# Attempt To Appoint & Success

## PHONE POWER

patient NEWS practice ZEBRA
DENTAL MARKETING & TECHNOLOGY

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*Perfect for energy-boosting huddles with your entire team!*

ATTEMPTING TO APPOINT & SUCCESS
Part 1 (5 mins)
Part 2 (3 mins)
Part 3 (4 mins)

# KEY POINTS TO BRAINSTORM

- ❒ Is the person who is answering the phone friendly?
- ❒ What is their stress level? Does it come across to the potential patient?
- ❒ Do they have a mirror close by as a reminder to smile?
- ❒ Do they realize that the smile on their face (or not!) comes across in their voice?
- ❒ Are they prepared for the call with the knowledge of available appointments?
- ❒ Does the practice have pre-blocked appointments available for new patients?
- ❒ Are new-patient openings available at convenient times where you know the practice will be <u>on time</u> or <u>have flexibility</u> to run over into another block of time?
- ❒ Does the person on the phone have the answers to the most frequently asked questions?
- ❒ Have these answers been scripted, written down, and approved by the doctor?
- ❒ Is their work space designed so they can ***focus on the caller*** without being distracted?

Thank you for reading Phone Power!
We know it will help you convert more callers into new patients for your practice.

# PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE

## YOU NEED A RELATIONSHIP TO SUCCEED

20% of patients who do not schedule with a practice say it was due to a lack of attention paid to them: the telephone call handler seemed distracted and definitely not focused on the caller.

Other patients felt rushed – like they were not important enough. No time was allotted for questions. Or that the person on the phone simply did not listen.

To sum up, the call handler was not welcoming, energetic, responsive, or interested.

**Now this is IMPORTANT!** Make sure you capture the following information from each caller:

- NAMES – spelling – and pronunciation. Sometimes it may be necessary to PHONETICALLY write it – to assist team members during the initial visit.
- TELEPHONE NUMBER – a simple reason could be: *"...just in case we are disconnected."*
- HOW THEY LEARNED OF YOUR PRACTICE and what prompted them to call. They may have seen your postcard or newsletter, or a friend may have referred them.
- And hopefully their EMAIL ADDRESS. This will become a valuable marketing tool in the future.

20% of patients who do not schedule with a practice say it was due to a lack of attention paid to them.

Brainstorm with your teammates. Discuss ways of gathering the new patient's email address. As an example, if the new patient is asking about *Invisalign*® or implants, you may suggest emailing them a fact sheet.

Capturing this information is very important for future marketing efforts. If a patient does not schedule, you can contact them in a few weeks or at a later date. Their needs or situation in life may change ... and this will allow you to show them you'd like to be of service.

# USE AN ASSUMPTIVE CLOSE

**ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THE CALL WITH AN AWARENESS OF ALL AVAILABLE EMERGENCY AND STANDARD APPOINTMENT SLOTS?**

Don't ask your patient, *"When would you like to come in?"* Usually their choice is not available and then the call begins negatively. Instead, try using an ASSUMPTIVE CLOSE:

> *"For your convenience, we have appointments available – 9:30am on Tuesday OR Wednesday at 4pm. Which will work best for you?"*

This technique varies depending on the type of marketing situation. In practice scheduling, the assumptive close is often a choice between two available appointments. The question does not include the option of saying no. By asking the potential new patient if she would rather come in on Tuesday at 11am or Friday at 3pm, you're redirecting her mind toward choosing between two "yes" options – rather than between yes and no.

When doing this, you assume that you have successfully satisfied the potential new patient's requirements  and they're comfortable with the decision to schedule an appointment with your practice.

