

Another three costly mistakes dentists make...and how to avoid them



The model for running a solo dental practice hasn't changed much in decades. The dentist focuses on delivery of care, while delegating most—if not all—aspects of running the business to staff. This model worked as long as the business side wasn't too complex.

In the old model, business flow was a series of straightforward tasks: perform the treatment, charge the patient, send the insurance claim on their behalf, fill out a recall postcard. The dentist didn't need to spend much time overseeing these tasks once treatment was performed, and the staff didn't need extensive business skills.

Today, such a simple flow doesn't cut it, especially as the industry becomes more competitive with each passing year. Practices need structured processes and systems in place, with continuous monitoring. And dentists can't afford to ignore office performance.

But that's a challenge for most solo practice dentists, who don't have the time (or the desire, understandably so) to continuously monitor and reevaluate their business processes. Mistakes happen, balls are dropped, and problems persist for months before anyone notices.

In a previous white paper, we covered three common mistakes that dentists make: poor patient retention; inadequate insurance knowledge during treatment planning; and ignoring unfinished treatment plans (click [HERE](#) for that white paper).

Here now are three more common mistakes that can end up being very costly. As with the first three we shared, these pitfalls can be easily avoided with a cloud-based practice management solution:

1. Inconsistent follow-up on unpaid claims

With few exceptions, most open claims should be resolved in less than 60 days. Yet, in too many practices, the number of claims that are still open after 60 days is surprisingly high, as is the dollar amount they represent in uncollected revenue for an office. Fortunately, there is a cloud solution to this problem. The Denticon cloud service will submit claims and automatically follow up on them if unpaid in 30 days. The software establishes an automated system which allows complete transparency—all the way down to individual claims. A dentist can monitor the entire system in minutes per week, not hours per day.

“Most dental practices still run practice management software that was written in the 1990s—even though it's often the single most important piece of technology in a practice.”



About Planet DDS

Founded over a decade ago, Planet DDS was the first dental practice management solution built as a true cloud solution from the ground up. Since then, we've remained true to our initial vision: to help dentists run their practices so they can focus on what matters most—patient care. We now deliver our innovative cloud platform and virtual business services to thousands of dental professionals across the country.

2. Inconsistent follow-up on missed appointments and unscheduled cancellations

Patients miss and cancel appointments all the time for reasons outside of an office's control, despite best efforts to discourage no-shows and cancellations. Once the appointment is actually missed, however, there is little excuse for not re-scheduling the patient as soon as possible. Consistent appointments benefit the dental health of the patient as well as the productivity of the practice. A solid cloud-based patient communications system automatically initiates communication with no-show patients and can report on the success of re-scheduling efforts.

3. Letting patient balances age too long

Patient balances that exceed 60 days of age post-treatment become more difficult to collect with each passing day. As a general rule, patient AR decreases in collectability by 15% per month after the critical 60-day mark. Yet many offices end up with balances older than 60 days because they are reluctant to collect money at the time of treatment, or they wait to collect until after they receive any insurance payments associated with the treatment in question because they aren't sure what the patient's insurance will cover. With the help of a cloud-based practice management system like Denticon and the insurance plan information it collects, a practice can accurately estimate copayments and collect at time of treatment rather than leave a future payment to chance. What's more, Denticon has tools for online payments that allow patients to make them on their own from home, eliminating another possible barrier. And for those patients who still prove elusive, Denticon offers automated payment capture services that reach out to patients via gentle letters and phone calls to speed collections.

In reviewing these common mistakes, it is clear that all of them can be avoided with a cloud-based application like Denticon. It is difficult for a solo practice dentist to be both the primary producer and the CEO. The emergence of a cloud-based application like Denticon and its related services allows the dentist to automate business processes and gain a better understanding of practice health.