

Building relationships

This will help increase profitability, says **Ashley Latter**.



Ashley Latter
is a business sales coach.



● Is this the image your practice conveys?

Are you ever treating a patient with one eye on the clock and you already know that you are behind schedule and have a room full of patients? Does this sound familiar? Anyone knows if you really improve the quality of service and give your patients world-class treatment, then we have to give more time for our patients and really get to know them and understand their wants and needs.

Value of preparation

Before you go to the gym, or you prepare for a long car journey, most experts will tell you to prepare for the journey and stretch before you train. Well it should be the same before we see a patient. Prepare for the appointment. We can read their notes, find out what we have done in the past and find out what personal notes we wrote down last time, such as information about job, holidays, family.

The patient may be booked in for an intensive treatment plan and so maybe you should gather evidence, past letters from happy patients, or even think where there might be some obstacles, so that you can be prepared

So just a few key points:

- Prepare for the appointment read the notes and file
- Gather evidence if needed during the appointment
- Become genuinely interested in your patient
- Allow more time for the appointment
- Make notes of what they have said
- Create the right environment so that they can talk
- Become a sensitive listener

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to help your patient make the right decision. The more preparation you do the better the appointment will go. So please plan to win.

Genuine interest

Think about the patient walking through the door, how do you think they are feeling? Their dental appointment is probably not their highest priority for the week. It may be not the thing they are looking forward to most during the week so you have to ensure that you treat the appointment as an event and give them the best possible experience.

So before putting them on the chair, why not become genuinely interested in them. Find out about them personally.

Below is a list of questions that you can ask:

- How did you heard about us?
- What do you do for a living?
- What does that entail?
- How long have you done that for?
- Are you married?
- Do you have kids?
- Are they boys or girls and how old are they?
- Are you going on holiday this year?
- Where to?
- What are your hobbies?

It shouldn't be a questionnaire, but you should just become genuinely interested in them. Become a sensitive listener. Forget about everything else and make the other person feel special.

Jane Lelean a dentist and owner of Quality Smiles Dental Practice in Buckinghamshire in spends at least 10 minutes getting to know each patient individually.

She says: 'I arrange seats beforehand and we sit down opposite each other and have a real conversation before we talk about any sort of treatment. It changes everything in the appointment; it puts patients at ease and builds a relationship. We can also find out about them, for example what jobs they have. We can then learn what is important to them before we even discuss treatment.'

Another thing is perhaps to get your nurse to make some notes and file them in their records. You can read them before they come back again and bring them up during the next appointment. It really shows that you care for your patient and that you want to establish a long-term relationship. Also use their name often in the conversation. By becoming genuinely interest in them, they will be more likely to become interested in you and what you have to offer and if you think about it, most people's favorite topic of conversation is themselves. People love talking about themselves. It puts them at ease.

Develop life long relationships and patients will be more likely to refer you to their friends and colleagues. ■

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