

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FROM DENTAL BUSINESS MASTERY

Six Areas Every *Dental Practice Owner* Needs to Get Right

Practical steps across the six areas that make the biggest difference to the long-term success of your practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Running a dental practice is one of the most rewarding things you can do - and one of the most demanding. You are managing a clinical team, keeping patients happy, watching your numbers, and trying to grow, often all at once.

Over our combined 69 years in the dental industry, we have worked with practices at every stage - from brand new owners finding their feet to established practices looking to sharpen their approach. And the same six areas come up again and again as the ones that make or break a practice's success.

This guide walks you through each of them - what they are, why they matter, and what you can do to get them right.

These six areas are not complicated. But getting all of them working well together, consistently, is what separates the practices that grow with confidence from those that stay stuck in the day-to-day.

The six areas covered in this guide:

- 01** **Your Team**

- 02** **Patient Experience**

- 03** **Local Area Marketing**

- 04** **Systems and Scheduling**

- 05** **Leadership**

- 06** **Tracking Your KPIs**

01

Your Team

When you build it, they will come.

One of the most common mistakes practice owners make, particularly in the early stages of building their practice, is cutting costs by hiring lower-level staff or reducing team hours wherever possible. It feels like responsible financial management. In practice, it works against you.

When you are building a practice, patients are forming their first impressions. Every interaction either builds the kind of reputation that fills your schedule or quietly erodes it. This is the time you need your highest level of customer service, relationship building, professionalism, and clinical skill on show - not a reduced version of it.

"When you build it, they will come." Invest in your team early and you create the conditions for growth. Cut corners and you slow it down.

What this looks like in practice:

- Hire for attitude, professionalism, and warmth - skills can be trained, the right disposition cannot.
- Keep your team hours as full as the schedule can support. A fully staffed, well-presented practice signals confidence to patients.
- Invest in your team's training and development - a team that grows feels valued and stays longer.
- Reduce turnover wherever possible. Continuity builds patient trust. Patients notice when the same warm face greets them every visit.
- Create a culture where your team genuinely enjoys coming to work. That energy is felt by every patient who walks through the door.

02

Patient Experience

Consider the whole journey, not just the appointment.

Patient experience is not just what happens in the chair. It is everything a patient feels and notices from the moment they first make contact with your practice to the moment they leave - and the impression that stays with them long after.

Most practices focus heavily on clinical quality, which is of course essential. But patients often cannot assess clinical quality directly. What they can assess is how they were made to feel. And that begins well before they sit down.

The patient journey has three key moments:

On the phone

Is the person answering your phone warm, helpful, and unhurried? Do they make the patient feel like a valued person rather than an appointment to be booked? The phone call is often the very first impression your practice makes.

Arriving at the practice

Does the patient feel genuinely welcomed when they walk in? Are they greeted by name, guided through what to expect, and made comfortable? A well-presented, calm, and friendly reception area sets the tone for the entire visit.

In the clinical environment

Gentle, unhurried dentistry with clear explanations at every step. Patients should always know what is happening and why. Good clinical communication reduces anxiety, builds trust, and creates the kind of patient who comes back willingly and refers their friends.

Ask yourself honestly: if you were a nervous first-time patient walking into your practice today, how would you feel? That question is one of the most useful ones you can ask.

03

Local Area Marketing

Everyone in your area should know you are there.

Broad marketing campaigns can be expensive and often attract enquiries from well outside the area where you actually want to build your patient base. Local area marketing is more targeted, more cost-effective, and far more likely to bring in patients who stay.

The goal is simple: everyone within your catchment area should know where you are, what you do, and what makes your practice different from the others nearby. That awareness does not happen by accident - it is built deliberately and consistently over time.

Practical local area marketing ideas:

- Google reviews - actively encourage happy patients to leave a review. They are one of the most powerful tools you have and they cost nothing.
- Facebook community groups - be a helpful, visible presence in your local online community. Answer questions, share useful information, and let people get to know you.
- Effective practice signage - does your signage clearly communicate who you are and what you do? Is it easy to read from passing traffic?
- Sponsorship of local sporting clubs and community events - your name on a banner at the local footy ground is seen every weekend by your community.
- Letterbox drops - a well-designed flyer in local letterboxes with a clear offer is still one of the most direct ways to reach households nearby.
- Open house seminars on oral and systemic health - invite your community in. Position your practice as a place of genuine expertise and care.

