

# HIGHLIGHT

by MicroDental

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## Building a Modern Dental Practice

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**"Summertime, and the living is easy."** So, says George Gershwin in the song Summertime from his American Opera Porgy and Bess. However, Summertime, may not be THAT EASY for a dental practice trying to work around school being out, family vacations, and activities that provide competition for the dental dollar. But, as a business owner, you still have bills to pay, salaries to handle, and family responsibilities to manage. So, what's the best way to prevent a slump in productivity in the summer months? Practice what you preach!!! Prevention!!

Study your numbers. Study your own data. Know what months of the year are your peak months and what months may pose challenges for you. Some of you may find that the summer months are terrific! If you have stellar months in the summer, great. Maximize those. Make sure you are rotating team member vacations so you can be open the appropriate number of days to take care of desired appointment requests. You may want to add some hygiene days to serve the needs of college students or kids who are out of school. Again, know your own data and the rhythms of your practices so you can "sing" to your own song.

However, if you have found that the summer months are challenging and slow, plan—in advance—to offset that potential downturn. Months in advance and throughout the summer, market to your patient family and community in additional ways and more extensively. Make sure that you are using social media to reach people on a regular basis. Post 3-5 times each week. Use the 80-20 rule: 80% of your posts should relate to personal interest items about you, your team, your patients, or your community and 20% of the posts should be educational or promotional. You can offer a promotion about a procedure. What a great time of year to promote invisible braces! Or tooth whitening! (This is still the number one requested service of dental patients throughout the country). Are you promoting tooth whitening in your practice--often and/or often enough??? Never think you have educated people enough about anything! Repetition is the key to learning. It takes about 5-7 times (or more) before anything begins to "register" with anyone!

## 10 STEPS TO OFFSET SUMMERTIME BLUES

Here are 10 steps you can take to make sure you have a terrific summer, year, and practice.

### 1. Establish or revisit the vision of your ideal practice:

Define every aspect of what "ideal" means to you: the type of treatment you will provide, the team you will have, the facility, the patient experience, case acceptance ratio, new patient flow, retention ratio, productivity, profitability, stress control, etc. Where are you on a scale of 1-10? Now, make a commitment to move upward on the scale. There is no reason not to have the practice of your dreams—whatever that is to you.

### 2. Define Customer Service: What are you are doing well?

Do more of that. Then ask yourself, how can we do things better? And do just that. This is what will differentiate you from other practices/businesses. It costs much more to attract a new patient than it does to retain an existing one. Don't lose patients due to poor customer service. Customer Service skills are learned. Make this an ongoing part of your practice development. Study. Practice. Deliver 5 Star Customer Service—no matter where you are located.

### 3. Provide the kind of service your patients want and expect:

Use surveys (digital or otherwise) questionnaires, social media, forum groups, and simply "ask". Listen to your patients. You may learn interesting, helpful and productive information by listening to them.

### 4. Apply etiquette in all areas and in all relationships:

Study and practice the skills of etiquette and insist that these be applied in every interaction by each team member—with each other, with your network of resource people, and with patients. These skills can be learned. Every person on your team can make or break relationships.

### 5. Provide a full range of services:

Clinical, financial, and emotional. Be a forever student of clinical excellence. Along with your advanced clinical expertise, focus on the management of your practice so that you GET TO DO the dentistry you WANT TO DO in the way you want to do it.

Become involved with patient financing and make a commitment to use it more often. Cost is the number one reason people do not go to the dentist and the number one reason they do not say yes to treatment (ADA SURVEY)—so, remove that barrier, when and where possible, with patient financing. Study how to communicate financially. This is a highly personal and very emotional subject for most people. Communication is the bottom line to your success.

**6. Educate Your Patients.** Improve your case presentation which is the fulcrum of your practice. Patients don't know about dentistry. Educate them about what's going on in their mouth and what you're recommending to get them healthy or change their smile-or both. Approximately 83% of learning takes place visually, so, find more ways to use visual aids. If you want more patients to say yes to treatment, use photography. The best of all visual aids.

**7. Stay in contact with your patient family in a positive way on a regular basis.** When your patients think of the dentist, you want them to think of you. "When do you market—always. When do you stop marketing: never." No matter how much you are doing now—add at least one more way to stay in contact with your patients—and do that now.

**8. Ensure that continuity of information is evident among all team members.** Document all information from the opening phone call to the scheduling of appointments, the diagnosis, recording of treatment, and financing. We call this "Linkage Communication®." Don't drop the ball due to poor documentation and lackadaisical communication. To your patients, perception is all powerful. If you support and implement "Linkage Communication®," you will appear professional to your patients—and that is what you want. Be all they expect—and more.

**9. Make sure that the completion of treatment obtains excellent results:** Abide by the Hippocratic Oath "Above all else, do no harm." Provide care that obtains excellent results that last.

**10. Be willing to stand behind all treatment:** In both your clinical and business interactions with patients make sure that everything you do is done with honesty and integrity and that your patients can trust that you will do so.

Summertime. This can be a vibrant, thriving time in your practice. The Ten Steps I have outlined here are steps that are foundational to a successful business/practice. So, practice what you preach: prevention. Get your practice in order. Know your numbers. Plan—in advance—to make sure that your goals are reached every month—including the months of Summertime!



**CATHY JAMESON, PHD** is the founder of Jameson Management, Inc. and is the CEO and president of JC Educational Services, Inc. a lecture, coaching, writing, and seminar organization. She has lectured throughout the USA and in 30 countries. She and her team of consultants have coached over 2500 clients and practices to outstanding levels of success while finding joy and fulfillment in their work and in their lives. Her recent book, *Creating a Healthy Work Environment*, focuses on her two decades of personal coaching in businesses and her doctoral study of management where she focused her research on the impact of leadership on the workplace. Cathy is an acclaimed author, speaker, and workshop leader. She has been honored as one of the top 25 women in dentistry, a Lifetime Achievement recipient from the American Academy of Dental Office Managers as well as from Excellence in Dentistry, and has been honored by her alma mater, Oklahoma State University as a Distinguished Alumna. She is a contributor to the ADA panel on practice management in the areas of teamwork and finance and has had over 1000 articles published. She and her dentist husband, Dr. John Jameson, live on a ranch in southern Oklahoma where they raise American Quarter Horses.