

2023

How to Take a Proactive Approach to Reduce Cancellations & No-Shows

Carrie Webber

Jameson Management, alogan@jamesonmanagement.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.ada.org/mddsarticulator>



Part of the [Dentistry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Webber, Carrie (2023) "How to Take a Proactive Approach to Reduce Cancellations & No-Shows," *Articulator Magazine*: Vol. 29: Iss. 4, Article 8.

Available at: <https://commons.ada.org/mddsarticulator/vol29/iss4/8>

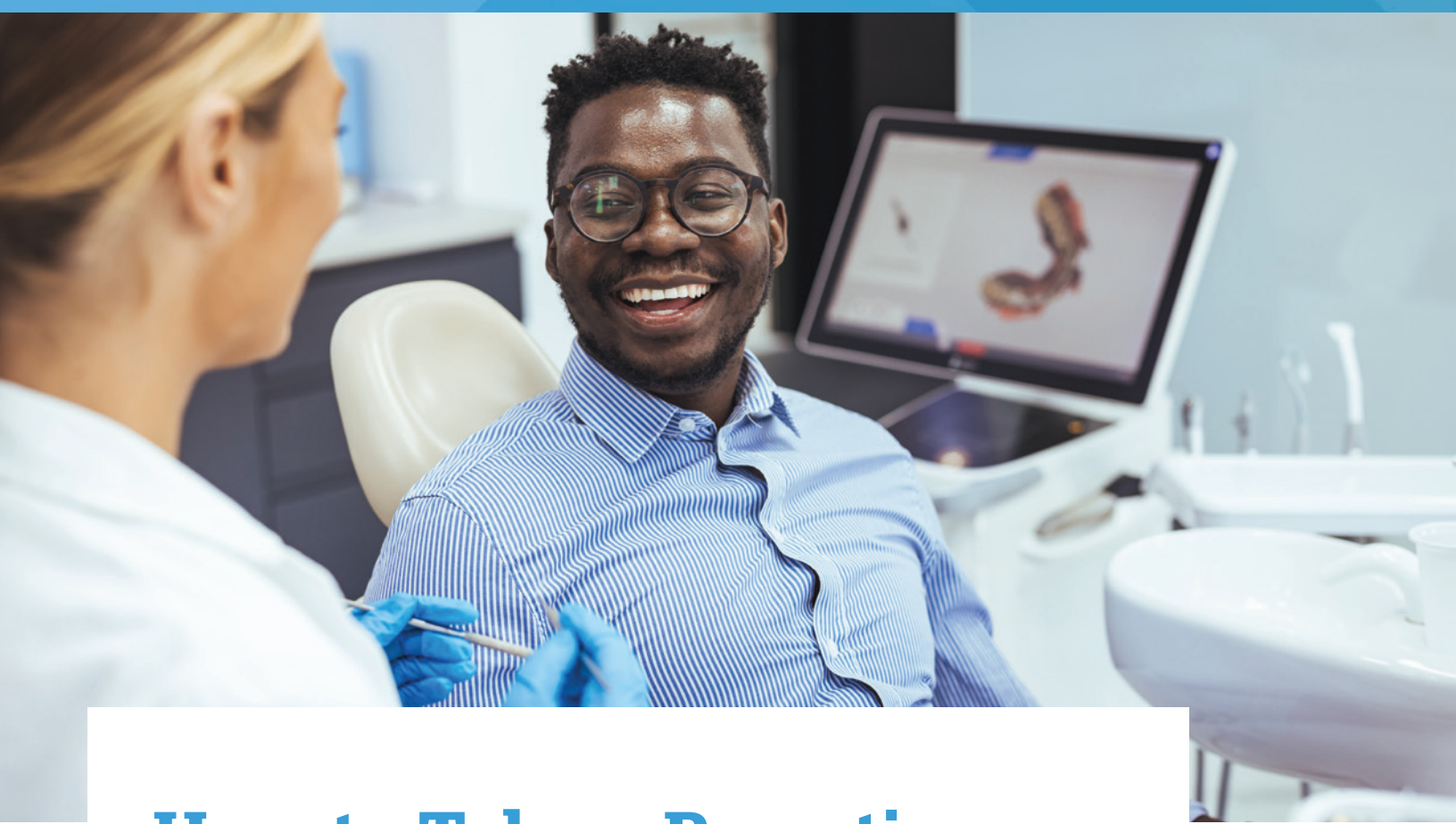
This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ADACommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articulator Magazine by an authorized editor of ADACommons. For more information, please contact commons@ada.org.

