Mary H. Osborne, Resources

PRACTICE RENEWAL

A Leadership Guide for Dentists

Fee Factor

While speaking at a state dental society meeting, I asked the group to identify comments that frustrate them when talking with patients about treatment recommendations. The group got into the spirit of the exercise and called out phrases that many of us have heard over the years:

- "Will my insurance cover it?"
- "It's not bothering me."
- "I can't afford to do that right now."
- "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

We followed that process with an exercise that allowed participating teams to work on questions they might ask to better understand what their patients mean when they make those comments. The participants began to talk at their tables, and there was some lively discussion about how they could help patients work through *perceived* barriers to treatment. As I walked around the room, I overheard someone say, "It's about the money; it's always about the money."

My first reaction was to disagree: it's not always about the money! There can be any number of reasons why patients do not proceed with treatment. But as I thought about the comment, I realized there was truth in it. I came to realize that on some level, it is "always about the money," and it is ***never only about the money.*** It occurred to me that what that person was saying about his patients could just as easily be what patients say, or think, about dentists. They may think it is all about money for us, but it is no truer for us than it is for them. Our financial gain is a factor in every fee we quote for every procedure we do, and it is never the only factor. Fees are a factor in every decision patients make about treatment. But fees are not the only factor.

Patients look for value-for-money-spent, just as we all do. They base decisions on the value they place on the service and on how that service supports their personal values. We set our fees based on the value we place on our care, skill, and judgment, as well as on the cost of doing business. All are subjective evaluations, perhaps even arbitrary. Our challenge is to discover the connections among all the variables which will allow us to help our patients make healthy choices.

Know Yourself

As I think about the issue of fees, it occurs to me that what Dr. L.D. Pankey referred to as the "Cross of Dentistry" has particular relevance in this discussion. The arms of the cross represent four directives for success:

- Know Yourself
- Know Your Work

- Know Your Patient
- Apply Your Knowledge

Each aspect plays a part in setting fees and creating value.

Personal Values

Knowing yourself has to do with developing a clear sense of your personal values, knowing what is important to you. Personal values, such as integrity, fairness, commitment, and responsibility, are foundational to establishing a business model unique to your practice. That business model will influence your attitudes about profitability, employee involvement and compensation, and fair fees.

As your values are challenged over time, you become more and more clear about what those values really mean to you.

While professional ethics can be taught and mandated, your professional ethics are a reflection of your personal values. They develop over time from the inside out. The more confident you are about your own ethics, the more confident you are likely to be in setting fees. When you know you are both able and willing to do what it takes to "make it right" for your patients, it is easier to quote a fee appropriate to that commitment.

Self-Esteem

Your self-esteem, or self-image, also contributes to your ability to establish and communicate fees. If you have an overblown sense of the way others perceive your worth, you may set unrealistic expectations for yourself. If you have low self-esteem, you may not feel worthy of a fee that many of your patients are more than willing to pay for your services. If you have learned that it is not okay to set yourself apart from others, you may base your fees on what practices in your area are charging. If you have learned that it is not okay for you to be wealthy, you may in some way sabotage your own efforts to be profitable. Your self-esteem plays a part in determining what you feel you deserve to be paid.

Deserving vs. Entitled

It is important to make a distinction between ***what you deserve to be paid*** for your work and ***what you are entitled to.*** Your clinical training, diagnostic and operative skills, excellent patient care, attention to detail, and commitment to success all play a part in determining what fee you feel you deserve to be paid, literally "to be worthy of." But none of those factors make you entitled to that fee, to "have a right" to expect it.

The late Dr. Bob Barkley suggested that ***we must earn the right to influence our patients.*** While

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our clinical knowledge can affect our ability to influence, more is required. I recall a young dentist I once spoke with who asked the question, "Why do I have to prove myself to a hygienist? I graduated from dental school!" I tried to help him understand that he would be asked to prove himself in many ways every day of his career. His training was just the beginning. We must determine what we believe we deserve to be paid, but others will decide whether or not they believe we are entitled to that fee. The more you know yourself, the clearer you will be about that distinction.

