Essential Steps to a **Successful 2017**

How to bring your dental office into the future

Links2Success

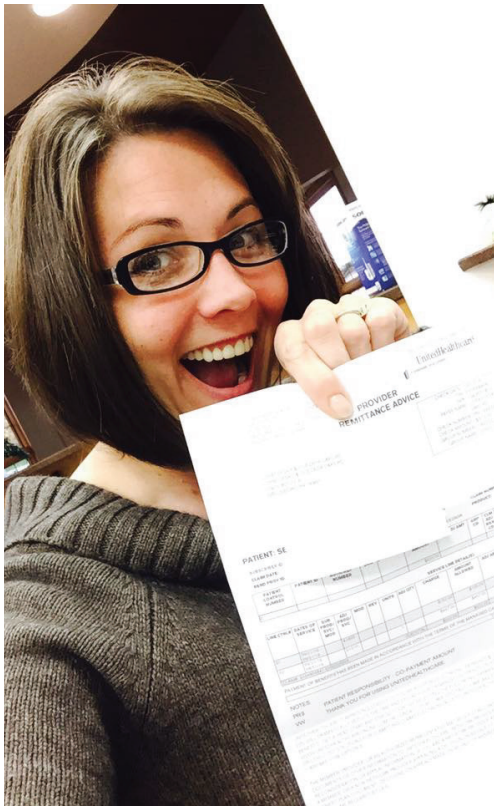
In recent years Dentists and teams are gaining more and more knowledge about the connection between oral health and overall health. As information emerges, our role as dental providers is shifting. We are no longer technicians of the oral cavity, but oral physicians, diagnosing and treating patients with their whole body in mind.

DENTAL PRACTICES CAN, AND SHOULD HELP PROTECT PATIENTS FROM SYSTEMIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS.

Often the dental provider is the single, regular healthcare provider a patient sees during the year. If we as a profession embrace our roles as oral physicians and begin treating and billing conditions that cause loss of function to medicalinsurance we can increase patient treatment acceptance, generate quality referrals from physicians, and add a sizeable amount of new production to the practice's schedule every month. This is the overarching goal of the Dentist as oral physician and dental office as wellness center model. It is a model that we believe the profession is primed and ready to perform in 2017.

What is a Wellness Center?

Just like oral surgeons have for decades, Wellness Centers can bill medical insurance for certain dental issues. This offering can not only change your relationship with patients, but also your bottom line. Practitioners will find it rewarding both emotionally and financially to work with patients to address periodontal disease, Sleep Apnea, TMD and other conditions that cause a loss of function while providing the added benefit of billing a patient's medical insurance to cover costs. Dental practices can add new diagnostic tools and treatments to support the general health of patients and increase profits. A wellness approach changes the role each team member provides. From the initial interaction, risk assessment is front and center. The intake process of a Wellness center includes gathering a complete health history including what (if any) medications are being used and why.



The Dental Assistant's role becomes one of education. Assistants explain how the oral cavity and body are connected and why it is imperative to have a full health history in the dental office. Dental Assistants in a Wellness center are akin to a physician's assistant in the doctor's office. The clinical team carries the educational element forward and conducts a series of risk assessments for oral cancer, dental caries and periodontal disease. The option for sleep assessments and TMJ testing are also included. Finally, when a patient is faced with a treatment plan for a procedure that is billable to their medical insurance, the dental office is trained and ready to provide that service.

Where to begin: 3 Key Steps

A wellness center does not happen overnight. It takes a Dentist ready to make substantial change for the better and a team that is ready to do the work to help make it happen. To begin the process of transformation there are 3 key steps to complete:

1 Write a Future Practice Statement

This is how I envision my practice 5 years from now:

2 Write an Honest Current Practice Assessment

Currently my practice looks like:

3 Write down the steps you must take to get from where you are now to where you want your practice to be:

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Next Steps

Once you have a clear vision of where you want your practice to go, you will need to reevaluate and perhaps rewrite or write for the first time, your guiding principles as a business.

Develop a New Mission/Vision for your practice. Answer the question: why does your practice exist? Who do you serve? What do you offer to patients that they can't get elsewhere?

Activity

1

Vision

Write out a compelling description of a future desired state of your practice. Make sure you can clearly picture what your practice will look like in the future. Think in terms of where you want to be. The purpose of this plan is to lay out the steps between where you want to be and your current reality.

2

Values

What do you stand for? What are the guiding principles by which your practice operates? Write these down. Facebook has 5 core values that are specific, powerful and emotionally engaging:

- **Focus on Impact**
- **Move Fast**
- **Be Bold**
- **Be Open**
- **Build Social Value**
- **You must have strong and specific values in your dental office.**

3 Determine your core values and document them:

4 Assess Current Reality

In a few paragraphs, summarize your results for 2016. It helps to look at your monthly financials. Did you collect more then you spent in overhead? Did everyone on your team provide you with numbers that covered their salary?

5

Positive Effects on Growth:

In what areas of you practice are you experiencing the most success?

6

How do you optimize those to produce continued results?

7

Negative Effects on Growth:

In what areas of your practice are you experiencing the most challenges? What do you need to change to reach your goal practice?

Consider the list below when thinking about things to add to your practice or remove in order to achieve positive growth.

