

7 MOST COMMON BUSINESS MISTAKES IN DENTISTRY



INTRODUCTION

Most dentists if you ask them, consider themselves to be more a clinician or a doctor, then a businessman or entrepreneur.

However, it is evident that acquiring the right business skills is becoming more and more important in dentistry, so that the dentists who are learning and implementing business skills, have competitive advantage over other dental offices not doing so.

Fear of unknown and staying in the comfort zone are two most common reasons why are dentists still primarily focused on clinical skills and have a hard time deciding to grow by developing and utilising their full business potential.

By working with thousands of dental offices in the last 28 years of my professional career in dentistry, I have detected most common “patterns” that are preventing dentist to grow the business side of their dental business.

“7 most common business mistakes in dentistry” will help you detect those patterns in your own dental office and will give you guidelines on how to start solving them.

Furthermore, if you want to permanently solve such or similar problems in your dental office, we recommend that you join us at our annual business training “D Business Leadership Summit”, that takes place every November in Zagreb, Croatia.

By working intensively with leading speakers and other participants, you will speed up your learning process and will be able to implement the best strategies to boost your dental practice almost immediately.

You are always one good decision away from the future you want!

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Poor patient communication

Did you know that well organised and efficient front desk is the first and most important thing that patients will notice and experience about your dental office?

Professional front desk will easily compensate for any mistakes in the clinical part of the treatment which may happen - however, it is much more difficult to compensate for a poor patient communication.

“People may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” M. Angelou

Based on the market research, a single potential lead that was not converted to a treatment by your front desk, amounts to a 5.000 EUR loss in a monthly revenue.

Front desk has a central role in the success of every dental office, but often doesn't get the right focus and attention - which leads to the following common mistakes:

1. Incompetent or unkind front office personnel
2. Lack of importance for every single phone call
3. Not answering incoming calls or putting patients on hold
4. Lack of initiative in the phone call with a patient
5. Managing patient's objections poorly
6. Lack of creating added value and differentiation from competitors
7. Improvisation instead of using prepared phone call scripts

Lack of business planning

Well clinical defined therapy plan is crucial for clinical success in dentistry. Lack of treatment plan results in compromised end result, which leads to unhappy patient or additional expenses for the owner.

The same goes for business planning. Lack of well structured business plan you are executing on, means that you will suffer from any change in the environment like price increase or an aggressive on-line marketing campaign from one of your competitors or a new service offered by the dental clinic in your vicinity.

“Plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”, general Dwight D. Eisenhower

The process of planning is much more important than the business plan itself, because by creating the plan you begin to understand how all parts of your dental business are interconnected. If the environment changes, you can change your business plan because you know what and how to change.

Not controlling your expenses

The only thing in business that you can control directly are your expenses!

Sales and revenue is something we have to plan and put our best efforts into making it happen, but there is no guarantee or control over it.

It is quite common today that a dentist is using an overpriced product or service because she was sold on the myth that “patients are asking for this specific brand” or she is using it for a long time and it became a habit - she doesn’t want to change it as it works well in her hands.

In reality you can exchange such a product for another one that is technically superior and has more value for your money. By choosing the right product with the right quality and price, you can save a lot of money that goes directly from your pocket.

The opposite example is using cheap or low quality products, where you have to repeat the procedure due to customer complaint. With a fixed cost of your chair time of approximately 100 EUR/hour, every repeated procedure is a direct cost to your business and further more, it is creating a bad reputation for your dental office.

You can avoid both scenarios if you carefully select the right dental products that will be used in your business, by utilising the right set of rules and clear criteria for quality of your choice.

Lack of delegation

One of the main constrains in dentistry is that dentists are spending most of their time “within 4 walls” of their dental office.

Due to this working condition, most of the dentist want the ability and freedom to spend more free time outside of their dental office.

Constant repetition of this routine of working within 4 walls is conditioning dentists to be less fulfilled and have less purpose, as they have to come back tomorrow and spend yet another day working in the office and be available to her patients.

This creates in time what we call the “operator mindset” - where in the end the dentists becomes overworked and tired and every success is just a short episode without longterm satisfaction, purpose or fulfilment.

One of the possible strategies of getting out of this “rabbit hole” is to learn, develop and use the power of delegation - where we start to use the potential, skills and time of other people in our team.

Delegation is the only way out of “operator mindset” towards the “owner mindset”, which in the end leads to personal and financial freedom, which escapes us as long as we have to do everything by ourselves and where patients are just asking for us.

Unclear marketing message

In today's competitive market, we always aim and try to be different from others - with that being said, our marketing message and our promise to the patients makes all the difference between failure and success.

How can we define that “something special” that makes us different from our competition and that will be the reason why have patients decided to come to our dental office?

Start by answering the following set of questions:

1. What are the most important services I want to provide to my patients?
2. How do I want to provide and deliver those services?
3. Who is my ideal patients? What are their needs? What is their definition of success?
4. What is the level of service I want to provide?
5. How is the look and feel of my dental office supporting that service and level of quality?

Your marketing message and promise to patients must have a big enough emotional value, so that the care for their oral health becomes stronger the other needs where they will spend money.

But most of all, your message must be authentic and it must be aligned with your values.

Patients are checking all information on internet today, so if you promise them something you have to make sure that you deliver on that promise.

Remember - it's not about the service or product!
It's about how you do it, that makes all the difference.

Not being able to hire and keep the talent

Hiring top talent today is a demanding process, which requires a lot of time, money and work invested.

We usually start by finding an old job description from the last time we were hiring, we publish it and once we collect all the received applications, we set up the interviews with the candidates - the hours we have already invested are mounting up.

Furthermore, today we usually receive much less applications due to a big shift in the workforce available on the market.

The other option is that we hire with much less time invested, through a recommendation from a friend or selecting from few candidates that applied for the job. Usually what happens is that this person leaves within few months because it wasn't the right fit with your organisation and values, but in this short time such a person will create a loss of energy and momentum in your existing team.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, hiring become a top priority and a “nightmare” - over 80% of the dental offices are currently looking to hire staff members.

Lack of systems and protocols

One of the signs that you are doing well in your “owner” role is the existence and implementation of systems and protocols in your clinic.

Lack of systems and protocols means you have a “job” not a “business”.

If your dental office is not able to function without you, that you have a serious problem - longterm result is a overworked “operator” and not a successful “owner”.

How do you know you don't have enough systems and protocols in place? The most common symptom is that everybody is coming to you for an answer to every problem that happens in your dental office.

Although some owners like this position of controlling everything, such a dental offices cannot grow and are not scalable, as everything depends on a single person.

As soon as you create a clear organisation scheme and start to train your staff and implement well defined and documented protocols, the sooner your will arrive to the desired destination of financial and personal freedom.