Your Team

Knowing yourself also includes having clear ideas about how you want your business to run, how profitable you want to be, what price you are willing to pay to achieve your personal and financial goals, and what you believe about compensating the people who work in your practice. All of those elements play a part in establishing your fees.

It occurs to me that assumptions regarding, "It's always about the money," sometimes occur between dentists and teams. Dentists may think that for employees it's always about the money, and employees sometimes think the same thing about their dentist. Again, from each perspective, it is true that it is "about the money," and ***never only about the money.*** Money issues have a legitimate place in the ongoing conversations within your team.

Ask yourself first how you really feel about how your team members should be paid. Do you have a scarcity mentality about compensation that translates to "more for you means less for me?" Or do you have a more abundant attitude that genuinely supports sharing the wealth? No compensation plan, bonus system, or incentive package can take the place of, or cover up for, your fundamental beliefs about compensation.

Be honest with yourself first. The more open and honest you can be in discussing money issues, the better. Your staff's ability to understand the financial challenges and goals of the practice directly influences their thoughts and feelings about the fees. And, make no mistake about it: ***your team's attitudes about your fees have an effect on your patients' acceptance of the fees.***

Ask yourself what you are willing, and unwilling, to share in regards to the finances of your practice. You don't need to share highly personal information, but the more transparent practice finances are, the better.

John Mackey, the founder and CEO of Whole Foods grocery stores, was interviewed in an article in the magazine, *Fast Company.* He described his "no secrets management" model. Each store has a pay book available for any employee to view the pay of any other employee in the store for the previous year. It is also known that senior executives limit their pay to 14 times what the average frontline employee earns.

New employees are hired to be part of a departmental team. For the first four weeks new hires are in a trial period. At the end of the four weeks to continue in the position, they must have the approval of others in the department. Since any additional pay beyond base wages is linked to the success of each team, employees are careful about whom they allow in, and there is considerable peer pressure to perform effectively.

If you have ever shopped in a Whole Foods store, you have probably noticed that their prices are not cheap. You have probably also noticed how extraordinarily helpful, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic their staff is.

Employees want to be well compensated for the contribution they make, and employers want to receive value for the wages they pay. Those are congruent goals; they should not be seen as incompatible.

To develop abundant thinking, focus your attention on how to create a model which supports everyone getting what they want. When you believe that is possible, then you can establish fees that support that outcome, and your team will enthusiastically support those fees.

Know Your Work

In setting fees we place a value on the service we will provide. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines *value* as a "fair price or return for goods or services." What constitutes a fair price? Dr. Pankey described a "fair fee" as (1) a fee "the patient is willing and able to pay with gratitude and appreciation" and (2) "which allows the dentist to render the best possible service to the patient."

Over the years I have seen dentists shake their heads over that definition, wondering what it would be like to have patients who are "willing to pay with gratitude and appreciation." I think that what is confusing about the concept is that we may expect patients to come to us with those attitudes, instead of recognizing ***the opportunity to help them develop those attitudes*** of gratitude and appreciation.

As to the aspect of the definition that has to do with rendering the "best possible service to the patient," you have a significant responsibility to evaluate your clinical and behavioral skills and establish fees which allow you to provide the best service you are capable of providing at any given time.

Our Value for Our Services

When we attempt to assign value for our services and validate our fees, there are a number of factors we may take into consideration. We can look at the market in general; that is, we can set our fees based on what others are charging or what insurance companies will pay. We also want our fees to be appropriate to the cost of doing business. When we analyze expenses, we understand there are certain costs associated with every hour our doors are open: the fixed costs of the facility as well as variable costs of supplies, salaries, etc.

It makes good business sense to look for profit beyond the cost of operating the business, and fees affect that profit margin.

