Stop thief! Give me back my retirement savings!

Introduction
You have a thief in your practice. Every day, this interloper siphons money right out of your pocket. Over the course of your career, this kleptomaniac will rob you blind. At stake are millions of dollars. That’s right, millions!

Who is this cunning culprit? Its name is inefficiency. Left unattended or ignored for years, inefficiency can wreak havoc on the practice’s long-term profitability, resulting in the dentists losing hundreds of thousands—perhaps even millions of dollars over the course of a career.

To combat this vexing problem, dental practices must be designed with step-by-step systems that facilitate maximum production without a high level of stress.

Stress is proportional to efficiency. Higher stress clearly indicates lower levels of efficiency, which ultimately translates into lower profitability.

Levin Group has found that these four action steps can help dentists build a high-performance practice:

1. Remove Bottlenecks
2. Document Systems
3. Build and Train the Team
4. Provide Superior Customer Service

1. Remove bottlenecks
Bottlenecks are built-in inefficiencies that slow down a particular system. The goal for practices is to eliminate bottlenecks by redesigning systems. Review all major practice systems, streamline processes, and eliminate bottlenecks. Without careful monitoring, bottlenecks can creep back into redesigned systems, especially when new procedures are introduced.

2. Document systems
Document all systems in a step-by-step manner. This allows the team to be trained quickly, excel in their jobs, and increase practice production. Documenting systems provides consistent and necessary information to the entire dental team. When systems are not documented, knowledge gaps occur which lead to inefficiency and confusion on the part of team members. Practice stress levels and staff turnover are both reduced when systems are documented.

3. Build and train the team
Once the systems are in place, the next step is training. If the systems have been written out in a step-by-step manner with accompanying scripts, then team members will be able to follow these systems on their own. This is especially advantageous to new team members and team members without an extensive dental background. Scripting is a critical training tool that keeps team members “on the same page.”

4. Provide superior customer service
Customer service affects every aspect of practice operations. Superior customer service combines documented protocols and scripting to achieve increased patient satisfaction, case acceptance, and referrals. As an example of a documented customer service system, Levin Group advises clients that there are more than 50 steps to follow when a new patient calls the practice, including:

• Answering the phone using specific scripts
• Requesting who referred the patient
• Educating the patient about the practice
• Helping the patient to be comfortable with the doctor and team
• Providing information about advanced technology and services

Conclusion
Inefficiency can rob dentists of the opportunity to grow their practices and save for retirement. Don’t let outdated systems drain your practice of hard-earned revenue, production, and profitability. You can reduce inefficiency by updating your systems and removing bottlenecks. Train your team on the updated systems, and you’re on your way to achieving a high-performance practice.