



# WHAT ARE YOU WORTH?

*Salary Discussions for Dental Office Managers*

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY BEVERLY WILBURN, DAADOM

Tune into any social media group of dental managers on any given day and there is bound to be a question about dental manager salaries.; dental managers simply relying on one another to sort out the complex and differing pay ranges of managers' salaries across the U.S.

Determining your worth is very personal. When looking solely at an hourly or salaried rate, we often miss out on some value-added benefits.

Here are three things to consider when determining in your worth:

## 1. AM I BEING PAID A FAIR HOURLY WAGE OR SALARY?

This is usually the first question someone asks. "I make \$28.00 hourly and I do this specific list of duties. Is this good?" What they sometimes don't think about is that many of these groups have managers all across the country, and rates can vary widely between different states. Wages can also vary depending on which part of the state your dental office is located. Are you in the suburbs, a rural area, or a major metropolitan community? It is unreasonable to think a manager in Los Angeles,

California would make the same as a manager in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Use salary surveys like salary.com or DentalPost.net, both of which update salary averages annually at minimum and will give a much more accurate reading of your local pay range.

## 2. WHAT IS MY QUALITY OF LIFE LIKE?

Do you commute eight minutes to the office? Are you able to attend baseball games and football practices and gymnastics lessons and school plays? Are you able to vacation, have a hobby, or take college classes? Having time to do what you love at home or out of the office makes for a great work/life balance.

Many people now believe that having a better balance between work and home is worth more than getting a raise. Our stress is reduced. Quality of life improves. An office willing to work with your schedule on Tuesday afternoon so that you can leave early to have a date night with your husband, a picnic dinner with your kids, or take that extra college class you've been wanting to complete



has a value. A doctor/owner that introduces and willingly pays for technology to make our jobs easier or reduce our time spent on tasks has a value. You determine what that value is.

## 3. WHAT IS MY TOTAL COMPENSATION PACKAGE?

Don't forget to factor in benefits such as paid time off, bonuses, and healthcare benefits. If the office you work for is fully paying or partially covering your healthcare premium, explore outside healthcare options and see what the worth really is. Healthcare and paid time off can often add up to several thousand dollars per year in salary. Often when practices can't afford to offer a physical raise, they may be able to offset benefits with things like extra paid time off.

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Some even offer perks like massages, car washes, laundry service, or mileage/travel reimbursement. Uniform allowances and reimbursement for tuition expenses, continuing education, and childcare expense are all great tools to use for negotiation of salary when the practice numbers don't support the ability for a salary increase.

Know your worth and be prepared to address it if you feel overworked and underpaid. Don't rely on social media circles to determine your value. "I haven't

had a raise in three years" just isn't enough for many practice owners to increase a manager's salary. Good and open discussions with your doctor or owner about your salary will lead to better communication in your working relationship. When you are ready to ask for an increase, bring to the table the practice statistics, your personal leadership accomplishments, and the benefits you have physically brought to the owner and the team. Give them the data, come armed with facts, and guide them to wanting to give you more. Tell them why you are worth it, because you are. ■



### MEET THE MEMBER

Beverly Wilburn, DAADOM, is the office manager of Karl A. Smith, DDS, LLC Periodontics and Implants. She works with dental specialists on case acceptance and marketing services and consults for several dental malpractice attorneys on risk management and evaluation of practice administration systems. She is a Lifetime member of AADOM, a member of three local AADOM chapters in the Washington DC area and serves as the Executive Administrator for the Virginia Society of Periodontists.