3Q | 2026

The Dental Transition

NEWSLETTER

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Staffing Shortages & Team Retention, Turning Your Practice into a Workplace of Choice

Staffing is a leading concern for many practice owners. Recent ADA polling indicates that nearly 60% of dentists are concerned about recruiting and retaining staff, especially hygienists. Staffing shortages and low reimbursement are the leading challenges for the future. Many dentists report having open positions for months and difficulty finding qualified candidates willing to accept current wages and hours.

Why Hiring Feels So Hard Right Now

The hygienist shortage is well-documented. As of early 2025, over 7,000 dental professional shortage areas exist in the U.S., and dental office workforce growth remains flat despite more hygiene graduates.

Wages have increased significantly, with hygiene wages rising 26.6% and dental assistant wages 25% from 2018 to 2023. However, after adjusting for inflation, average dental office staff wages have declined, making these roles less attractive compared to other healthcare and economic sectors. At the same time, rising costs of equipment, supplies, and technology are outpacing reimbursement rates, limiting owners' ability to increase wages.

Retention Beats Perpetual Recruiting

Retention is as critical as recruitment in the current environment. Some practice types experience turnover rates above 20–25%, with implant practices reaching 27.5% and front office turnover up to 30%. High turnover disrupts patient care, reduces trust, increases training costs, and often leads to costly temporary staffing or reduced capacity.

Many root causes are non-financial, including limited career growth, poor work-life balance, unclear expectations, weak leadership, and burnout. Addressing these issues systematically can significantly improve retention, even if you cannot offer the highest pay.

Build a Culture People Do Not Want to Leave

A positive, supportive culture strongly predicts retention. Research and case studies emphasize the importance of open communication, regular feedback, and recognizing contributions to keep teams engaged. Celebrating milestones, acknowledging achievements, and involving team members in process changes help staff feel valued and invested in the practice's success.
Team camaraderie is also important. Simple practices such as morning huddles, team lunches, or social

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Celebrating milestones, acknowledging achievements, and involving team members in process changes help staff feel valued and invested in the practice's success. Team camaraderie is also important.

events can strengthen relationships and build resilience during busy periods. Younger team members often seek workplaces with a clear mission and shared values. Clearly communicating your practice's purpose and how each role supports patient outcomes can distinguish you as an employer of choice.

Support Well-Being and Prevent Burnout

Burnout is an increasing concern for all dental team members, including dentists, hygienists, assistants, and front office staff. High patient volumes, time pressure, emotionally demanding interactions, and balancing clinical with administrative tasks are common stressors. Practices that proactively manage workloads through realistic scheduling, adequate staffing, and dedicated time for training and administrative tasks are more likely to retain experienced staff.

Offering flexibility, such as adjusted schedules or part-time options, can make your practice more attractive, especially when competing with larger employers. Some practices now provide mental health resources, peer support, or regular well-being check-ins, recognizing that a burned-out team cannot deliver quality patient care.

Create Clear Career Paths and Strong Onboarding

Retention improves when team members see a future in your practice. Structured onboarding, clear role definitions, and mentorship help new hires feel supported and confident. Providing continuing education, cross-training, and opportunities for additional responsibilities, such as leadership in infection control, patient education, or technology, demonstrates your investment in their growth.

Compensation remains important. Regular salary reviews, performance-based bonuses, and competitive benefits, such as health coverage and retirement plans, are key elements of a strong retention strategy. Even if you cannot offer the highest pay, combining fair compensation with a positive culture, growth opportunities, and respect can make your practice a preferred workplace for top talent.

Strong Teams Drive Practice Value

For practice owners, a stable, engaged team not only reduces daily stress but also increases the value of the business. Buyers and lenders closely evaluate staff tenure, turnover, and team depth when assessing risk and pricing. Practices with high turnover, frequent use of temporary staff, or ongoing hiring challenges may receive lower offers, stricter lending terms, or face longer sale timelines. Investing in retention now makes daily operations smoother and positions your practice as a stronger, more valuable asset for future transition.

