



Dancing with Grace

REPRIORITIZE TO MAKE MANAGEMENT FUN AGAIN

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY JOANNE MILES, MAADOM, RDA, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT, PRODUCTIVE DENTIST ACADEMY

Do you ever feel like some days your job is more like a firefighter than office manager? Your day begins and ends putting out fires, rather than confidently steering a smoothly functioning dental practice?

If so, you are not alone. According to *FutureDentics*, the number one concern dental office managers experience is burnout. As a pivotal position in the practice, dental office managers are responsible for multiple tasks with equally weighted importance. Combined with unexpected daily surprises from patient no-shows, equipment failure, and team conflict, it is common to get stuck in reaction mode, rather than proactive management.

Fortunately, there is a better way. The strategy to getting out from behind the 8-ball so you can be in control of an efficiently run practice is easier than you think. Minor adjustments to how you start the day can be all it takes to go from feeling exhausted and defeated to succeeding and accomplishing your goals.

#1 ALIGN TIME WITH PRIORITIES

Billionaire Jeff Bezos says one of his secrets to success is performing

the most important tasks early, when the brain is fresh and alert.

Arriving 30-45 minutes before huddle is an ideal time to check your numbers and prepare for any potential staffing issues. It will be a quiet, uninterrupted time to:

- Check previous day deposits
- Update QuickBooks and ledgers
- Make sure everything is balanced

Think of the tasks that require your focused concentration, such as 401k administration. Completing this task first thing in the morning before the hum of the practice is at a fever pitch will give you a much better chance for effective execution. This gives you added mental bandwidth to navigate unexpected situations that will require your immediate attention later in the day.

Getting a quick jumpstart before the team arrives will also allow you to take a look at the schedule and spot any potential obstacles or prepare for staffing issues that may pop up, such as dead car batteries, accidents, or illness.

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#2 MORNING HUDDLE: ENGAGE ALL 5 SENSES

Check the emotional temperature of the room before beginning the daily routine. Look at your team. What do you see? Are shoulders slumped, eyes bright or sleepy? What do you hear? Is the team laughing and smiling, or are some being more quiet and reserved than usual?

Gauging the emotional collective will help you allocate time to your team in a way that benefits both the practice and the person. While one team member may need a personal touch from you to see if they are feeling all right, another team member may be eager to begin and can support the day by sterilizing some equipment from an implant case that was performed late yesterday afternoon.

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The morning huddle is also an ideal opportunity for you to anticipate whether the day is going to be in harmony, or out of tune. For example, there may be a patient on the schedule coming in and you know the doctor is specific about having a certain amount of time isolated for this patient so he/she can provide undivided attention. But in reviewing the schedule, you see that hasn't happened. Seize this time to align with your assistant to see what you can do to support solving this scenario so it can be a great experience for everyone involved.



MEET THE MEMBER

As a Business Development Consultant for Productive Dentist Academy, Joanne is known as the Swiss Army knife for business. With decades of experience in growing dental practices across the nation, she holds a passion for sharing proven methods that guide dentists to grow from start-up to large multi-practice organizations. Her area of expertise and focus is business operations, team development, and patient experience. You can contact her at JoanneMiles@ProductiveDentist.com.

A true practice administrator knows the power of the team around them. Are you hitting your goal for the day? If not, this is your chance to look at where you may be able to make it up, and more importantly, see if your team picks up on it. You may hear a hygienist say, "hey, I see we are short of our grab bag bonus by \$600, and I noticed that Mrs. Jones, who is coming in at 10, has outstanding treatment. The doctor has some space over here and we may be able to schedule her today in that space!"

#3 GET IN TUNE TO THE RHYTHM OF THE PRACTICE

Being an office manager is more than catering to the business side of the practice. As soon as you know nothing is urgently pressing at your desk and patients are being brought back to treatment, take 15-30 minutes and observe the surroundings in the clinical area. The sterilization room is a great place to be just enough out of the way, but fully present to see and listen.

You will be amazed at how much you can hear coming from the treatment rooms:

- Is there a need that may have been missed during huddle?
- Are we running on time, or are we lagging?
- Is the clinical team connecting and building relationships with the patients?
- What are they patients saying? How is their tone? Are they happy, concerned, or other?
- If a patient is unhappy, is the situation being managed well?
- What are the doctors saying

and how is it being received?

- Is there an equipment failure preventing us from running on time?

This step allows you to know within the first 30 minutes what tempo is being set by both the team and patients. This is your proactive opportunity to catch any beats that may be off early in the morning so you can activate a plan that ensures the rest of the day runs as expected.

The other benefit to spending these few moments on your feet is the trust it builds with your team. Demonstrating your commitment to being present and supportive reassures the team that the day is being set up for success, and as a servant leader, you are here to support their success.

You can extend this connection throughout the day by listening to the rhythm using the communication set-up in the practice. If you have a headset, listen for queues for treatment planning. If you don't already, you will begin to instinctively hear when a spinning drill goes silent that indicates there may be a problem. Shifting from reactionary to proactive mode also allows you to listen for opportunities that grow the practice. Giving yourself space to actively listen during the day provides key insights into what matters most to the team, patient, doctor, and practice:

- Are obstacles getting in the way of team enjoying the job and delivering great patient care?

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- Is there a system that maybe isn't as efficient as you thought it was?
- If there was an additional piece of equipment, would this procedure be faster and easier to complete?

The reality is that graceful management does mean coming in a few minutes early so you can reap the rewards. Your day becomes more manageable, you can pivot quickly and stay in control, team satisfaction goes up, and you can enjoy eight hours of fun, rather than feeling tired and defeated. ■



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