Tell your assistant exactly what you want him/her to cover with patients. Anticipate questions that the patient might ask and formulate answers. Identify which written materials will be given to patients. Determine who will place follow-up phone calls to patients, etc.

Together you can create a checklist of what is to be covered during the post-op discussion, which will help the assistant understand exactly what’s expected and put you at ease in relinquishing this responsibility.

Or better yet, give general guidelines as to how you want the job carried out and be willing to allow the staff member to complete the task according to the plan they develop. Understandably, the staff member may take a somewhat different approach than you do to achieve the same outcome.

Encourage your staff to ask questions and be patient in answering them. Remember, they are not going to complete every task exactly the way that you would, and they may make a mistake or two along the way.

Yet with ongoing positive and constructive feedback, they will develop the skills and confidence that will enable you and your team to achieve a whole new level of success.

Molar ‘seating’ anyone?

You’re a fantastic practitioner, and when you go to dental meetings across the country you focus mostly on the educational opportunities and products that allow you to provide the very best in patient care. But how much fun are you having with your patients and staff? Kids will enjoy sitting on this giant molar — made of durable plastic, not dentin. We found this — and many other fun products such as tooth-shapped golf trees, tooth-shaped earrings, and more — at the Museum Shop at Baltimore’s National Museum of Dentistry (www.dentalmuseum.org/shop).

About the author

Sally McKenzie is CEO of McKenzie Management, which provides success-proven management solutions to dentistry nationwide. She is also editor of The Dentist’s Network Newsletter, www.thedentistnetwork.net; e-Management Newsletter from www.mckenziemgmt.com; and The New Dentist magazine, www.thenewdentist.net. She can be reached at (877) 777.6151 or sallymck@mckenziemgmt.com.

Dr. Eugene W. Heller is a 1976 graduate of the Marquette University School of Dentistry. He has been involved in transition consulting since 1985 and left private practice in 1990 to pursue practice management and practice transition consulting on a full-time basis. He has lectured extensively to state dental associations and numerous dental schools. Heller is the national director of Transition Services for Henry Schein Professional Practice Transitions. For further information, please call (800) 730-8885 or send an e-mail to hs@henryschein.com.