We may also want to be compensated for the time and energy we put into providing a service. For many of us time is a precious commodity, and our investment of time represents a commitment to doing the right thing and doing it well.

When we organize our practice in such a way as to allow everyone on the team to individualize the time they devote to a given patient, we expect to be compensated for that. We also understand that some procedures, and some patients, take more of our energy than others, and we attach a value to the effect that has on our physical and emotional well-being.

We want to be compensated for the quality of the service we provide — not just the clinical service, but all the non-clinical things we do for our patients. When we go out of our way to make patients comfortable, when we allow time for them to have all their questions answered, when we make it easy for them to keep their appointments and pay their bills, we see those services as part of the fees we charge.

And finally, in dentistry we can also ask to be rewarded for our care, skill, and judgment.

- ***Care:*** Care has to do with the attention we pay to our patients, the ways in which we attend to their physical, mental, and emotional needs.
- ***Skill:*** Our skill has to do with our ability to perform procedures with predictable, excellent results.
- ***Judgment:*** Our judgment is related to our ability to diagnose disease and recommend appropriate treatment, our ability to solve the unique clinical riddle each patient presents.

Your fees should be appropriate to the level of expertise you have in each of these areas. All of the factors discussed are legitimate elements of a fair fee. Each one should be taken into consideration in setting fees, although it is important to

remember that they may or may not in any way influence our *patients' perception of the value of our services.*

While they may mean little or nothing to our patients, these factors should be used to justify our fees to ourselves. The process you go through to determine your fees is as important as the fee you set. ***In setting a fair fee, you have a responsibility to determine what it will take for you to feel rewarded enough to "render the best possible service for the patient."***

Know Your Patients

In conversations about fees, I often hear dentists express disappointment that their patients don't value the care they offer. Dentists have been taught that their job is to convince the patient of the value of their services. I'd like to suggest that helping your patients appreciate the value of your services is only part of the process. ***Understanding your patients' values, and how what you have to offer fits with their values, is even more important.***

Fees are related to both *value* and *values.* I see a subtle, but important, difference between the two concepts.

Patients' Value for Our Services

Some of the factors we think are important in determining *value* are also important to patients.

- ***Quality of Care:*** I think most patients would consider quality of care to be an important factor. It's just that their understanding of that is different from ours. Quality of care for them is determined by more subjective considerations than margins and other measurable parameters. While they want good quality work, they do not really know what that means.

  The sad truth is that your patients will never fully comprehend the complexity of the clinical work you do. In fact, the more refined your clinical skills are, the less likely patients are to fully understand the level of excellence you have learned to achieve. Even visible differences that are obvious to us may not be apparent to them.

- ***Relevance:*** Relevance is another highly subjective element that determines how much patients value your care. Patients can value, theoretically, how talented or how skilled you are, but that ***only transfers into action as they see how your skills can affect their lives in a positive way.*** This is related to what salespeople call, "features and benefits," but it is much more than that. Relevance exists as a deeper level and is more related to personal values.

- ***Esthetics:*** Esthetics is another aspect of your services that has value to most patients on some level. Most people would prefer to have an attractive smile; however, the way *attractive* is defined varies from person to person. Patients tend to have a vague idea of how they would like their smile to look based on personal preferences and cultural influences. The subtle differences of color and light that we emphasize are often not important to our patients, at least initially.

  Becoming clear about esthetic goals is not unlike the process of getting someone out of pain. Your patients may start out wanting things to be a "little bit better," then discover they want more as the process unfolds.

- ***Comfort:*** Comfort is also something patients tend to value. Most people want to be free of pain, both in terms of their day to day lives and in terms of their dental appointments. The easiest fees for patients to accept are those that involve procedures to get them out of pain and procedures to relieve the pain of treatment. For example, many patients who say that they don't want anything not cov-

ered by insurance easily make the choice to pay for nitrous oxide.

