

The Art of a Well-Crafted Response

Team Champion Message:

Over the past month one of the most common discussed topics has been how to sift and sort through potential patients on phone calls when the focus goes to “costs” or “insurance.” As we discuss, most people do not know exactly what questions to ask, so they tend to go back to what they know, which is the money. The fact is too often the focus of your prospective patients is based on false or misguided notions. It’s not that all patients are wrong so much as they simply don’t know any better. But for you the dental expert it’s frustrating just the same. Therefore it’s up to you to educate your patients, as part of your overall new patient experience, to get them thinking the right way about your services.

As is the case with dental practices all over the United States and Canada, the classic example we come across all the time is when potential patients who are shopping around (typically not those who are referred to us) for a new dentist of choice tell us they want to know the cost right away and know how insurance will work. We all have heard this enough times, and I know many of you have been working hard on how to counter that objection. Coming up with a solid and disarming rebuttal can quickly bring the naysayers around to the right mindset to make an informed decision. I know the majority of your local competitors still fumble this one away despite their having been in the business for years. Here is another version of a response you can use:

“Mrs. Smith, first of all, I appreciate your wanting to know what the fees of (fill in the type of service) will be, and we’ll get to that. But before we go any further I just want to make sure you understand that over the years it’s been my experience that out of every 20 to 25 people I talk to only a couple will end up scheduling an appointment after hearing what the lowest fee will be for

what you are inquiring. You see, it comes down to a simple fact that most dental practices in town don't take the time to discuss what is most important with you, which is there is no way to accurately quote a fee for (service being requested) because there are too many personal variables that will lead to the final fee for the procedure. What typically happens is someone will quote you a number that is on a piece of paper in front of them knowing it will ultimately be different once you come in for your appointment, so they are happy to tell you what you want to hear on the phone asking you to take it or leave it just to get you on the schedule. How can they assume one fee is accurate for everyone? Ultimately, whether you choose us or to have your treatment done at all, I want to make sure you can make the best, most informed decision that meets your personal oral health and individual situation Would you be open to setting up an appointment with us so you can confidently know what is needed so you can be satisfied with the results, rather than disappointed because you were told one thing and then presented another higher fee? "

We can then go on to ask the prospective patients questions we know are important for them to know, but they may not know to ask.

How do you think a patient would respond to this question:

"Mrs. Smith, would you be upset if I quoted you "X" for a price over the phone, just to get you to schedule an appointment, then we quote you a higher fee once we examine you because there was more work needed to accomplish what it is you want to take care of?"

I believe we all know the answer to this question. We could then go on to say:

"Thank you Mrs. Smith, I had a feeling you would answer the question that way. This is why I am taking the time to guide you through this process to help

you be happy with the decision you will make when selecting the right dental practice to take care of you. We would love the opportunity to become your practice of choice and want the relationship to start out the right way, not by creating a situation you and I both know will upset you. Do you agree with that approach?"

Here again, the answer most likely will be "Yes." If it isn't, I would run away quickly and refer this person to your "favorite" competitor down the road.

We can continue on by stating:

"I am glad you agree Mrs. Smith! It is really important to us that you receive individual attention because developing a relationship built on trust and transparency is our highest priority. We believe people make great decisions when a relationship can be established first."

A well-crafted response can lead to big breakthroughs when it comes to accurately interviewing prospective patients during their first call to your practice. Instead of dismissing them as a "C" patient right away, give them a chance to be educated on how to be a good patient. Of course, there are going to be percentage of people calling who truly are not a good fit for the practice and we want to avoid them at all costs. Imagine if we could "coach" 30-40% of these people into becoming an "A" or "B" patient simply by giving them some guidance on how to make the right decision about choosing a dental practice.

As you get comfortable with this approach you will notice the responses turning from negative to positive. Once you establish you are truly looking out for them the good ones will always come around.

You will maybe get a handful that just keep pressing you about costs and insurance no matter what. That is when you will know to walk away from those folks. Quite

frankly, they are not our kind of people and we do not like doing business with them because in the end there is rarely any loyalty or dependability to be found with them.

At your next team meeting I would encourage you to sit down and start identifying the real questions people would benefit from asking, or at least thinking about, before choosing a dental practice. After identifying the best questions, carefully and deliberately start crafting powerful answers to those questions so they will have no other choice but to view you as their one and only option. Again, put yourself in the patient's shoes.

When the day comes when a patient says to you, "Wow, I didn't even think about asking that!" then you know you've done your job and done it the right way.

All of us probably know at least three to five questions patients don't know to ask and would benefit from asking us before agreeing to any commitment. Once you have identified these critical questions for yourself I would incorporate them – and your answers – into your qualifying phone call presentation.

Although the focus on this article is about a New Patient phone call, it can be applied to every step of the experience when you are seeking an agreement from the patient to get them closer to saying "Yes" to your diagnosis.

Like anything practice makes perfect, and enough repetition of your responses will put the confidence in your words. And how confident do you think your patient will feel when you've got the right answer for every one of his or her questions? I think we all know the answer to that!

Today, choose to be extraordinary!

Kevin