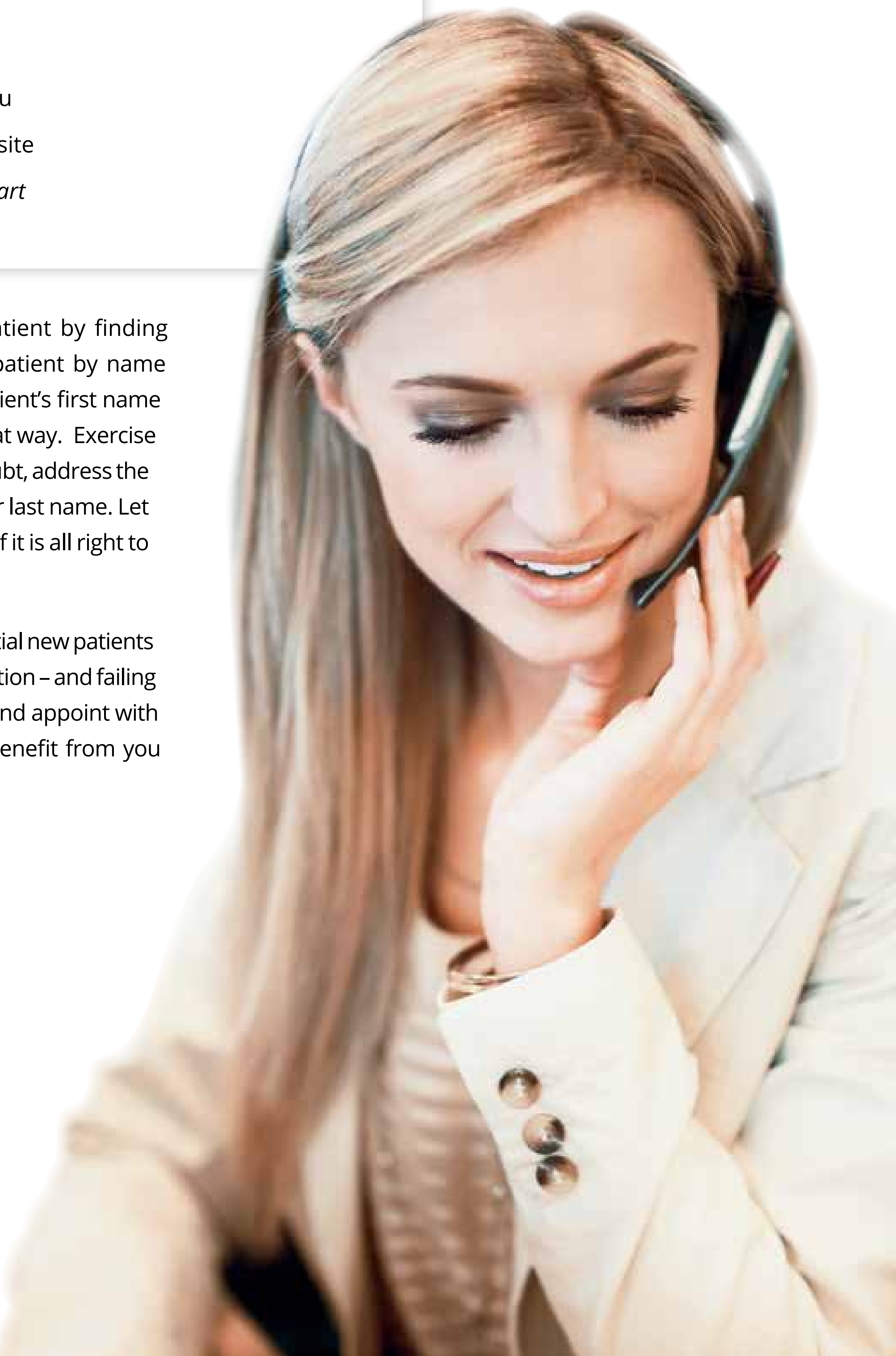
Definitely try to offer the new patient the earliest available appointment – within 48 hours if possible. Longer wait times between call and appointment can mean increased cancellations.

# FOCUS ON THE CALLER

Ensure your work space is designed so you can focus on the caller without being distracted. Are all the tools you need close at hand?

Are you building relationships on every call? If someone calls with a simple request: **"What are your hours?"**

- Start building a relationship
- Involve them in a conversation
- Find out how they heard about you
- Ask if they have been to your website
- Start telling them *what sets you apart in your community.*



Establish a rapport with the new patient by finding common ground. Address the new patient by name once you learn it. You may use the patient's first name if they introduce themselves to you that way. Exercise good judgment on this and when in doubt, address the patient using Mr., Mrs., or Ms. and their last name. Let the patient be the one to let you know if it is all right to use their first name.

For best results, avoid loading up potential new patients with administrative and clinical information – and failing to appoint. Often they leave your call and appoint with another practice. Your competitors benefit from you educating the potential new patient.

