

3 WAYS TO GROW YOUR HYGIENE DEPARTMENT





NOTE FROM AUTHOR

I have been a dental hygienist for 15 years and I've had the privilege to work in different areas of the industry. I started out as a wide-eyed ambitious hygienist and began my career in general dentistry. While I enjoyed the practice I worked in, I quickly fell into the trap of feeling like I was in a day-to-day job earning a paycheck, but not necessarily being challenged to grow outside my comfort zone.

In an effort to chase my dreams, I moved across the country and started working for a progressive practice where I was forced outside of my comfort zone and once again found myself as a wide-eyed ambitious hygienist. I quickly realized that while I thought I was providing the best care for my patients, I was actually underutilizing many of the services we provided. *Do you ever feel like this happens in your practice?* I started thinking about my career as my own business and truly enjoyed the pride and achievement that came with that mindset.

After practicing dental hygiene for 8 years, a spinal injury left me unable to practice, but since I loved the field of dentistry I took a position as a Practice Manager for a pediatric office. This was one of the most challenging positions I've undertaken, yet one of the most rewarding. It allowed me to have a better understanding of the business side of the practice.

I soaked up as much information as I could and went on to become a consultant, where I traveled across the globe and trained over 325 offices of varying sizes on how to grow their business. I started teaching practices how to generate more new patients and continued to teach them how to grow their "business within the business" - their hygiene department.



Rachel Paul, RDH
Clinical Communications Specialist

I believe everyone has more potential, and that includes your hygienists. I will share what I know to be true from my past experiences and the content and wisdom that has been enlightened upon me by one of my mentors – Jay Geier. I hope you enjoy this eBook and share this information with your team. Here is one of my favorite quotes.

**“CHANGE IS INEVITABLE,
GROWTH IS OPTIONAL.”**
JOHN MAXWELL

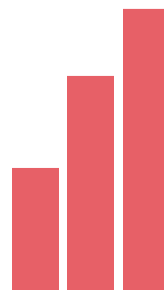




TABLE OF CONTENTS

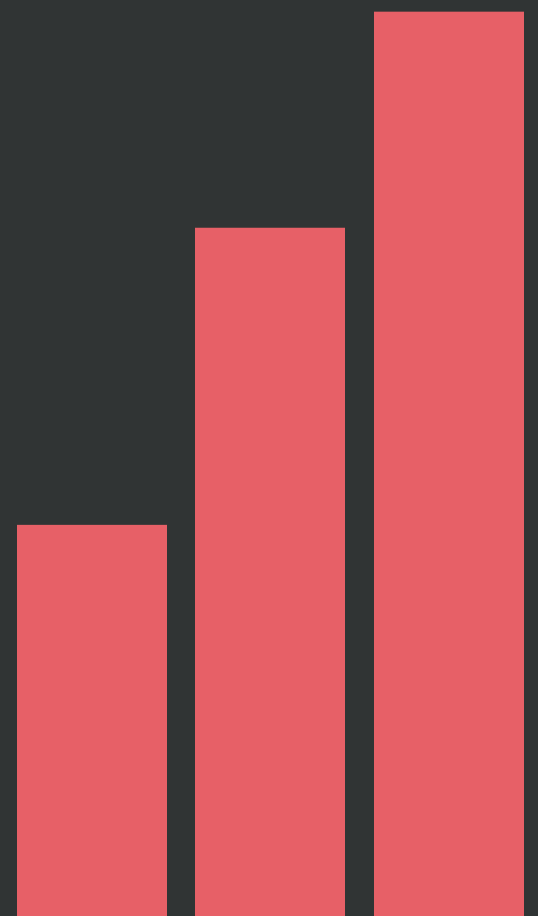
Section 1 - Introduction

Section 2 - The #1 Way

Section 3 - Are Your Patients Loyal?

