



8 MOVES that PAY

Maximizing Case Acceptance

a PARAGON featured resource

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by Ken Runkle – America’s Profitability Expert™

Every day your mailbox is filled with offers promising to “take your practice to the next level” or “increase new patients” or “boost case acceptance.”

Some of these programs produce results while others simply make promises.

One massive benefit of having served dental practices for over twenty-five years is that I’ve been able to see first-hand what really works and what does not work in many different practice environments throughout the country. The eight moves listed below have proven enormously effective in maximizing case acceptance and increasing the bottom line. In fact, they are being used right now in the most successful practices we serve.

Begin making these moves today:

1. Start with a Treatment Coordinator

When a new patient enters your practice, the first and last person they see should be your Treatment Coordinator.

What is a Treatment Coordinator?

A Treatment Coordinator can be any staff member trained by the doctor to effectively develop relationships with patients and successfully present cases.

Beginning and ending with a Treatment Coordinator allows new patients to develop a comfort level with someone in your practice while establishing trust. Studies show that we tend to bond with the first person we meet in new situations. For example, you may still be friends with the first person you met entering college or dental school. The Treatment Coordinator should be the first handshake and the last goodbye.

If you are unfamiliar with the role of a Treatment Coordinator (TC) in terms of case acceptance, let me briefly share some highlights. First, it is critical to understand that the TC must be a “raving fan” of the doctor and the practice. His or her level of passion will speak volumes to new patients. Secondly, the TC must always share the following information with new patients:

1. The **history of the practice** and how it has served the area with excellence.
2. The **doctor’s bio and brag**. The doctor should approve a three-sentence bio and brag statement that highlights his or her training and expertise.
3. The **philosophy of the practice**. This is a critical element that sets the tone for case acceptance. Below are four sample philosophical statements:
 - ❖ Doctor X is very conservative and if he says you need the treatment, I would recommend you pursue the treatment.
 - ❖ Our goal is always optimum oral health.
 - ❖ We practice Golden Rule Diagnostics, meaning that we treat you the way we would treat our own families.
 - ❖ We always take a long-term approach with your dental health, meaning we are willing to spread out your treatment over time.

***Select, train and begin using a Treatment Coordinator this month
and watch your case acceptance rates begin to rise.***

2. Loosen Up Accounts Receivable

Within the current economic environment it may be wise to loosen-up your accounts receivable for long-term patients. With patients who have proven to be reliable over an extended period of time, offering them many payment options increases their response to proposed treatment.

We recommend implementing an Automated Clearing House (ACH) program, which allows you to set up patients on a monthly withdrawal directly from their bank account. Your bank will be familiar with setting up this program for your practice. Many patients are more willing to agree to treatment if they can pay \$100 a month for 8 months rather than \$800 today. The ACH approach ensures the patient's payment arrives monthly in your account, protecting you, and it also makes it easier for the patient.

The more payment options you offer, the higher the rate of case acceptance and case completion.

3. Be Aware of B.I.C. Opportunities

Sometimes a convenient opportunity for case presentation and acceptance reveals itself while you have the patient's "butt-in-chair" (B.I.C.). In other words, it makes sense to present and complete other necessary dentistry while the patient is numbed and prepped for another procedure. "Mrs. Smith, would you like me to go ahead and take care of this other tooth while we have you ready?"

As an encouragement to the patient to say yes, you may want to offer an incentive like a credit toward their co-pay amount.

Caution:
Please show professional integrity with B.I.C. opportunities.

4. Always Present Pictures

Pictures speak louder than words.

As standard operating procedure, all new patients to your practice should have pictures taken showing their current smile. Having your Treatment Coordinator show the patient what their teeth look like now and what they could look like with some treatment evokes a deeper emotional response than words.

Pictures are the prelude to cosmetic cases.

5. Always Present Cosmetics

Regardless of the patient's situation, we always recommend presenting cosmetic options to all patients. The more you present cosmetics, the more cosmetic dentistry you will perform.

In the past, many doctors have asked their patients, "What don't you like about your smile?" With that approach, studies say that 1 out of 2 patients say they are happy with their smile. If a patient says she is happy with her smile, all opportunities for presenting cosmetic dentistry fly out the door.

What if you simply provided your new patient with a picture of what her smile could look like? Many successful practices make it standard procedure to take a picture of every new patient smiling. Then, using computer programs, they show the patient what their smile could look like. A picture of a brand new smile on a patient's face is a powerful case acceptance tool.

Warning:

If you cannot perform the dentistry at the level reflected in the picture you show the patient, do not show the picture.

6. Keep Patients in the Practice

When presenting cases to new patients, preventive dentistry tends to take a backseat to more extensive procedures. Understanding the long-term value of keeping a patient in your practice can shift the focus to making preventive dentistry (regular prophys) a priority.

In other words, as the TC presents a case, he or she should always end with: “Doctor X believes the most important thing you must do is make sure you schedule your preventive dentistry.”

We also recommend that you, the doctor, as the most powerful voice in your practice, must always emphasize the importance of scheduling preventive dentistry with every patient during every visit.

*The more patients you keep in your practice,
the more opportunities you create for case acceptance.*

7. Guard Your Expectations

All positive and negative energy, words and attitude coming from the doctor and staff directly impact the patient’s view of the practice and their openness to accepting their case.

If you have high expectations for case acceptance and practice excellence, make sure it is reflected in the way you and your staff speak, act and engage with patients. Resist negative thinking when cancellations come and problems arise. Your negative energy and words may keep you from capitalizing on opportunities presented later in the day.

Make sure your words and actions always reflect your high expectations, not negative thoughts and opinions.

You, the doctor, are the mood ring of the practice.

8. Consider a Facility Facelift

As society experiences change more rapidly, the appearance of your practice needs to keep up. Businesses used to think in terms of facility updates every eleven years. That soon moved to nine years, then to seven years and updates are now recommended every five years.

When was the last time you gave your practice a facelift? New flowers, a new sign, new carpet, new furniture, etc... Or, maybe it's time to clean the clutter off the front desk.

A facility facelift breathes new energy into a practice and provides a more welcoming environment for new patients.

The environment of your practice sets the atmosphere for case acceptance.

Do not hesitate. Begin making these moves today to create a more profitable practice tomorrow.

Go for it!

– **Ken Runkle, America's Profitability Expert™**, is the founder and president of Paragon Management, Inc. and has been helping dental practices reach peak profitability for twenty-four years.
