

PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLES
WRITTEN BY YOU
OUR MEMBERS!

MEMBER FEATURES



MEET THE MEMBER

After 21 years in the floral industry, lifetime AADOM member Monica Payne, FAADOM, found her true passion when she made the shift into dentistry in 2012. She is practice administrator for a multi-location practice in the MS delta area: Lifetime Dental, PLLC. In addition to managing the clinics, in 2018 she and her doctors started Surety Dental Solutions, to provide team-building and consulting services as well as offer dental and medical insurance filing for other dental practices.

BLOCK SCHEDULING

FOR THE PRACTICE ADMINISTRATOR

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY MONICA PAYNE, FAADOM

Do you ever hear the rumble of your workday coming to an end and think, “Surely it can’t be 5:00 already!”? Where did the time go? Did I accomplish ANYTHING? What actually did happen today?

Welcome to THE CLUB!

Over the past few years, I’ve been a through a real-life transformation. I have found myself morphing from the girl-at-the-front-desk type of office manager in a single-doctor practice to a DSO administrator maneuvering between clinics and a centralized billing/operations center. The shift was challenging, yet exciting, because I enjoy a fast-paced work environment and changing tasks frequently. But what I did not do initially was properly schedule myself so that I controlled my day rather than my day controlling me.

As office managers, it’s inevitable that we will encounter numerous interruptions throughout our day. Whether it is endless emails, meetings with doctors, technology failures, or a team member needing to “chat”, our personal productivity wanes as the hours go by. In my initial position at the smaller practice, I had a mental checklist of all tasks that needed

completing on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. It was a tangible list...morning huddle, print reports, make deposit, submit insurance, etc. Even though my job seemed easier to manage with a checklist, I would find myself working late and on weekends to complete it all. What I discovered is that while checklists are useful at times, they do not account for our time. The ability to manage my time had spiraled out of control...even at the smaller practice.

The realization of this downfall led me to the question, “How can I stay in control of my productivity rather than feeling defeated at the end of the workday?”

Not sure where to start, I contacted my longtime friend and practice management consultant, Sharon Tiger, to assist me in untangling the intricate web and get me back on track (in control). After a lengthy brainstorming session, together we devised a plan to keep me on task throughout the day: block scheduling (the same method we use to frame our doctor’s daily schedule).

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...BLOCK SCHEDULING CONTINUED

What is “block scheduling”? The practice of planning each minute of your day in advance, and dedicating “blocks” of time for certain tasks and responsibilities.

FIVE STEPS TO EFFECTIVE BLOCK SCHEDULING

STEP 1: Brain Dump - Using the old-fashioned pen and paper method, the notes app on your phone or any note-taking app, start by making a list of everything you do daily.

STEP 2: Categorize - Label tasks C, D or S.

Commitments: things such as meetings, appointments, projects with due dates, etc.

Deep thinking tasks: the things that require your complete attention and focus.

Shallow thinking tasks: tasks that you could pick right back up if interrupted.

STEP 3: Create a Template

1. Block off time for commitments. Anything with a time, date, or deadline attached to it.
2. Create blocks for “deep thinking” tasks. Plan these items for the times of day that are the least

demanding on you and in which you are most productive. Times when you are able to put a “do not disturb” sign on your door (probably not at the very beginning or end of the workday). You should only be interrupted with “true” emergencies.

3. Create blocks for “shallow thinking” tasks. Encourage your team to hold calls and questions during this time, but you can be a little more flexible than with “deep thinking” blocks.
4. Email, phone calls, social media. We need to be mindful of how much time we spend on these tasks each day; they are necessary, but should not be allowed to infiltrate our entire day.

STEP 4: Fill in Your Blocks - Make time in your schedule to map out your day for tomorrow, so that when you leave the office, you are FREE to spend time with your family and can take much needed “down-time”, rather than worrying about how tomorrow will flow.

TIPS

- Communicate what you are doing with your doctors and team. Help them to understand that this is important for your productivity and that you need their help in following your schedule. They should adhere to your new schedule and the times that you have blocked off as available.
- In the beginning, overestimate the time each task will take; we are typically over-achievers causing us to think we can accomplish more than is realistically possible. It will create frustration if we are not hitting our goals.
- Schedule buffers and breaks between your tasks, giving your brain time to transition from one to the next, as well as a couple of breaks to regroup throughout the day.
- REVISE as needed! Do not get overwhelmed; it will take trial and error to work out a schedule that works the best for you. Know from the start that your original schedule will probably change... that is OKAY...that is NORMAL!

Happy Scheduling! ■