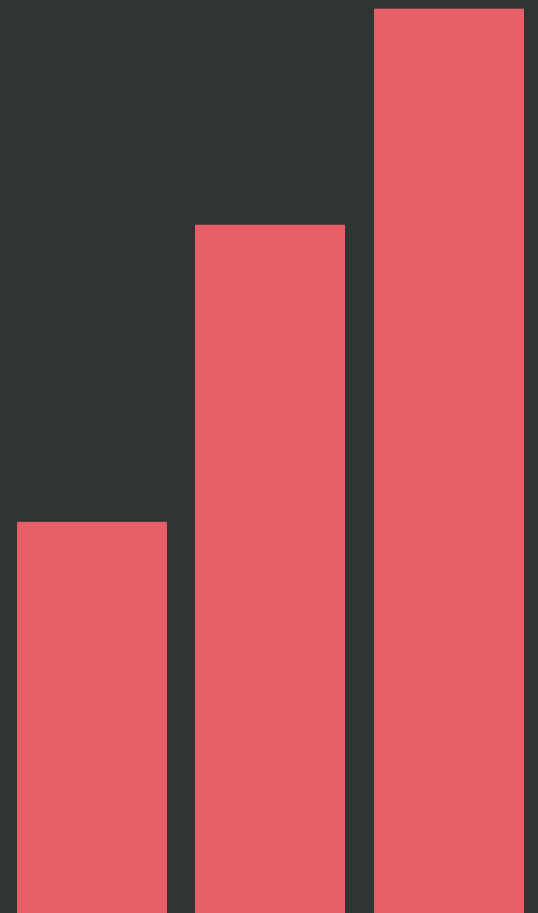
Section 4 - Examine Your Underutilized Services

Section 5 - Summary



SECTION 1

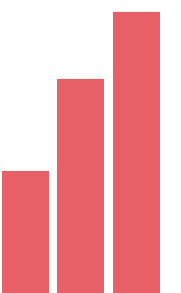
INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION



In order to grow a successful business, there are three areas that you must constantly focus on. This is any business, in any field, in any culture, in any part of the world, and this includes your practice and your hygiene department. If you take these three actions, your practice and hygiene department will be what you always dreamed them both to be. For purposes of this eBook, I am going to discuss my expertise, which is “3 Ways to Grow Your Hygiene Department.” **Let’s get started!**



1

INCREASE NEW PATIENTS. This is no secret. In order to grow your business, you must increase new patients. Doctors often say, "I don't need help with my new patients" or "I don't need any more new patients," but the reality is that you cannot grow your hygiene department, let alone your practice, without a steady influx of new patients. If your new patient numbers have remained the same over the last year, then I can bet that your hygiene department has remained the same: stagnant. Now, if you have a 5-Star certified team answering your phones (which I'll get to in a minute) and your new patient numbers are steadily increasing, then congratulations! You get it! You can move on to the second way to grow your hygiene department.

2

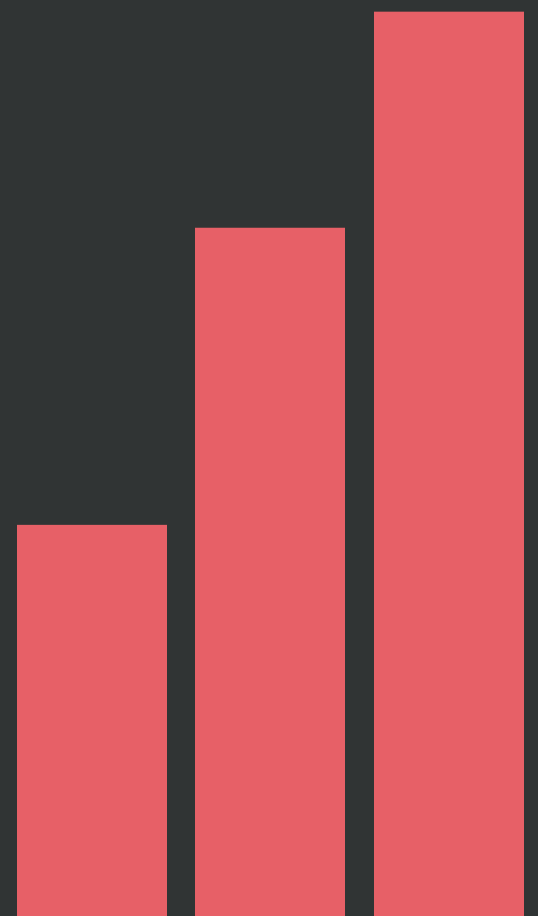
INCREASE FREQUENCY OF PURCHASE. People sometimes get confused when I ask what this means but it's quite simple. To grow your hygiene department, which is its own "business within the business," you need to increase how often your patients come into your practice. If you increase your new patients and they do not return for a second visit, then you are just wasting your marketing dollars and you will never grow. If you are wondering how to increase your frequency of purchase, then read on and I'll tell you how you can put some strategies in place to make this happen.