How to Take a Proactive Approach to Reduce Cancellations & No-Shows

Cover Page Footnote

1) American Dental Association. (2023, September). Health Policy Institute Economic Outlook for Dentistry Report. Retrieved October 30, 2023, from https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/sept2023_hpi_economic_outlook_dentistry_report_main.pdf?rev=41920b57b37e410d809fbb551e83a&hash=5DFE315

RMDC: SPEAKER PREVIEW SERIES



How to Take a Proactive Approach to Reduce Cancellations & No-Shows

MS. CARRIE WEBBER



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms. Carrie Webber is the Chief Communications Officer and co-owner of Jameson, a dental management, marketing and hygiene coaching firm. She is a member of the Speaking Consulting Network and was named a Leader in CE by Dentistry Today in 2019 and 2020.

There is nothing more stressful and frustrating than the toll cancellations and no-shows take on a perfectly planned and scheduled dental day. More and more practices are finding cancellations to be wreaking havoc on their schedules, most particularly in hygiene.

In September of 2023, the ADA Health Policy Institute (HPI) shared results from doctor-answered surveys about the state of practice schedules. Those results showed that 80% of the respondents claimed cancellations and no-shows less than 24 hours out were the main reasons for not having a fully booked schedule.¹ It is indeed a pain point in many practices today.

Many questions arise from this issue. What do we do when patients cancel? What can we do when they cancel? How do we reschedule a no-show? And, the most important question to ask - How can we prevent cancellations and no-shows from happening in the first place?

There are three specific areas to focus your attention on in practice and in patient experience to take a more proactive approach to build a sense of value for appointments: 1) The patient experience, 2) The patient check-out and 3) Overall team verbal skills with patients.

THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

It is important to understand our role in our patients' dental journeys is not only to provide clinical dentistry but to educate and build a healthy mindset regarding their continuous care. So much of what a patient perceives to be valuable in their care has to do with everything but the dentistry itself. So, what are you doing throughout your patient's experience to build a sense of trust, need and value that are imperative for patient retention and engagement?

It is important every patient interaction with every member of the team is executed with intention, a high level of professionalism and advocacy for consistent and continuous dental care. These are the questions you need to ask to take the temperature of your practice's performance when it comes to building trust and a sense of urgency:

- What is your patient experience process?
- Does everyone on your team know what that process is?
- Is every team member on board and executing their part of that process with excellence?

The Four Pillars of a Healthy Patient-Practice Partnership are Trust, Need, Urgency and Value. Our processes and patient experience should be working to build these pillars within our patient relationships to help more and more patients not only get the treatment they want or need but to stay loyal in the practice. We want them invested in their own dental care to the point they keep their scheduled appointments.

THE PATIENT CHECK-OUT

The best time to schedule an appointment with a patient is face-to-face. When they are completing an appointment and you are scheduling them for restorative care or their next hygiene appointment, it is important to utilize this time to build value for why they are there and why it is important they come to the next appointment.

Repetition is the key to learning, so make sure that as you pass the baton through patient handoffs every team member takes the time to support the patient's decision and to reiterate the importance of the next appointment. Commitment questions can help in the engagement and retention of that appointment's importance with the patient. Here are some examples:

- "Do you see any reason why you may not be able to keep this appointment?"
- "Doctor will be reserving 90 minutes of time to provide this care for you."
- "Can we count on you to be here next Monday?"

TEAM VERBAL SKILLS

My father, Dr. John Jameson, always says the most important thing he and his team did throughout his practicing career to help improve treatment acceptance and patient loyalty was to continuously work on the mastery of verbal skills.

How do we work together as a team to sharpen our verbal skills to elevate our patients' perceptions of value for their appointments with us?

Here are ways to begin introducing effective communication skills training for a heightened customer service experience in your practice:

- Brainstorm as a team examples of excellent customer service verbal skills that you have directly experienced. How did it make you feel? What are examples of things those companies said? How can you incorporate those verbal skills into patient interactions? Examples of businesses that often come up in this exercise are restaurants, hotels and luxury brands. Looking outside of dentistry for inspiration is a great way to build skills through the reflection of other successful businesses.
- Explore and discuss as a team where you could replace "weak" words with stronger, more value-building words. Some examples: Use "reserve" in place of "schedule", use "fee" instead of "price or cost" and eliminate words that reduce the value of what you are saying - diminishing words such as "just", "kind of" and "sort of".
- Practice. Practice. Practice. Select scenarios you recognize need improvement in your practice and role-play those scenarios as a team, taking turns being the patient and the team member. Coach each other to improve your skills in those scenarios so the next time you have that conversation with a patient, you will be stronger and more confident in how you communicate.

The proactive approach to reducing cancellations and no-shows is full of intentional effort, processes and skills. When a practice commits to continuous improvement and implements positive changes in its efforts, fewer cancellations and no-shows occur and the consistency of your dental days improves. ■

REFERENCES

1. American Dental Association. (2023, September). Health Policy Institute Economic Outlook for Dentistry Report. Retrieved October 30, 2023, from <https://www.ada.org/>