# ATTEMPT TO APPOINT

You need to have a level of influence over your new-patient callers in order to get the appointment. The appointment is the single most important goal of every new-patient call.

Building trust will be easier when you engage your caller with the proper greeting and know your practice's competitive advantages. Beyond that, if you can genuinely convey your desire to help them and your desire to have them as a patient of yours, you'll win the call.

## People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care

Your ability to build a good relationship within a few minutes into a new-patient call will be strengthened when you make the caller feel important. Here are six ways to make your new patient feel important:

1. Simply show gratitude for their time, for contacting your office, or for reading your newsletter.
2. Don't be disagreeable. Be positive.
3. Listen actively and ask questions. You'll be perceived as more intelligent.
4. Never criticize – it lowers esteem or could make someone angry. It will result in a loss of trust with the practice.
5. Show appreciation for something the caller has accomplished.
6. Be polite, concerned, and caring. They will value and respect you in return.
7. Many people are judgemental, so if you unconditionally accept someone, it can boost self-esteem and make that person much more likely to accept and follow your recommendations.

People don't always want the least expensive service, but they do always want good customer service along with feeling that they are valued. Consumers will not buy from someone who treats them like they're not important.

### TIP:

When asked about price, you might respond with:

*"Mrs. Smith, may I ask you a question?"*

*"Is price the only thing you consider when deciding who does your dental work or are there other reasons that are important to you?"*

*"That's exactly why you should take advantage of our free consultation. You can talk through all of your questions and you'll have a chance to get to know us before making any decisions. I have tomorrow at 10am or at 2:30pm available."*

# MAINTAINING CONTROL OF THE CONVERSATION

- Acknowledge what the patient has communicated and that you can help.
- Don't pause. Move directly into offering your solution.
- Answer questions briefly without adding more information than required. You don't want your answer to inadvertently add a new objection for the patient.
- Ask your own questions and make them easy to answer.

# BUYING SIGNALS

When we are listening effectively, there are certain comments or questions that you will be able to identify as your signal that you can ask for the appointment. New patients may express very subtly their desire to book. Here are several things that translate to booking signals:

- They ask about a specific product or type of service.
- They ask about results or guarantees.
- They ask how treatment normally starts or if they can adjust something to suit their needs.
- They ask about price, insurance, or payment.
- They ask you to repeat information or they repeat a question.
- They ask your opinion or share a bad experience they had with a competing dentist.

When you respond to the patient query, remain curious and follow through with your own questions. It's important to avoid viewing any of these buying signals as objections. Remember to watch your tone and speed – remain positive, open, and helpful. Questions that ask for more detail are signals that the patient is ready to book.  It's your job to effectively recognize these signals and obtain a positive response to your presentation so that you will have a higher likelihood of booking an appointment.

# KNOW YOUR SCHEDULE

One of the worst call-handling situations we hear is a receptionist putting a caller on hold to "get the schedule." Sometimes it sounds like the schedule is a mystical item!

You know you will be receiving new-patient calls each day and you need to know your schedule.

- Know your next available appointment times.
- Be abreast of this schedule information at all times during the day.
- Reserve appointments for your various new-patient treatment requirements – consultation, tour, cleaning...
- Get the new patient into the earliest (for them most-convenient) appointment time. When patients decide they have a dental need, you need to capture them as quickly as possible, otherwise they may continue to search for providers who can service their need sooner than you. If you can get the new patient in the same or next day – within 48 hours – you're most likely to capture that patient.

Successfully managing new-patient flow takes thought, knowledge, and careful planning. This can be one of the most challenging aspects of increasing your new-patient numbers each month, but when done correctly, you will reduce stress for team and patients, you will provide a great first impression, and you will increase results.

# ROLE PLAY

One of the best training methods we use at Patient NEWS is to review calls as a team and then role play possible ways we could answer questions or handle situations differently.

1. Remember that new patients who are calling your office already know a bit about you. They probably received your newsletter, visited your website, and may have asked friends about you. That means that you're dealing with an educated and informed prospect who may already want to become a patient. Using key words from your marketing materials will provide a consistent message that will build confidence in your expertise.
2. What are the reasons that you are proud of your practice? Your focus, services, philosophy, training, awards? When a new-patient caller asks about something related to any of these, you can tell them about it and add how proud you are of xyz. This will convey your passion for your practice.
3. Repeat your key value proposition words and words that resonate with patients: caring, comfortable, trusted, compassionate, conservative, gentle, friendly, happy. How can you use these words in new-patient calls? Script out talking points and post them where call handlers can quickly refer to them.

