

**TOP TIPS TO  
MAKE YOUR  
RECEPTIONISTS  
STAND OUT  
FROM THE  
CROWD**

**Practiceplan**  
The business of dentistry

Part of the **WESLEYAN** Group

## First impressions

- The front desk team need to answer the telephone within four rings maximum, as people start getting impatient after this. I know this is sometimes difficult, but you need to have a plan in place that if a receptionist is busy dealing with a patient, one of the other team members will step in.
- Think about how the team answer the phone – what wording do they use? Do you always mention your name so that the patient who is calling, knows who they are dealing with and has taken ownership of their call? The telephone needs to be answered with enthusiasm, stating the name of the practice, their own name and end with a statement on how they can help the patient. Using their own name gives an opportunity to build instant rapport with the patient. **Don't forget you never get a second chance to make a first impression.**

### Examples:

*'Good morning/afternoon Smiles Dental Studio, Karen speaking, how may I help you today?'*

Or

*'Good morning/afternoon I'm Karen from Smiles Dental Studio, how may I help you today?'*

- Make sure your tone is calm, friendly and confident as it's much more difficult with no body language to read. Helping to reassure the new patient and make them immediately think they have called the right practice.
- After the patient has enquired about the services of the practice, the receptionist should immediately thank the patient for ringing them and ask the patient for their own name, so that you can refer to them by this when explaining everything to them, another relationship builder. It is polite to ask if they are happy for you to use their first name, don't just assume it's okay.

## Why the patient is calling

- Ask the patient how you can help them and what aspects of their dental care/ treatments they are interested in; are they having problems or is it a routine appointment they are looking at making?
- This is the part of the conversation when you need to be focused and genuinely interested in the patient and finding out what they are interested in.
- Let the patient speak, try not to interrupt and make sure you demonstrate that you are listening to them 100% and interested with an occasional 'yes, that's right or I understand' (empathy) between pauses. This is the most important time for you to listen to their needs as the rest of the telephone conversation will be gauged around this, so don't get distracted.

- Always have a notepad ready and make notes! Did they say they were nervous, worried about their dental health, interested in cosmetic dentistry, etc? If the patient isn't forthcoming with information, ask open questions that gets the patient talking and listen attentively to their answers so you have a full overview, before you start to tell them about the practice, the benefits of joining and what you have to offer.
- Be positive but don't make assumptions, although it is important to collect as much information as possible, don't make the patient feel bullied. Do not make the mistake of asking one question then launching into a presentation on how you can help them.
- Find out when they last saw a dentist, this is always a good indication of what type of patient they may be.
- Ask the patient how they heard about the practice. There are many advantages to this, you can establish what aspect of your marketing is working which is important if you are spending money on advertising, etc. If it is a referral, you will have a chance to thank the referring patient and you will also know that you have a red-hot client, who is genuinely interested in making an appointment with you.
- If the patient says I saw your website, again thank the patient and ask if they were looking for you specifically or just Googling practices in the area (this is an important distinction because if they were looking specifically for your website then chances are that someone has recommended you to them). During the conversation ask them what it was about the website that they liked. This is important information and will help you establish what part of the website is working and, in some cases, not.

### The pitch

- After you have truly understood what the patient requires, then it's your turn to give them an overview of the practice and what it has to offer. Focus on the benefits of joining the practice, the membership plan and presenting solutions based on the original information they gave you and answering any of the questions that you have gathered.
- The aim of this conversation is not to go into detail about treatment options and details about the membership plan. Stick to the headlines and focus on getting them to book in for a consultation where more information can then be presented.
- If it is a routine appointment, explain what will happen at the first appointment, what is included and the cost of the new patient consultation, something along the lines of:

*'The first appointment will be for you to meet the dentist who will provide a thorough examination to check the health of your teeth, gums and of your mouth in general, and to identify any problems that you may have. They may need to take x-rays at this appointment to be able to give a more detailed assessment.'*

*Once the health check has been completed, we will then give you a written treatment plan and explain any costs and the options available to you. The cost of this initial appointment will be £XX.XX or £XX.XX if the x-rays are needed.*

*We do have our own practice membership plan which most of our patients choose to join. This allows you to spread the cost of your routine appointments throughout the year and entitles you to a discount on any treatments you may need. You will also be eligible to request assistance from our Worldwide Dental Emergency Assistance Scheme should you need to see a dentist in an emergency or if you had a dental trauma. We will be able to discuss in more detail at your appointment.”*

- Explain the set-up of the practice, i.e. long-standing dentists, downstairs access, hygienist, etc.
- Find out if they have been recommended to a particular dentist and if there are certain times that are better for them.


### **The close**


- Thank the patient for making the appointment, confirm again, and then tell them how much you are looking forward to seeing them.
- Think about how you can make it a 'wow' visit. Arrange for them to come at a time when you can meet and greet them and help with the paperwork. Make sure that if you promise something you make sure it happens. Take responsibility for the task, do it yourself, don't pass onto a colleague to do it for you.
- If the patient is attending on a date or time when you are not there, tell them that one of your colleagues will be here to help them. Also, if you can give them any easy travel information, i.e. if they are coming by bus, where to get off or parking facilities around the practice, this is a nice touch.
- If they are still unsure if they want to attend following your conversation, offer them the opportunity to come in and have a chat with the receptionist/practice manager and the chance to have a look around.
- Refer them to your website or encourage them to call you for more information if they have any questions.

Call us on **01691 684165**  
Email us at **info@practiceplan.co.uk**

For more inspiration and ideas for  
running a successful plan and practice,  
visit **www.practiceplan.co.uk/mediahub**

 @practiceplanuk

 @practice-plan-limited

 @PracticePlan

 @practiceplan

**Practiceplan**  
The business of dentistry |

Part of the **WESLEYAN** Group