- ***Service:*** Patients take service into consideration when determining value. Again, that is a broad term that means different things to different people. For some patients being seen on time is a key factor, while others might place greater value on the responsiveness of the staff, and still others focus more on administrative support, such as filing insurance claims.

  Given a choice between good service and bad service, virtually everyone would say they want good service. Whether or not they are willing to pay more for it can be a different story.

- ***Demand:*** Demand is sometimes a factor in creating value, but I believe that is less so in dentistry than in some other areas. It may be true for some people that if they know you are busy, they believe that also means you are good. It is also true that when people know they will have to wait a long time for another appointment, they are less likely to cancel.

  But I get concerned when I hear dental teams equating that situation with patients valuing their appointments more. I believe waiting for appointments may make them more responsible about keeping appointments, but we should not confuse that with value for the services. In fact, the inability to find convenient appointment times may cause people to leave your practice or to refrain from referring you new patients. It is easy for that scarcity of appointment time to be seen as evidence that you are too busy to care about them.

All of the elements of value I have outlined are important to understand: the ones you use in setting your fees, and the ones patients use in deciding whether or not to accept them. On so many levels, the value of your services is subjective.

Our Patients' Values

In addition to the value of the service, there is another element that goes into your patients' decisions about whether or not to proceed with the dentistry you recommend: their values. My dictionary defines a *value* as "something having or held to have real worth or merit." Value, in this context, has to do with a deeper, more complex and more expansive set of parameters.

To know your patients, and to earn the right to influence them, you must also understand their values.

Values have to do with things we determine are important enough to pay a price for. The price could be money, but it may also be time, energy, fear, or discomfort. The truth is that patients make decisions about dentistry based on the same values they use to make decisions about other things in their lives.

When your patients make decisions about dentistry that are congruent with other values-based choices they make in their lives, those decisions have a different quality to them. The more their decisions fit into the multifaceted structure that is their life, the more appreciative and enthusiastic they are about that decision.

How Values Are Formed

Our values are the product of a wide variety of factors:

- ***Childhood:*** Our values are influenced a great deal by how we were raised. The things we hear and see as children leave enduring impressions on us as to what is important in life. Attitudes about family, health, money, safety and security, learning, and integrity, for example, are influenced by what we were exposed to as children.

- ***Experience:*** As we grow and learn, we have experiences which have an effect on the values with which we grew up. Our experiences may call into question those values, or they

may reinforce them. Through experience, we begin to see other perspectives and develop our own constellation of personal values.

- ***Knowledge:*** Our knowledge also influences our values. Information we acquire can expand our understanding of the world, help us to see how other people make decisions, and provide us with a broader array of options that can contribute to more clarified values.

- ***Self-Awareness:*** Another factor that influences our value system is our self-awareness. The more we know about ourselves, about what motivates us, what annoys us, what has meaning for us, the clearer we become about what we value. When we are able to see ourselves clearly in relation to the rest of the world, we see our place in that world. Self-awareness has the potential to deepen our values and to help us make our values live through our actions.

Regardless of how values are formed, they are the foundation for the choices we make in our lives. Whether they are values that were taught to us and embraced without question, or whether they are the product of conscious thought and deep soul searching, they affect our decisions. Whether we use them with intention or by default, they are a factor in most of the choices we make.

Choices that are congruent with our personal values have a different quality to them; on some level, we feel better about those choices. If a fair fee is one that the patient pays with gratitude and appreciation, it must be the result of a values clarification process.

Co-Discovering Values

While some people have given a lot of conscious thought to their values, many go through life making decisions with very little thought as to how those choices fit with their value system. That may be particularly true about choices they have made about dentistry. That does not mean their values do not influence their choices, only that it is has not been an intentional process for them.