3

INCREASE SIZE OF PURCHASE. You need to increase the amount that each patient invests in your practice at each visit. Imagine if you could double the amount a patient spends per visit, all the while increasing the quality of care (which by the way, they go hand in hand). I am willing to bet that you have thousands of dollars of unrealized revenue sitting in your hygiene department. You may not even see it because you are in it every single day. The good news is that you can easily increase the size of purchase, and I'll tell you how it's possible!

SECTION 2

**THE #1 WAY –
INCREASE
NEW
PATIENTS**





First, I want to spend some time talking about the #1 way to grow your hygiene department - increasing new patients. Now, if you are one of the doctors who already have this mastered, meaning that you have a healthy, steady influx of new patients and a 5-Star certified team answering your phones, then feel free to jump ahead. Just make sure you are honest with yourself before doing so. If your front desk team has not hit a 5-Star rating since...actually you don't know the last time, then you should probably stick around for this part.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOUR TEAM HAD A 5-STAR RATING?

DID YOU KNOW THAT ONE BROKEN APPOINTMENT IN HYGIENE AMOUNTS TO \$30,000 A YEAR OF LOSS PRODUCTION?

Let's talk about the reasons why you should ALWAYS be increasing new patients and how this is relevant to growing your hygiene department. I worked for a dentist early in my career (remember the wide-eyed ambitious hygienist) who decided he had plenty of new patients, so we were no longer accepting them. As a young hygienist with no business-thinking mindset, I saw nothing wrong with this idea. In my mind, we were so established that we didn't need new patients. This did not last long, because as you might expect, we started having holes in our schedule. This had a huge impact on my daily numbers and my production, as well as my doctor's production, suffered with the increased openings. This is why you should ALWAYS be accepting new patients.

3 REASONS YOU SHOULD ALWAYS BE INCREASING NEW PATIENTS

TIP

Encourage your team to pass out referral cards when they are out in public, buying groceries, or dropping their kids off at daycare. Trust me, everyone on the team needs to be in the new patient business.

TIP

Subscribe to the Hygiene Profit Leaders Podcast on itunes or go to www.HygieneProfitLeaders.com and listen to Episode 4 for more information on how to improve your retention rate.

1 Every dental practice loses around 15 - 20% of their patient base every year. People move, people find a sweeter deal down the road, people pass away (sorry it's a fact of life), people get offended by one of your staff members (or you), etc. The list goes on and on. It is imperative that you are replenishing your patient base all the time, not just when you feel like you need more new patients. I repeat, ALL THE TIME!

2 A new patient can bring in thousands of dollars of revenue over the course of their lifetime into your practice. This does not include the referrals they send. If they like you, you will have their whole family, their coworkers, their friends and their neighbors coming through your door. The conservative average revenue of a new patient is typically worth around \$1,500. The average revenue is the average amount of dollars a new patient will invest in your practice over their lifetime. Multiply that number by the average number of new patients you see every month, and you will get a good idea of just how valuable they are to your practice. Never stop focusing on new patients!

3 Increasing new patients is the quickest way to grow your hygiene department. If you have not added another column of hygiene in the last year, then you are not increasing new patients (or you have a severe retention problem, and that is a whole other topic). In most practices, your new patients filter in through hygiene first. I realize this is not the case for all, but for the majority this is true. So, if you increase new patients, then your hygiene department should increase as well. In fact, for every 50 new patients you increase per month, you should be adding a full-time hygienist. What are your new patient numbers, and when was the last time you added (not replaced) a hygienist to your team?



Hopefully, by now you have a better understanding of the first way to grow a business. If your team is not 5-Star certified or it's been a while since you've taken the 5-Star challenge, then I encourage you to request one through your member website. If you are not a member, visit the Scheduling Institute's homepage www.SchedulingInstitute.com to request one today!

SCHEDULING
INSTITUTE



We kept seeing our numbers increase. We got to the point where we started to see an increase in new patients pretty rapidly. We started going from an average of 30 a month to an average of 60 per month; then 80 per month; then 90, then we broke the 100 barrier. We are now looking at 125 to 130 patients a month.

