Schedule for Success

By Weston Lunsford, CEO of Dental Intel
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There is no argument that diagnosing, presenting and then treating elective/restorative treatment is one of the most important aspects of a dental practice’s success. But often we overlook another critical aspect in the practice. Argumentatively the function of scheduling your patient visits has moved to the top of the list of activities that have the greatest impact on your overall success.

Think about this for just a moment. Obviously without dentistry being performed on your patients there would be no production, but just as critical, without patient visits there wouldn't be any production either. The concept seems pretty easy to get, but then why don’t the team members responsible for scheduling know how many patient visits are needed to achieve the production goals? Do you know how many are needed?

It’s a common belief that scheduling is a simple job – so simple that in most cases when a new team member is hired, especially one with no dental experience, this is their first responsibility they are given in your practice. With very little understanding on how important this role is in the overall success of the practice – is it any wonder why your practice might be under-performing?
Not only is it important for schedulers to understand the effect they have on how full the schedule is, they need to understand what effect they have on the overall production, what the production goals are, and at any given moment where the practice is in relationship to the goals.

By the schedulers knowing the production goals along with what your Average Production per Visit is (which might be low due to ineffective treatment diagnosis and presentation), they will know exactly how many visits you need in order for the practice to reach its production goals for the period.

Have you already scheduled next week’s visits to ensure that you are going to reach your production goal for the week, month quarter and year? Have you looked at it? Do you know where you are at? More importantly, do the team members who manage the schedule know?

The fact is most practices do not take a proactive approach to scheduling for success. This is no fault of the schedulers – as team members will generally work to reach whatever expectations are set so long as these expectations are obtainable, measurable, and consistently reported.

In truth this is a difficult job - but an individual who knows where they are in relationship to where they ought to be has a much better chance in getting there than those who don’t.
Here are 2 suggestions to make sure you are scheduling for success.

1. Declare an annual production goal for the practice and what that means for each provider then break this down into a week which is easier to manage. Identify what each provider's average production per patient visit is. Take their weekly production goal, divide this by their average production per patient visit. Now your schedulers know exactly how many patients your providers need in order for them to reach their production goals. Keep track of this daily and schedule for success. If the number of visits required is not realistic, you might need help in understanding how to effectively present needed and recommended treatments to your patients in order to increase your production per patient visit. Maybe you have room to improve in both areas, but identifying how many patients are needed to reach your goal is a simple process. Before the next week begins you should already have scheduled your goal setting the week up for success. Weeks add to months and months to years. By helping your schedulers schedule for success, so long as you don’t have a cancellation issue the schedulers and your practice will be successful. Ask yourself – ‘How can your schedulers ever hit a target if the target is not right in front of them?’

2. Measure, measure, measure! It’s imperative that once you have identified the number of patients your practice and providers need to see in order to reach your production goals that you measure and monitor the schedulers progression towards reaching these goals. When performance is measured, performance improves and when performance is measured and reported back to the team, the rate of improvement accelerates. It happens EVERY time! Make it part of your daily huddles and celebrate the success!

While at first glance clinical procedures appear to be the most important aspect of the overall success in a practice, but the administrative procedures are equally important. Don’t just try to fill your schedule. Identify your goals and begin scheduling for success today.

For a deeper dive into what your schedule looks like in relationship to what it should look like in order to reach your goals, please contact Dental Intel today and receive a quick 10-minute snap-shot of your practice using Dental Intel’s Intelligent Dashboard. We have one simple goal. To help you and your team improve the performance and value of your dental practice.
Dental Intel is a web based Practice Intelligence platform. Bringing your data and your team together in real time.

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