

Business

Simplify your practice life

Janice Charlton offers some top tips to help you create a happy balance

Becoming a practice owner was quite possibly your ultimate goal since starting out in the world of dentistry, and reaching it should make you feel at the pinnacle of your career.

However, for many dentists it can often feel like quite a lonely place, thanks to the constant treadmill of tasks that need to be carried out on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Staff wages, banking, marketing, patient enquiries, the list goes on...and that's all before you've even stepped into the dental surgery.

Running a business isn't supposed to be easy, in fact much of the fulfilment comes from creating a success out of a lot of hard work. The problem is that when things become too complicated, the joy begins to ebb away and we're left feeling as though work life is dull and toilsome.

This is where simplifying your practice life can have a dramatic effect, because it can help you to start enjoying your work again. So here are my top tips to help you make things easier, less complicated, and far more enjoyable.

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Invest in the best

Whether you're doing the gardening or removing plaque, there's a lot to be said about using the best tools available for the job in hand.

You wouldn't do the weeding with a kitchen fork, you'd buy the right equipment to help get the job done quicker, more effectively, and with a longer lasting result. Apply the same mentality to your dentistry!

You're lucky enough to work in an industry that keeps itself at the forefront of technological innovation and is renowned for always offering a world of exciting gadgets.

Keep yourself up to date with latest products coming onto the market, because many of these are designed to make your working life easier, simpler, more precise, and far more enjoyable.

With so much available right at your fingertips, my advice is to spend a little to get back a lot. Just make sure to do a bit of research and cherry pick what you invest in – you don't want to end up with a cupboard full of useless equipment.

Make the most of upcoming events and exhibitions so that you can try before you buy.

Delegate and outsource

Feeling overwhelmed by a never-ending to-do list is not a nice place to be and there comes a tipping point in business where you need to be able to delegate certain tasks. This first requires an understanding and an acceptance that you physically cannot do everything yourself, followed by allowing yourself to hand over certain jobs – something that is not as simple as it might sound!

However, effective delegation will enable you to free up your own time so that you can focus on things that are more beneficial either to your business or to your work-life balance.

If you have employed people who you trust and who have with a broad skillset between them, then consider which tasks might be better handed over to various team members. Don't just dish out the jobs you least enjoy; instead use this process as a means to enhance and improve your team by passing over interesting tasks that will provide career progression.

There will be some things that are better suited to specialised skills outside of your practice walls – such as HR, accountancy, or marketing – which is where the help of firms or freelancers can be very beneficial.

Make meetings matter

Morning huddles, monthly get-togethers or quarterly catch-ups – there's no right or wrong when it comes to meetings. What is important is the content; as long as you and your team are up to date in terms of the business, compliance activities, training, etc, choose a frequency that suits you and your practice.

The worst thing you can do is have meetings for the sake of it; this can become a waste of everyone's time.

Instead, schedule your meetings, plan for them, and make sure the content you cover is relevant.

Create an agenda and stick to it, ensure the minutes are taken and communicated to all staff afterwards, and at your follow up, check that actions points have been covered.

Incorporate monthly revenue

Offering your services for a fee puts you at what some people refer to as 'the sharp end'. This is where people pay you to carry out particular tasks that you are sufficiently skilled to be

able to offer. The great news is that there will always be teeth that require dental treatment at varying degrees, but the problem is that you are restricted by the number of hours in a day that allow you to carry out your services.

Having a source of regular monthly income can greatly reduce the stress and worry that is rife in service industries, which is where incorporating a patient payment plan can really simplify your practice life.

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At Patient Plan Direct, our administration fees are just £1.20 per patient per month, and we offer a high level of customer support to go alongside it. Patients who sign up to a dental plan are more likely to remain loyal to your practice for their care and they will become regular attenders, so you will see an improvement in their oral health as well as your bottom line.

Find balance

Your home life affects your work life, and vice versa. Often if one side isn't causing you joy or fulfilment the other will suffer. As strange as it sounds, to simplify your practice life, it helps if you can find contentment within your personal life, too.

Use time away from the practice to reduce stress through the things that put you in your happiest state. This may be through exercise, travel, quality time with family, or hobbies – whatever you do make sure it's something you enjoy and are you're passionate about.

By incorporating these handy hints to help simplify your practice life, you will hopefully begin to find more overall balance and joy in both work and social time, which is something we all want to discover! **D**



Janice Charlton fully understands the challenges of running a modern dental practice. She has vast practice management experience and is also a qualified dental therapist. She has supported hundreds of dentists and their teams across the UK in successfully establishing dental plans within their practices, whether offering a plan as an option to private fee per item, or considering a move out of the NHS.

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