Values clarification in dentistry is simply a process by which patients become more conscious of their personal values and how their dental care fits into that value system. One of the ways you can participate in that process is to learn to listen for values and offer feedback as to what you are hearing. ***In that process of co-discovering values, you learn about patients as they learn about themselves. It is a concurrent learning process, and it may be less complicated than it sounds.***

Think back to a recent conversation you had with a new patient in your practice. What did you learn about what is important to that patient, not just in regard to dentistry, but in his or her life in general? Ask your team members what they learned about what is important to him. Based on things he said, chances are you will be able to name a few things that you think are important to him: family, health, education, and/or relationships might have been mentioned. That is the beginning of co-discovering values.

The next time you see that new patient try following up on what you think you learned. You might ask a question like:

> *"The last time you were in, you mentioned that you work out regularly and try to watch your diet, Mr. Green. It sounds like your health is pretty important to you, is it?"*

If he agrees that it is, you might follow-up with another question, such as:

> *"How did you come to that decision to make exercise a regular part of your life?"*

As your patient describes what motivated him to start exercising and what strategies he used to incorporate it into his life, you will be learning about his values if you listen carefully. And as he describes that process for you, he may become clearer about his value for health and the price he

has chosen to pay for it.

Even if the value is less related to dentistry, the conversation is important. I may not know how a particular value a patient has could be related to their choices in dentistry, but the more I know about that value and what it means to that person, the more prepared I am to help him or her work through any values conflicts which may come up. If a patient talks about her children who are in private school, that may indicate a strong value for family or education. I would want to learn more.

Relationship Building Takes Time

To be known on the level of your values enhances trust. If I believe that you truly understand what is important to me, I am more inclined to trust that your recommendations take my values into consideration.

Even if there is a values conflict between decisions, I trust that you make the recommendation with an understanding of the conflict it may cause. I trust that your recommendations are truly made in my best interest in the broadest sense. I believe that you are taking into consideration ***not just what is best for the disease I have, but what is best for me.***

Co-discovering values is not a quick fix, but a process that occurs over time. It is not a sales technique, but a relationship-building practice. Certainly, as you learn to listen for values, you may find that you develop deeper relationships more quickly, but if speed is the goal, you are not likely to be successful.

Successful co-discovery requires a willingness to proceed at a pace appropriate to the individual needs of the patient, with a belief that the fine dentistry you offer is congruent with other values your patients hold dear. It is not designed to just "sell the case," but to foster relationships in which people pay for your care with gratitude and appreciation.

Apply Your Knowledge

We have explored the way your personal values and professional attitudes and beliefs about dentistry contribute to the fees you establish. We have looked at the way patients see the decisions they must make about dentistry. How can you now "Apply Your Knowledge," the final arm of Dr. Pankey's cross, to setting and articulating your fees?

Develop the Service

First, develop the service. In order to have your fees accepted, you must be able to articulate them with confidence that you can meet your patients' expectations. You must know that you "have it on the shelf," as Dr. Pankey used to say. As you learn to see clinical signs and symptoms, enhance your ability to diagnose and treatment plan, and develop your clinical skills, the value of your service grows.

f you concurrently develop your ability to listen to your patients, to connect what you have to offer with what is important to them, and to care for them with respect and compassion, the value of your service grows exponentially. But I believe that having it on the shelf goes beyond learning the skills; it also requires developing confidence in those skills. It takes time and practice to develop that confidence, and your fees should reflect where you are on both scales.

Avoid setting fees based on what someone else thinks you should be paid. Set your fees one person at a time. If you must, offer a service at no fee to someone you believe has the ability to appreciate your care.

As you take what you have on the shelf and put it into practice, you will become more confident, both in your ability to do the work and in your ability to help your patients value the work. As their appreciation is expressed and your expertise grows, so will your confidence, and you will eas-

ily adjust the fees appropriately, one person at a time.