# ENDING THE CALL

The end of the call is another opportunity to WOW the potential patient. Before you hang up, ask:

*"Is there anything else I can assist you with today?"* **OR** *"If you have any further questions, I'll be glad to answer them. Please call me."*

**BE SINCERE ... SAY IT LIKE YOU MEAN IT ... SAY IT WITH A SMILE!**

In our industry, you must realize that for any number of reasons, not everyone will appoint immediately. What do you do if they don't? Brainstorm with your team. Create a follow-up plan. Have that plan in place. Next steps can be:

- Invite the new patient to your website and reaffirm that they can email any remaining questions to you through the website.
- Mail them practice or procedure brochures.
- Email a related clinical report ... another reason to capture the email address.
- Schedule a follow-up call.

  *"I'll call you next week to be sure you have found a solution to your problem."*

**OR**

*"I'm calling to be sure you received the material I sent."*

Throughout all new-patient calls, you're continuing to build rapport for the future. With a proactive follow-up plan in place, you'll find another 25% will eventually appoint.

All of these techniques will assist you in capturing additional information.

# TOP TIPS FOR ADDITIONAL SUCCESS

When you have successfully booked a new patient, use one of our top tips for additional success – ask this simple question...

*"Is there anyone else in your family that you'd like to book an appointment for? We can even schedule you at the same time!"*

You can DOUBLE your new-patient volumes by using this question for each new-patient caller.

Don't forget to **SAY THANK YOU!**

It's amazing how many new-patient calls we listen to that don't include this simple phrase. So guess what? This becomes a competitive advantage to you. Show gratitude. Don't take a patient's business for granted. In fact, there was an etiquette poll that found that nearly five out of ten people don't always say thanks – and that remembering to do so is a sales point of difference. Be warm, personable, and tell the patient – whether they have booked an appointment OR NOT – that you appreciate the time they took to call your practice. Thank them!

# BOOK THE APPOINTMENT

Now that you've established a friendly tone, identified the reasons for the call, and overcome any objections, it's time to focus on booking the appointment. In order to do this, you'll want to:

Always thank the patient for calling your practice.

- Maintain control of the call by offering various solutions for the patient.
- Control the conversation, for example, *"Will this be the first time you're coming to our office? Let me be the first to welcome you."*
- Make more than one attempt to book an appointment or secure a consultation visit, particularly if you have a FREE Consultation or FREE 2nd Opinion offer. Every patient has the potential to take advantage of this offer. Let the doctor present treatment options face-to-face.
- Build trust by using an assumptive close: *"We have appointments available Tuesday at 9am or Thursday at 4pm. Which would be best for you?"*
- Handle insurance questions briefly and effectively (after all, you need to know so much more about your patient's condition and plan to really answer questions). 70% of patients do have some form of insurance, so be prepared to be as helpful as you can in assisting them use, and benefit from, their plan.
- Ensure you have the patient's name and contact information.
- Offer additional assistance, directions, email information, etc.
- Always thank the patient for calling your practice.

# BUILD FOR THE FUTURE

Throughout all new-patient calls, you're continuing to build rapport for the future. The end of a call is another opportunity to WOW the potential patient. Before you hang up ask, "Is there anything else I can assist you with today?" Be sincere. Mean it.

Practice ZEBRA Call Conversion metrics, performance, word clouds, trends, recordings, and scorecards will help you monitor progress. Listen to recorded calls as a team to identify ways you could improve. We've been doing this with our teams at Patient NEWS and it's very helpful, although it was a little uncomfortable at first. Remember, no one is listening to judge – only to help improve your ability to convert more new-patient callers into active patients. And at Patient NEWS, everyone has a mirror at their desk to remind them to smile.  We practice what we preach!

For assistance at any time ... please contact your Account Manager and they will be delighted to assist you.

**Everyone at Patient NEWS thanks you for your business and we look forward to helping you build and strengthen your patient relationships.**

*Here's to success in converting more patient inquiries into appointments!*

For the dental practice or DSO that wants to **STAND OUT** & *Grow!*

patient NEWS practice ZEBRA

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