Say it right: the power of scripting

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

“What we’ve got here is a failure to communicate.” — Strother Martin in “Cool Hand Luke”

Introduction

When your team members don’t know what to say or say the wrong things to patients, the effects can be devastating — poor customer service, decreased production, elevated stress and the loss of quality patients. Don’t let communication breakdowns send patients away frustrated and confused. Provide your team with the communication tool that can enhance every patient interaction — scripting!

Communication affects every aspect of practice operations. Scheduling, case presentation, patient financial management and other practice systems are only as good as the verbal skills used by the team. Improved communication skills benefit the team, the practice and patients.

Based on more than 22 years of consulting to dental practices, Levin Group recommends scripting as an effective solution to a practice’s communication challenges. Scripting can help practices enhance the team’s communication skills in these four areas:

• Training
• The trust factor
• Treatment knowledge
• Staff enthusiasm

1. Training

Practices are always searching for effective ways to train their teams. Scripting is one of the best training tools because nearly every aspect of the patient experience can be documented and scripted. The more scripts your practice uses, the better trained your staff will be. It may seem difficult and time-consuming to script every type of patient interaction, but the more information you can give to your team members, the more empowered they will be to provide high-quality customer service to your patients.

While scripts must be adapted to the speaking style of each team member, scripting conveys a consistent message to patients and sets a tone on how to address issues and develop solutions. The ability of your dental team to communicate effectively and efficiently — both among themselves and with patients — will have a positive impact on practice success.

2. The trust factor

In most situations, patients are willing to accept major treatment plans only after building a relationship with a practice and gaining a sense of trust with that practice’s entire staff. This sense of trust in the practice is particularly important when a patient asks a team member for a second opinion about a recommended treatment plan.

Even if a tremendously positive relationship exists between the patient and the dentist, the patient will rarely automatically accept a comprehensive restorative or cosmetic treatment plan without having more questions. Often, when the dentist leaves the consultation room after a case presentation, the patient will turn to an assistant or hygienist who is present and ask for a second opinion on the proposed treatment. Relying on the trust the patient has placed in the practice, the team member should reinforce the benefits of the recommended treatment, emphasize the clinical skills of the doctor and use positive statements to answer any remaining patient questions. Scripting prepares your team to handle patient queries and objections, helping your practice build a long-term relationship with patients.

About the author

Dr. Roger P. Levin is founder and chief executive officer of Levin Group, Inc., a leading dental practice management consulting firm that provides a comprehensive suite of lifetime services to its clients and partners. Since 1985, Levin Group has embraced one single mission — to improve the lives of dentists.

For more than 20 years, Levin Group has helped thousands of general dentists and specialists increase their satisfaction with practicing dentistry. Levin Group may be reached at (888) 973-0000 and customerservice@levingroup.com.