Dr. Kevin Rowan



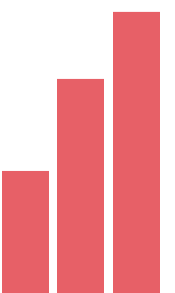
Dr. Rowan understands the importance of new patients and subsequently his hygiene department is growing, too! Here's what Dr. Rowan's dental hygienist, Katie Durrough, had to say:



"When I started there were only 2 hygienists on staff, and now we have 5 at our main office and 1 at our sister office."

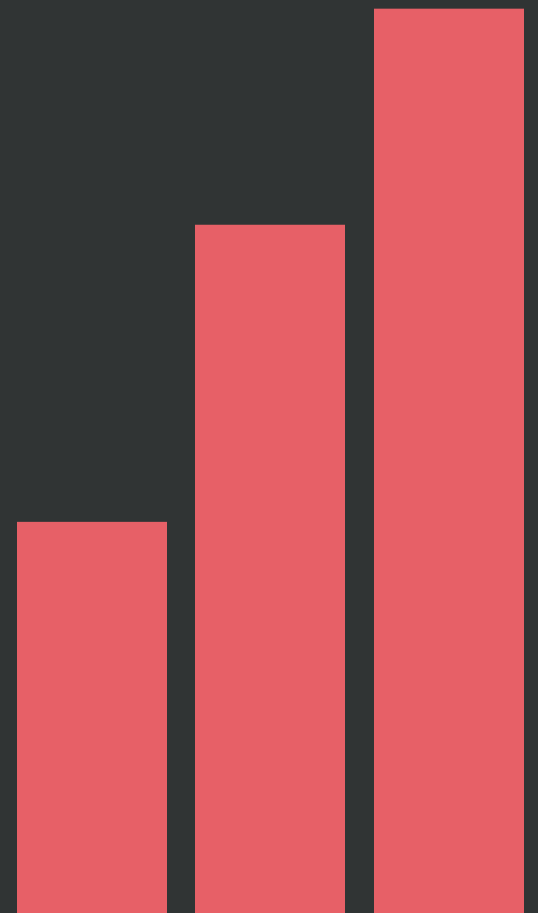


NOTICE HOW THEIR HYGIENE DEPARTMENT IS GROWING WITH THE INCREASE IN NEW PATIENTS!



SECTION 3

ARE YOUR PATIENTS LOYAL?

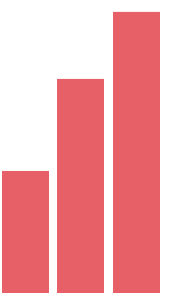




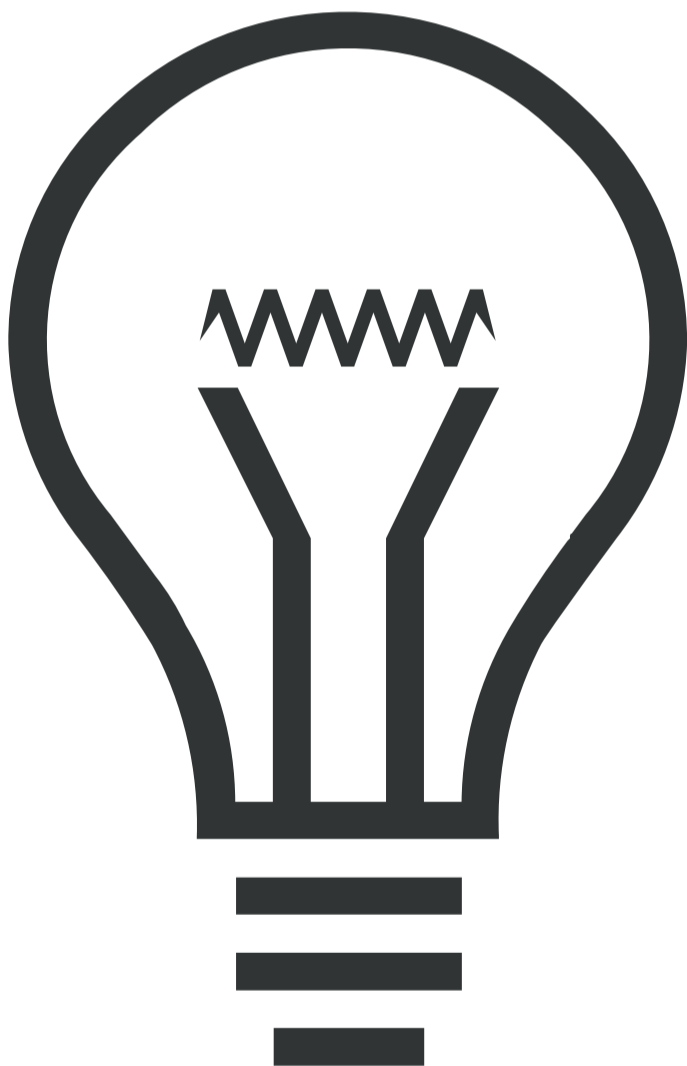
Let's move on to the second way to grow your hygiene department – increase frequency of purchase. How often a patient comes into your practice can have a great impact on your bottom number. Just think about the difference between a patient who comes in once a year for a preventative visit versus the patient who comes in every 3 months for a perio maintenance visit. One will bring significantly more revenue into your practice and will unintentionally be a much more loyal patient. I can almost guarantee you that they are less likely to cancel last minute on your hygienists.