- **Limit practice to a specific patient base**
- **Cater to patient needs by expanding hours, days, and providers in your current facility**
- **Expand your facility to accommodate greater patient demand**
- **Expand your presence in a market by acquiring or building new practice locations**
- **How many patients will your practice treat**
- **What clinical services will you offer**
- **Does equipment need to be replaced?**
- **Are you engaged with your community?**
- **Are you involved with MD'S in your area?**

When choosing you must answer truthfully, remember each of us is different and we should build the practice we are happy with, not what others are doing. Change cannot or should not happen overnight. It must be done with small achievable sets of initiatives that will help you move toward your goal. In most cases, you can't achieve your vision in just one year. But, you can take steps toward reaching it.

5 Initiatives to Ignite Change

Now that you have your core values and an idea of where you want to take your practice, you can determine which initiatives make the most sense to incorporate in 2017. The options are:

1

Add Wellness

Increase your team's capacity to focus on wellness by supporting continuing education. Allow the team to expand their current roles in the office. Dental Assistants can take on a significant role of educator prior to handing off the patient to the hygiene team. Trained Assistants can use an intra oral camera, take the patient's blood pressure, go over the medical history, and set the patient up for treatment.

2

Improve office efficiency

Improving your responsiveness to current patient demand and maintaining or improving the quality of care with the same number of resources (team members and operatories) can significantly ignite positive change by eliminating inefficiencies in your current systems and processes. What can you do to make your systems run smoother?

3

Broaden your level of services

Providing your patients with more clinical choices improves the value of your office and revenue from each patient visit. Consider adding: training, tools, educational opportunities and or in-office equipment.

4

Increase Demand

Do a better job of filling your team's schedule through advertising, referral programs with MD's within your area that match the treatment you are providing. Some sources to consider:

- **Local OBGYN**
- **Local Sleep Lab**
- **Local MD's (diabetics, TMD, ENT)**

5

Add new Dentists or Hygienists

Of course, you can only take this step when you have the demand and efficiencies to add someone profitably. If you do, have each Dentist offer a different specialty: Six Month Smiles, Sleep, Perio, Dentures etc.

Next Steps: Involve the team

Once you determine who you are as a practice and define the initiatives you want to accomplish over the next year, it is important to define what the goals will mean for each team member. It is critical that you involve your team. Define what the plan means to each team member by asking:

- **Does it mean they need more training in a certain area?**
- **Does it mean they need to schedule more efficiently?**
- **Does it mean they need to improve recall?**
- **Does it mean you need to add other services?**
- **Does it mean everyone in office should be part of the training?**

Protect your Future

Make sure each member knows their daily, weekly and monthly goals. This is as simple as taking your annual goals and dividing them by the number of working days in a year. The key to exceeding your goals every year is to exceed them every day. Make it a routine to share results on a daily and weekly basis. Reinforce how important each team member's part is to the practice's overall success. Celebrate the daily and weekly victories.

Create a Budget

Budgets are of utmost importance to the long-term success of your practice. You should plan your budget a year in advance. When reviewing your budget, challenge each cost; don't assume you have to pay for something this year just because you did it last year. A few more helpful tips about budgeting:

- **Your budget should show how much each team member needs to produce per hour**
- **Talk about the daily goals in your morning huddle**
- **Add tools to save you money (check directly to bank, credit cards with certain balances for offices, and % rates that can keep you with one package so you have one person to work with on all banking and services.)**
- **Never count on revenue from a new hire or new initiative until it becomes a reality**
- **Fund new initiatives with profits**
- **Don't buy something or hire someone unless you can survive a failure**
- **Talk with your bank about the benefits of a loan to set up new equipment for growth**
- **Practice saying 'no' – if you can't afford it, say so**

Commit to the plan

Each team member should agree and sign the new implementation plan so you can successfully grow. Some tips to ensure success include:

- **Post the plan where each team member can see it**
- **Check progress weekly at team meetings**
- **If you fall behind set up a plan to get back on track**
- **Celebrate the little victories and share them with your team**
- **Tools will increase your skills and increase your overhead. List what tools you are adding, and the predicted outcome.**
- **Nominate team leaders who can be trusted to bring issues they find are hindering growth and solutions to those issues.**

Remember

Leadership is not dictatorship. You will only be successful if you rely on your team to help. If you are serious about growing your practice, offering new services, expanding your reach, serving new patients and or preparing for a comfortable retirement, today is the day to begin!

Commit Today

What commitments will you make today to grow your practice?

1

2

3

4

5

What tools can you add to increase skills and expand your service mix?

- Soft Tissue Laser
- MI Paste
- Caries Detection
- Oral Cancer Detection
- Brush Biopsy
- Intra Oral Camera
- Pano/3D X-Rays
- Sleep Apnea Appliances
- TMD Appliances
- Medical Questions to add to your intake
- Training for team to learn the connection between the Oral Cavity and The Body
- Set up a program for members to educate patients
- Set up the ability to add medical billing to your office

  Set up of budget in advance to provide you the map needed for each provider to follow.
- How to increase their daily production to cover the overhead
- What are the written roles of each team member now, and what are we adding to their responsibilities?

Next Steps

If you are ready to begin the transformation from dental practice to Dental Wellness Center we can help!

Contact Linsk2Success today for a free consultation.

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