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# Are you the weakest link?

By Dr Phillip Palmer



Well, you've received your BDS or DDS, and now you're a dentist.

You attend post-grad clinical courses every year, more than enough to get the CE hours necessary to keep your registration going.

And yet... Somehow, while you're doing 'ok' your practice is not giving you the rewards you deserve. You're stuck at a certain level of production, and your expenses every year seem to be rising at least as fast if not faster than any increases you can generate in fees.

Your wife says that the wife of the dentist down the road is driving the latest model whatever, and asks why she can't have one too?

When you sit and think about it it's obvious what the answer has to be. It can't be you, so, it must be someone else. It must be them!

The staff must not be doing the job they should be. The front desk staff must not be answering the phone right, or they're booking in the wrong sort of work. Maybe they're not 'closing' the patients properly. After all, you are doing the right thing: you can tell that your clinical work is way above average, you're diagnosing work in the treatment room. Why isn't the front desk staff booking them in properly? If they're booking them in, why are the patients cancelling so often? Maybe she's rude to them. I've heard from other dentists that the role of the receptionist is to make sure the appointment book is full and should people try to cancel, the front desk person should talk them around!

And it is not like they haven't been told. After all you have sent your front office staff to some courses to 'upskill them' (you don't go along of course, because after all, you do enough courses to improve your skills. This is their problem!)

Maybe it's the hygienist, if you have one. Why is she so surly? Why isn't she busier? And why can't she do more? You've heard of other hygienists who produce at least three times her salary. She must be the problem. It must also have to do with the practice's location. The guy down the street is in a much better position. It's not that their practice is more visible or has better signage but somehow that practice's location must be much more lucrative. They always seem to be getting a high volume of patients. You have always needed to market more in order to get patients.

Maybe, it could have something to do with the patients your practice attracts. For some reason you have always been stuck with the dud patients. You always get the patients that don't value their teeth or a nice smile. You get the ones that never refer their friends and always feel entitled to a discount. The always get the ones that

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don't appreciate good clinical dentistry when they see it and don't listen to your explanations while they are in the chair only to ask questions on stuff you just covered to the front desk on the way out. If only the good patients would come in...They would surely recognise how good a dentist you are.

That manipulative pushy supply rep hasn't helped things either. You have way overcapitalised on your practice and have equipment that you hardly use. Your lease repayments are definitely hurting your take home. If only you had another supply rep...

It couldn't that there is a lack of leadership, management and business skills within the practice.

It couldn't be your communication skills with patients and staff or your case presentation skills. In school they always told you that you wrote good essays.

It couldn't be anything to do with you

You couldn't possibly be the problem that is holding your practice back.

You couldn't possibly be the weakest link in this equation.....could you?

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