

# A Recare Coordinator Is The Key To Tightly Locking Your Back Door



by Gary Kadi, Author of “Million Dollar Dentistry”

When I ask a group of dentists what they feel the most efficient way to grow a practice is, their answer is almost always “new patients.” Well, this is one-third true.

You see, there are actually *three* equally efficient ways to grow a practice and when orchestrated in harmony they can really turbo-charge a practice.

These three methods are: (1) new patients who understand your market position, (2) patient retention and the purchase of treatment, and (3) services and products.

For the purpose of this article I will focus on patient retention. In dentistry we are one of the only sic codes that has a built-in consumer mindset that you must return for service. Oil change shops are another. I believe it was way back in the “Amos and Andy” days that it was declared that you should get your teeth cleaned twice a year and most mothers drilled this into our belief systems forever. Now, most feel guilty if we haven’t gone to the dentist because we do not want to let our moms down.

As we all know, our moms’ value systems fall to the opposing factor we all know and love – the fear associated with going the dentist.

This is why I recommend spending some time, money and attention on retaining your most precious asset – your patient base.

## ***Here is the NextLevel Practice Five Step Guide to Establishing a Recare Coordinator:***

### **Step 1: Hire the right Recare Coordinator**

This may be easier than you think and he/she may already be a part of your practice. Go through your patient base and look for a patient who has been coming to you for awhile and really likes you and your practice. Ideally, this is someone who you have transformed by enhancing their smile and self esteem. I focus on a person such as this because if they were to hit the phones for your practice, their voice would have a natural conviction. You want someone whose communication is rooted in the purpose to help others; who has been educated that a great smile begins with regular hygiene visits. I usually recommend paying this person a flat hourly rate with a bonus pay for each patient that schedules and arrives. A secondary value of this team member is to address the area of quality assurance.

## Step 2: Generate your target list

Go back eighteen months and generate a list of those patients who are in need of a hygiene visit. Have your recare coordinator start with your most recent patient and work back from there.

## Step 3: Have a good communication strategy

Educate your recare coordinator that she will make a difference even if she is leaving tons of messages. Consider that each left message is like a postcard in the mail marketing your practice. We have invented a way that generates a response call – the key is creating mystery. If you call and leave a message saying, “This is Jennifer calling from Smiles by Design. I see you haven’t been in for a while and would like to schedule you,” you will not generate many call backs. Again, the key to success here is to create mystery. Our minds work on “why?” so we have developed another approach that works extremely well: “This is Jennifer calling on behalf of Dr. Laserguy regarding your dental care...please contact us...we are here until five o’clock today.” Now the call recipient is wondering what it is about their dental care that warrants a call. When this person returns your call, start by telling them that they are due for their hygiene visit, ask if mornings or afternoons are better for them, then offer an appointment time. If they decline and say they cannot schedule, ask the question, “Did we do anything to prevent your return?” If an issue arises, discuss it, take responsibility and invite them back. You want to get to a point with the patient where they either schedule or choose not to be included as a part of your dental family.

## Step 4: Track, monitor and analyze results

Have your recare coordinator make notes directly on the patient list she uses to make phone calls. Every patient should be noted so that you can analyze common themes that may need to

be addressed within the practice. According to a study by the ADA only nine percent of patients leave a practice due to a change in insurance or money concerns and 68 percent leave due to customer service issues. There may be an opportunity to strengthen some areas of your practice that may have caused patients to leak out.

## Step 5: Ongoing maintenance

Once you have a completely cleansed active patient base, make your coordinator responsible for keeping your patient attrition to a minimum (usually ten to fifteen percent is acceptable). To ensure that a rate of 99 percent preappoints occur, send one-month appointment reminder cards and make two-week update calls. We created these two-week calls as a way to greatly reduce cancellations and no-shows, and in our experience, we’ve seen a reduction. This call is done two weeks prior to the hygiene visit. The recare coordinator calls on behalf of the hygienist and states, “we are preparing for your visit on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ and would like to know if anything has changed with your dental condition, insurance, medical history, or personal information.” This call serves as a reminder and places value on the appointment time because you show that you are preparing for their arrival. You may be saying that this takes time. It does and this is why I recommend having a dedicated person held accountable for this. Let’s also look at the value of a missed appointment. It includes your hourly hygiene production and as outlined in the hygiene patient education section of my book, *Million Dollar Dentistry*, that missed appointment averages \$800-\$1,200 depending on your case acceptance conversion rate and fee schedule.

Expanding your focus, attention and resources toward retaining your patients by using a dedicated person will dramatically enhance your practice productivity. Your existing patient base will develop a higher trust level and will more readily accept treatment. Hire a recare coordinator today.