Co-Discover Clinical Findings

We spoke earlier of co-discovering values, but I'd like to ask you to think about co-discovery in broader terms. With new patients to your practice, with regularly scheduled hygiene patients, and with those you see for emergencies, you can practice co-discovery. You can co-discover values, clinical conditions, causes of disease, and even treatment plans. ***The art of co-discovery is the key to treatment acceptance.***

Patients must fully understand *what is* before they can begin to appreciate *what is possible.* ***Dentists have been trained to be problem solvers and can become so interested in solving the clinical riddle that they get way ahead of their patients in the process.*** When you can learn to slow down the process, you will allow your patients to take ownership for their problems. I am not suggesting you delay giving patients information about what is present in their mouths. I am suggesting that you do that in a way that engages them in the process.

Find ways for your patients to see, feel, and hear what you do. Use a camera, x-rays, models, a hand mirror — whatever it takes to engage them in the process. Use those tools every time you are looking in their mouths at every hygiene visit, not just for new patient exams. Pay attention to how your patients respond. Change your approach if one tool is not working.

Ask your patients questions about what they know about how present conditions occurred, and ask as if you expect an answer. Give them time to think about it. Help them develop a process for figuring out what got them to where they are today and to monitor how their mouths are continuing to change.

It is not enough for them to just see inflammation, wear patterns, or openings around the edges of old fillings. Patients need to understand ***why*** that is a problem for them. A 6 mm. pocket only has relevance to a patient if he or she understands the significance of a 2 mm. pocket and an 8 mm. pocket. They need some basis for comparison, some understanding of what you would expect to see, what it looks like when it is healthy.

Patients can also learn much about esthetics. Help them understand what goes into an attractive smile. Help them become more discriminating in what they are seeing. Help them understand the esthetic implications of unhealthy soft tissue or of the long-term esthetic implications of losing posterior teeth. Help them see subtle changes you are seeing as you see them. ***If you stay focused on a more comprehensive approach, your patients will begin to think in those terms as well.*** If they are not responding, resist giving them solutions. Take the time to find a way to help them connect with what you are discovering together.

Build Appreciation

If you want patients to appreciate your care, they must first appreciate the significance of the existing conditions. There is a difference between *gratitude* and *appreciation.* The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines ***gratitude*** as "thankful." The definition for ***appreciation,*** on the other hand, is "recognition of the quality, significance or magnitude of." It implies the ability to discriminate. You can help increase that ability for your patients.

The process of co-discovery is designed to help the patient more fully appreciate the magnitude and the significance of the existing conditions. ***By co-discovering both values and findings, we learn with our patients about what is present, why we think it is significant, and how it fits with what is important to them.*** It is not something we have to orchestrate; it is an outcome of

the process.

Even after the patient has accepted treatment, it is important to continue to build appreciation. The co-discovery process continues at every step of the process.

Help your patients understand what you are doing and why: not in highly technical terms but ***in the context of how what you are learning is important to them.*** Check in with them as to how they are experiencing the process and what you can do to make it better for them. Help them see subtle changes as they occur with photographs and models as reference points.

It is well known in dentistry that Dr. Pankey sometimes did not quote a fee until after the treatment was complete. I don't recommend it as a business practice, but consider for a moment how your practice would be different if you did not agree on a fee until after the case was complete. I suspect you would do the following:

- Make sure you can deliver the value before you begin, in terms of:
  - Clinical skills required.
  - Appropriate time allowed for each procedure to achieve the desired result with minimum interruption.
  - Staff support to focus on and attend to all the patient's needs.
- Make sure you know your patient well; you would not begin treatment without a strong connection with the patient.
- Make sure the patient appreciates the significance of the problem and wants to solve the problem.
- Do everything you could do during treatment to help the patient feel good about his/her decision to proceed with the treatment plan.

Ask yourself how you can enhance your ability to do all those things before you quote a fee. At the beginning of this newsletter, I quoted comments from our patients that we have all heard at one time or another. While each comment is frustrating to us, it can bring some clarity as an indication that we may be having the wrong conversation with the patient at that time. Those comments are likely evidence that the patient does not yet appreciate the significance of the problem enough to be interested in solving it. It's not all about the money; it is just too soon to be talking about fees.