You do not need a large marketing budget to build a strong local presence. You need consistency, visibility, and genuine community connection.

Systems and Scheduling

A full schedule does not happen by chance.

Strong systems are the quiet engine of a well-run practice. You may have a wonderful team and a great patient experience, but if your systems are letting patients slip through the cracks - missed recalls, incomplete treatment, last-minute cancellations that stay empty - you are leaving significant growth on the table.

Effective scheduling and patient flow systems protect your production, your patient relationships, and your team's sense of order during the day.

The key systems to get right:

- Appointment confirmations - a consistent confirmation process (SMS, phone, or email) significantly reduces no-shows and last-minute cancellations.
- Recall systems - your recall process should be proactive and multi-touch. Patients who feel gently and genuinely cared for come back.
- Treatment plan follow-up - unscheduled treatment is one of the biggest untapped opportunities in most practices. Have a system to follow up and bring patients back in.
- Keeping to time - respect your patients' time and they will respect yours. Running on time signals professionalism and care.
- Never move a patient's appointment unless absolutely unavoidable. Changing patient appointments at your convenience erodes trust quickly.
- Provider continuity - where possible, keep patients with the same provider. Familiarity builds loyalty and makes clinical handovers smoother.

Every gap in your schedule is a system that has not quite worked. Most gaps are preventable with the right processes in place.

Leadership

The practice reflects the person leading it.

Leadership is one of the areas practice owners most underestimate - particularly earlier in their ownership journey. You may be an exceptional clinician. But running a practice requires an entirely different set of skills, and the good news is that leadership is something you can actively develop.

Your team looks to you - consciously and unconsciously - to set the tone. How you show up as a leader shapes the culture, the communication, and the performance of everyone around you.

What good practice leadership looks like:

- Commit to your own growth. Read, attend events, seek out mentors and coaches. The best leaders are always learning.
- Lead by example in everything - your punctuality, your communication, your attitude toward patients and colleagues.
- Be fair and consistent. Your team needs to trust that you will treat everyone with the same standards and the same respect.
- Stay optimistic, especially in difficult periods. Your energy is contagious. An anxious, negative leader creates an anxious, negative team.
- Keep your business worries to yourself. Sharing financial stress or operational anxiety with your team does not resolve it - it simply destabilises the people who look to you for steadiness.
- Take action when needed, and take it promptly. Unresolved issues with team members or processes fester and grow. Address things directly and early.
- Be a great communicator and an even better listener. Your team has more insight into the day-to-day than you might realise - create the space for them to share it.

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Tracking Your KPIs

You cannot improve what you are not measuring.

Key performance indicators - KPIs - are the numbers that tell you how your practice is really performing. Not how it feels like it is performing, but how it actually is. Many practice owners have a rough sense of their revenue but limited visibility into the metrics that drive it.

When you know your numbers, you know which levers to pull. You can see a problem emerging before it becomes a crisis. You can identify growth opportunities you would otherwise miss. And you can have much more informed, productive conversations with anyone advising you on your practice.

The KPIs worth tracking in most practices:

New patient numbers	How many new patients are you seeing each month? Is that number growing, stable, or declining?
Patient retention rate	Are your existing patients coming back? High attrition is a sign of a patient experience or recall system problem.
Active patient database	How many patients visited in the last 18 months? This number tells you the true size of your practice.
Production per day	What is your average daily production? This is a core measure of your clinical efficiency and schedule quality.
Hygiene department performance	Is your hygiene department full? Are patients being recalled effectively and accepting recommended treatment?
Treatment plan acceptance	What percentage of presented treatment are patients accepting? Low acceptance points to a communication or experience issue.
Outstanding recalls	How many patients are overdue for recall? This is one of the most common sources of untapped growth.

You do not need to track everything. Start with five or six key numbers, review them monthly, and act on what you see. Consistency matters more than complexity.

Ready to go further?

If any of these six areas resonated with you - whether you are just starting out or have been running your practice for years - we would love to have a conversation.

Our Advisory Program gives you expert eyes on your practice every month, KPI tracking, anytime access for urgent questions, and a team that genuinely understands dental.

Book a free online consultation

dentalbusinessmastery.com.au/advisory-program

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