

These three software tools boost practice productivity

Learn how software can help avoid the “games” of scheduling



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Technology Advisor Linda Elie has over 35 years of industry experience – the past 20 at Patterson Dental helping teams optimize workflows with smart software choices.

Since the start of her career at Patterson, Technology Advisor Linda Elie has seen software undergo significant changes and upgrades. However, the concerns about using new software remain – office teams are oftentimes wary of losing control of the way they communicate.

“I’ve seen a lot change from paper to digital processes,” Elie said. “When I first started working with Patterson, the big ‘wow’ for me was people would no longer have to fill out paper insurance claims.”

“Now, we expect automation to make our lives easier and efficient. So many places were scared about moving away from paper; there was this fear about losing control.”

These days, with an abundance of software solutions available, practice teams can choose the efficiencies they believe will take their office to the next level – improvements like **scheduling notifications, patient messaging, and website enhancements.**

1

SCHEDULING NOTIFICATIONS

Elie said one of the concerns she hears as she consults with office teams is their struggle to manage schedules manually – especially when it comes to sending patient reminders and last-minute vacancies.

“Patients and practices seem to love when their dentist or another service provider will give them an immediate notification if an opening becomes available,” Elie said. “Patients can get in the office for a cleaning if they need it, and with a software solution program working in the background to broadcast these opportunities, it gives the practice an efficient way to fill a schedule slot that might not have otherwise been filled.”

Similarly, Elie noted automatic appointment reminders save significant time and stress on teams that already have full plates.

“Honestly, office teams don’t have the capacity to do this manually all of the time,” she said. “They have to answer phones, manage schedules, greet and dismiss patients, take payments – it’s one thing that can be taken off their plate.”



2

PATIENT MESSAGING

In her experience, Elie said one of office managers’ biggest concerns in adopting patient communication software is losing the personal touch. There’s a belief automated messaging could come across as cold.

But the truth is, offices retain full control of how each patient receives communication. If certain patients prefer receiving phone calls and dental offices can accommodate, there’s nothing saying they can’t keep doing that.

“The great thing about these solutions is they allow you to communicate the way patients want to be contacted,” Elie said. “For the ‘my dads’ of the world who have a flip phone and don’t text, you can make that phone call and stay personally connected.”



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Elie said there's usually a "light bulb" moment when office managers and other decision makers understand the ability to customize communication within specific software solutions.

"They want to keep what they think is working well, which usually involves a personal touch," she said. "When they see there are solutions that allow them to retain control, they say 'Maybe I can do that.'"



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Another facet of scheduling is simply allowing patients to do it themselves, at their convenience. Allowing them to request appointments, complete registration forms, or pay their bill online at their convenience are all items patients expect.

"People want to do things on their own when the thought arises, not on the dental office's limited hours of operation," Elie said. "If that happens to be in the middle of the night because they can't sleep, then so be it. No one wants to be stuck in a telephone queue or use time at work to accomplish a task."

When it comes down to it, an office has nothing to lose by integrating these options.

"Not every patient will have to use it, but overall it's going to have a positive impact," Elie said. "It's a convenience which expresses you understand the value of your patients' time. If available, it's a win-win for those patients looking for that solution." ●



"People want to do things on their own ... not on the dental office's hours of operation."

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