another common misconception is that a coach or consultant with a small active client base is better than one with a larger base, because many clients assume the former will give them more time and attention. In reality, you want to work with people who have many active clients and a real depth of experience—someone who can help you become more independent and equipped to handle things in the future, instead of dependent on someone to hold your hand through every challenge that may arise.



4

“What type of clients do you like to work with?”

If someone simply says, “with dentists,” it’s the wrong answer. You’re looking for someone who won’t take just anyone on as a client, and who believes that finding the right fit is important. In fact, when you first speak with them, you should get the feeling that they’re interviewing you as well! This is important because a bad fit can turn into an unproductive relationship where little to no results are achieved. Coaches or consultants should also be able to articulate their main value proposition, as well as the profile of their ideal clients.

5

“What are your expectations of me?”

This question is important because they shouldn’t claim they can help you without concerted effort on your and your team’s part. That’s not to say they don’t have systems in place to help you reach your goals more efficiently! However, they should be upfront about the work that needs to be put in, because part-time effort produces part-time results. A good consultant should be completely honest and upfront that the process may not all be easy; there may be bumps in the road ahead, because sometimes discomfort comes with change.

Also, don’t hire “yes people.” Working with coaches and consultants who are only telling you what you *want* to hear, rather than what you *need* to hear, is counterproductive. Why are you hiring them in the first place—to do things the way you’ve always done them? Or to be challenged to revise and change so that you can improve?

Plus, beware if they pitch you on being at your “beck and call” anytime you need them. This can sound very appealing and comforting, but it’s similar to the problems that arise when a parent takes care of everything for children without giving them the chance to figure out things on their own. Excessive hand-holding doesn’t let you become a successful independent practitioner, which should be your ultimate goal.

6

“Is your pricing structure tied to specific results?”

Make sure they rationalize their pricing structure by explaining how it’s tied to tangible results. At my company, we explain to potential clients that if we work with them for a year, the increase in their monthly revenue should at least match the total they’ve spent with us in that same time period. It frames our “fees” as an investment that produces a return, rather than just an expense. And we show a client how the program will pay for itself in their growth. It also gives a clear picture of what a successful outcome should look like.

In addition, if consultants or coaches claim to provide you with a specific deliverable—more patients, better SEO, a more cohesive team—they should be able to define the incremental steps that get you there.

7

“Do you stand behind your promise for results?”

The worst kind of people are people who want something for nothing. How can you expect results if you aren’t willing to do anything? That’s not what we’re talking about here. If you’re ethical and willing to work to get a result, and you do *everything* the solutions requires and you don’t get that result, the consultant should have an agreed-upon way to make that up to you. (Extended services with extra support to ensure you see a result, for example, or additional services.)

In the end, you want your business relationship with your coach, consultant or marketing service provider to feel like a partnership, rather than just a transaction. Where the better you do, the better they do. ■