Difficult Conversations

It is important to recognize that all conversations regarding money are about more than just the money. Whether you are talking with your team or your patients, keep in mind that it is no more "all about the money" for them than it is for you. Conversations about money, whether we like it or not, have an element of intimacy to them. When you talk with members of your team about compensation, you are dealing with issues about *how much* they are appreciated. When you talk with your patients about fees for dental care, they are often asking themselves if they are worthy of such an investment.

When you set your fees, you are dealing with questions about your own worth, not just the value of your services. You can't know all the issues that are present in the room when you talk with someone about money, but you can be sensitive to them.

You must set your fees based on what you believe you deserve to receive for the commitment you are making, remembering that while you may be deserving of that fee, you are not entitled to it. Your patients decide that. As you move from a position of entitlement to one of gratitude and appreciation, it is more likely that your patients will go to that place with you.

As I was working on this issue of *Practice Renewal,* I received a letter from my good friend Dr. Rich Green. It seems he was reflecting on his own experience in working through these difficult issues:

> "As I struggled to learn new skills, one thing became amazingly clear. As our patients come to us, confident in the

> care they receive, the trust they transfer to us is incredible. I found myself acknowledging, out loud, this trust transfer of my patients and an interesting thing happened; they began to "pay" with gratitude and appreciation. To the extent that I conveyed to the patient, "I don't need your gratitude and appreciation," they didn't extend it! But when I was ready to risk myself and my gratitude and appreciation, the patients took the opportunity to express theirs."

Rich's comments remind us never to take for granted the trust people place in us when they agree to our treatment and our fees, to avoid arrogance in favor of gratitude and appreciation. How would your practice be different if you learned to express your gratitude and appreciation to your patients when they put their trust in your care, skill, and judgment?

Classic & Current Resources

My work is influenced and informed by the wisdom of past as well as emerging new thinking. The following is a list of some of the sources I referred to while writing this issue of *Practice Renewal:*

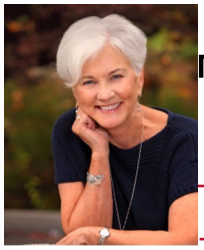
American Heritage Dictionary

Successful Preventative Dental Practices **by Bob Barkley**

Fast Company **magazine**

Dr. Rich Green
www.evergreenconsultinggroup.com

A Philosophy of the Practice of Dentistry **by L.D. Pankey**



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Fee Factor

1. What is most important to you in regard to your professional ethics and values? How do your self-esteem and values play a role in determining how you set your fees?

2. How do you feel about *how* team members should be compensated? Do you have a scarcity mentality about compensation? An abundance mentality?

3. How much information in terms of the practice finances are you willing to share with your team and why?

4. What do you take into consideration in setting your fees? How much are your fees a reflection of the care you provide? The skill? The judgment?

5. Think about a recent conversation with 2 new or existing patients, and write down what you learned about what is important to him or her in his/her life as a whole. At a team meeting discuss what you know about those patients, and identify one thing you are curious about in terms of their values. What questions might you ask to follow-up on what you believe you heard and on what you would like to know?

6. Identify one thing you can do in your practice to enhance your ability to *develop the service.* Choose any service you now offer, and ask yourselves how you can enhance the value of that service either clinically or behaviorally.

7. *Co-Discover Clinical Findings:* Ask your patients questions about what they know about how present conditions occurred in their mouths. Identify specific situations in which you can engage patients more actively in clinical co-discovery. What tools will you use? What questions will you ask?

8. *Build Appreciation:* What steps will you take to help your patients better understand the ***significance*** of existing conditions in their mouths? How can you change your initial exam, continuing care exam, and emergency exam to develop ***significance*** as well as knowledge? In regard to ongoing treatment, how will you change what you are currently doing to ensure that the patient is better able to appreciate the "quality, significance, or magnitude of," the service you are providing? Ask yourself how you can enhance your ability to do all these things before you quote a fee.