Let's go through 3 actions to put in place to help increase the frequency of purchase.

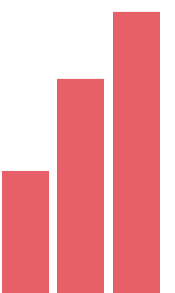
1 Create value at every visit. This might seem obvious, but how often do we diminish our treatment recommendations by using the word “maybe” or you have a “little” cavity or a “little bit” of bleeding. I know I was guilty of this when I started my career as a dental hygienist. There is little (no pun intended) value creation in using these words. You create value throughout the visit using intraoral cameras, educating the patient, using proper verbal skills, offering a dental fitness report card, etc. It's important to personalize their visit and always give them a why, what, and when for returning to your practice.



2 Develop a solid periodontal program. You might be wondering how this relates to increasing frequency of purchase. If you do not put your patients into the proper periodontal program, then they will not return as often as you need them to for periodontal maintenance. Many offices do not even have a protocol for gingivitis, or rather I should say their protocol is clean them and see them back in six months, but is that the best treatment for that patient? Gingivitis is the gatekeeper for periodontal disease so shouldn't you have a protocol for treating gingivitis? All too often dental hygienists will undertreat perio on their patients. They go underneath the gum line and remove bacteria, yet they charge out a prophy code. This builds no value for the patient and sends the message that everything is normal. By the way, if your active perio numbers are below 20% I can assure you this is happening in your practice. It's a very slippery slope!



I remember training an office and the hygienist increased her active perio numbers from 3% to 30% in just 3 months after completing the Profitable Perio training. I was curious as to what made the change, and her response was spot on! She said, "A lightbulb went off that day that while I thought I was helping them out by not charging them out for perio, I realized they did not see the severity of the disease and were not coming in as often as they needed to for maintenance. I changed the way I looked at it." Bingo! I am also happy to report that she had a 100% treatment acceptance, and her schedule was built out for weeks. Her passion was evident to her patients, and the new tools she learned allowed her to communicate this effectively.



Here's what Dr. Allison Piper had to say about giving away periodontal treatment.

“ Our staff used to give away periodontal treatment all the time and never recommended scaling and root planing procedures because ‘people can’t afford it.’ We have a program to help our patients in need, but we are not giving away things for free anymore. ”



3 Designate ownership of the recare system to one person.

This means you need to assign one person the task of getting patients back through your door. Multiple team members can help this person call patients, but ultimately this person is responsible for reducing downtime in the schedule. They need to track downtime and be held accountable for that statistic. They must be given the proper time to sit down and focus on this as well. If your response to the question, “Who is responsible for getting patients back on the schedule?” is, “We all call patients when we have the time,” then that is not a system. You are missing out on increasing the frequency of purchase.

TIP

Check out Episode 18 on the Hygiene Profit Leaders Podcast for more info on this topic!
www.HygieneProfitLeaders.com