Staffing While Preparing to Transition

Staff retention becomes extremely important when it is time to transition your practice to a new doctor. Recently, we have had quite a few practices that have lost hygienists while we were trying to find a new owner for the practice, and this has proven to be a huge obstacle. New owners are looking for a turnkey practice, and the last thing they want to do is try to recruit a new hygienist on day one. This will often cause them not to pursue that opportunity. Our advice is to do whatever you need to keep them happy, even if that means compensating them at a higher rate than you would typically feel comfortable with.

Contact us TODAY to schedule a free consultation!

Why Practice Sales Fall Apart and How to Avoid It

When planning to sell a practice, one of the most common reasons a transition falls apart, whether with a DSO or an independent buyer, comes down to the organization and accuracy of the information you provide. This can feel overwhelming if you are not familiar with your practice management software reports or if you have taken a hands-off approach with bookkeeping and accounting.

When planning to sell a practice, one of the most common reasons a transition falls apart, whether with a DSO or an independent buyer, comes down to the organization and accuracy of the information you provide.

Often, it is simple issues that begin to erode buyer confidence. Examples include not disclosing a staff wage increase, stating you are a PPO-only practice when you actually accept some Medicaid, failing to mention that a piece of equipment needs repair, or having attorney fees on your books from two years ago that were actually related to a personal item. These items may seem small, but each time a buyer has to clarify something or discovers information that was incorrect or incomplete, they gradually lose trust in all the information you have provided. As their trust decreases, their scrutiny increases, which usually results in more concerns being identified.

While buyers are responsible for performing due diligence, repeated mistakes in disclosures or intentional omissions, whether or not they are intentional, can cause a buyer to walk away from the opportunity entirely.

Other red flags include large outstanding accounts receivable or significant patient credit balances. While buyers are responsible for performing due diligence, repeated mistakes in disclosures or intentional omissions, whether or not they are intentional, can cause a buyer to walk away from the opportunity entirely.

This happens with DSOs as well. A DSO may give you an initial offer based on your profit and loss statements, only to discover during due diligence that your EBITDA is significantly different from their original calculation. This often results in a much lower valuation than expected. An independent buyer may determine that you perform a high number of specialty procedures that they are unable to replicate, which makes the practice unrealistic for their skill set.

To avoid these issues, it is important to review your software reports carefully to confirm that all information is accurate and complete. It is also helpful to cleanout personal expenses from your books before beginning the sales process. And if you plan to hire a broker, remember that a broker does not audit the information you provide. They may ask many questions to clarify details, but they rely entirely on the data you submit. They are not an audit firm and cannot verify whether the information is accurate.

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Preparing accurate, organized, and complete information protects the value of your practice, maintains buyer confidence, and dramatically increases the likelihood of a smooth, successful sale.

If you are considering selling your practice in the next three to five years, or less, this is the ideal time to prepare. A brief conversation can help you understand what steps will protect your value, strengthen your

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position, and make the entire process far less stressful. If you would like to review your practice reports, discuss your goals, or explore your transition options, We invite you to call us to schedule a time to talk. We are always happy to help you plan the smoothest and most successful path forward.

What Our Clients Have To Say About Us Matters

"I was very satisfied with Brian and Sean Hudson and the smooth transition experience they guided me and my staff through. Their professional approach to every detail and concern removed any apprehensions I may had at the onset. Needless to say, my dental practice was sold within a short period of time. I highly recommend their services." – *Dr. Richard Craybas*

"Hudson Transition Partners could not have been more helpful when I was selling my Dental Practice. Their excellent professional practice evaluation was extremely detailed and invaluable when presenting my practice to potential buyers." – *Timothy Holloway, DMD*

"I worked with Hudson Transition Partners when I was looking to relocate and purchase my first dental practice. From the initial phone call to the closing, they were there for me every step of the way. Their guidance and referrals to other professional sources were invaluable." – *Matthew Whipple, DDS*