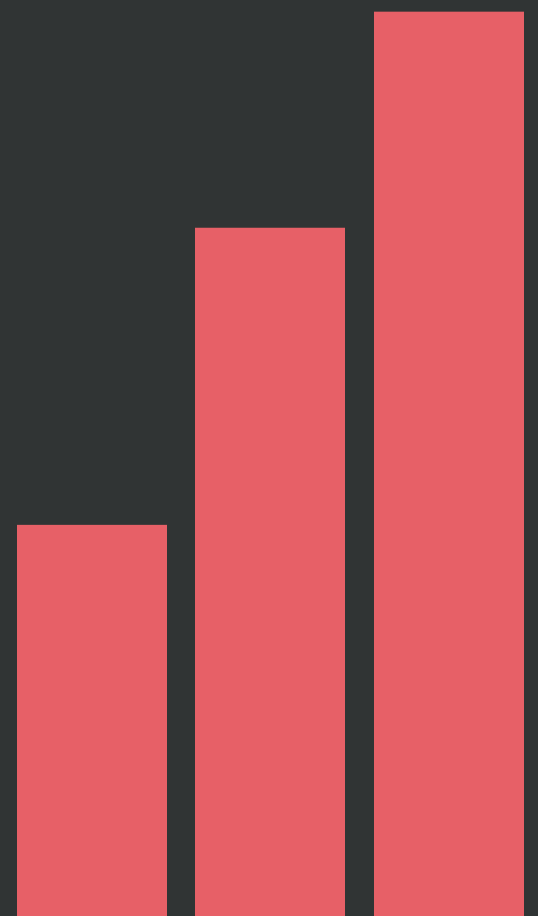


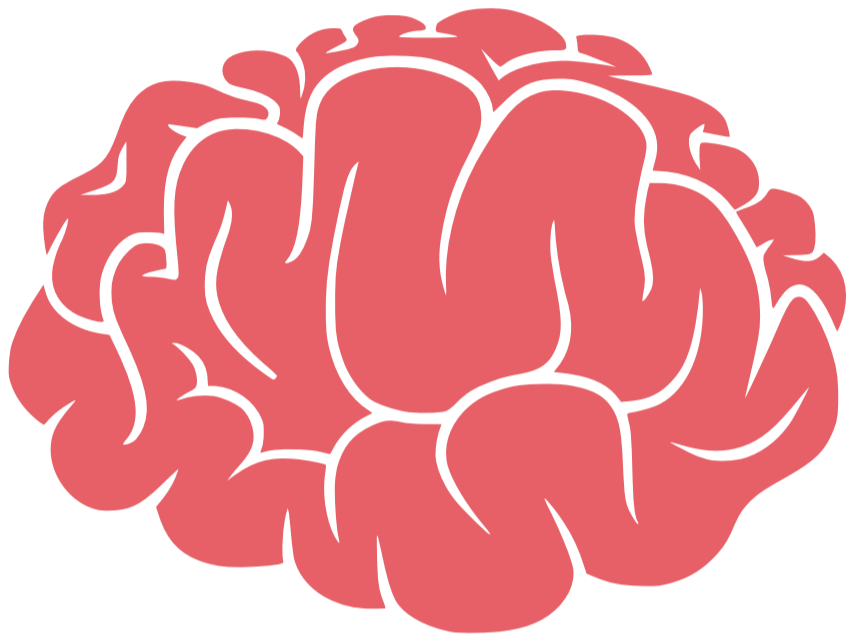
“ The biggest difference the hygiene trainings have made on our practice is that we are all on the same page in making sure our patients have the most complete care, whether it is recommending a certain product or educating them on gingivitis and getting them back on a more frequent recall.”

Lauren Crout, RDH, Dr. Chip Mercer ”

SECTION 4

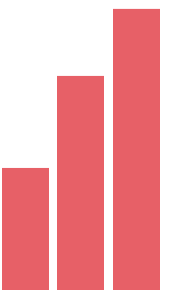
EXAMINE YOUR UNDERUTILIZED SERVICES





“*The eyes only see
and the ears only
hear what the
brain is looking for.*
– Jay Geier”

This one might be the most obvious, but you must increase the amount that each patient invests at each visit. You already have many of the tools to do this, you are just not utilizing them to their full potential. Any services you recommend outside of the prophylaxis, bitewing, and exam are great ways to increase the size of purchase. Many of these services are also non-insurance driven, so it increases your bottom line significantly. I never even thought to recommend fluoride to my adult patients until I had the knowledge as to why I should be recommending it. In the words of Jay Geier, “The eyes only see and the ears only hear what the brain is looking for.” This might be my favorite quote by Jay. So true!



HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF PURCHASE

1 List all the services you already provide and determine how often you are recommending them to your patients. For example, perhaps you have an oral cancer screening device and you realize that out of every patient your hygienists saw last month, only 10 were offered or accepted this service. Now you know that this service is underutilized, so you can set a goal and make a game plan to increase this service. This will also increase the quality of care you provide to your patients.

TIP

Make a list of all the services you currently provide in hygiene, set a goal for each, and track on a daily basis!

TIP

Say to your patient, "Let's get this started today and save you a trip back!"

2 Get your patients involved with your treatment plan with co-diagnosis. This means you get your patients involved with your discoveries. Use the intraoral camera, and let them see what you see. If the patient has a cracked tooth, take a picture and put it up on the screen in front of them. I was required to have a picture up of every patient in my last office. I can tell you from personal experience, treatment acceptance was much higher in that office than the previous offices I practiced in. Pictures will help you educate them and create a sense of urgency. Offer to do treatment that day if you have time. The minute they walk out your front door, the sense of urgency diminishes and the size of purchase may be affected, because they will make every excuse not to return.

“ One of the main things I learned from the Mix of Services Training is the verbiage to use to sell products, such as fluoride, night guards, and bleaching trays. Things we’ve always done but a better way to come across to the patient.

Dianne McCormick, RDH, Dr. David Crabtree

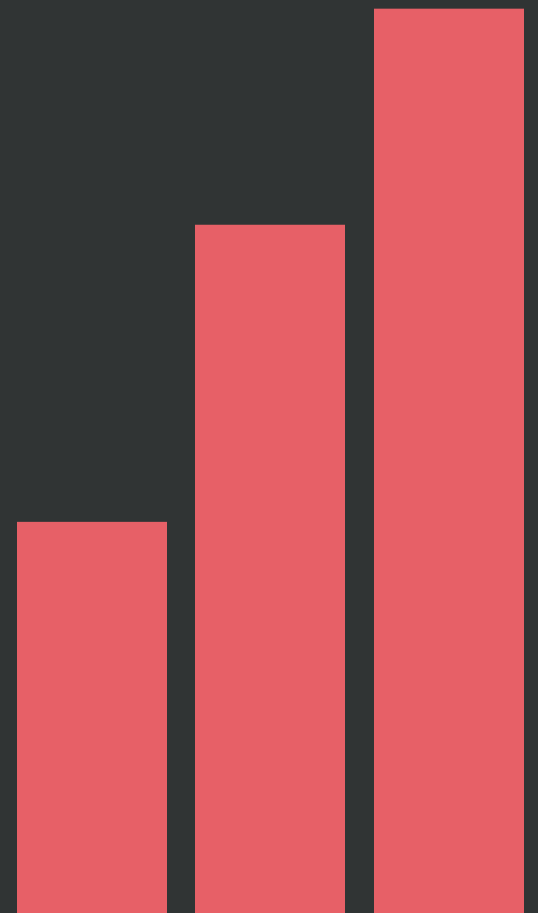


3 Identify their value and objections so you are speaking their language. This has a huge impact on treatment acceptance. Take the time to get to know your patients and personalize their treatment plan. For example, your patient is getting married and she values the appearance of her teeth. With her upcoming wedding, money is an objection. You could offer her a whitening special for soon-to-be brides. Now, you are speaking her language. She wants whitening trays and is happy to find the extra \$100 to pay for the trays that were reduced for her big day from \$250. The size of her preventative hygiene visit just went up \$100. Now that is significant!



SECTION 5

LET'S SUMMARIZE





In summary - to grow your hygiene department, you must first increase new patients. New patients typically see the hygienist first (not always) so that will build out their schedule. Next, the hygienists need to be equipped with the verbal skills and tools to create value to ensure the patient is coming back on a consistent basis to increase the frequency of purchase. Finally, your hygienists need to increase the size of purchase by recommending high-level services outside the basic prophylaxis and bitewing. This will not only increase production, but it will also ensure that the patient is receiving the highest quality of care. At the end of the day that is the most important thing.



Do you remember how many new patients you need to see per month to add on a full-time hygienist?

I hope you have enjoyed the content in this ebook. Now I leave you with a very important question to ask yourself:

**IS YOUR
HYGIENE
DEPARTMENT
GROWING AT
THE RATE YOU
WANT IT TO?**

If not, there is a good chance that one (or all) of these areas need to be focused on.

“

*You will either step forward into growth,
or you will step backward into safety.*

Abraham Maslow

”

Which direction are you going?

Call today at **866-761-7972** for a complimentary consultation to determine which areas of your hygiene department need attention or simply visit **www.FreeHygieneCall.com** to speak to a Clinical Specialist.

