BEST PRACTICES FOR AGD MEMBERS

Compliments of CareCredit®

Series 2, Vol. 4

How to Create a Thriving Cosmetic Practice

By Harvey Silverman, DMD, FASDA, FABAD
President, Silverman Institute of Cosmetic Dentistry

Developing a successful cosmetic dentistry practice does not come easily, but neither is it elusive. It starts with your entire team having a winning attitude that opens everyone’s mind to replacing old habits with new ones that produce powerful results. The reality is, you CAN have a thriving cosmetic practice. You just have to break through the barriers to success.

Barrier #1: I Don’t Feel Comfortable “Selling” Cosmetic Dentistry

In dentistry, as the clinical professional, we are very comfortable informing patients what they need. But, with cosmetic dentistry we need to change our mind-set and instead consider what patients want. You should not have to “sell” cosmetic dentistry to your patients. Instead, you want to encourage patients to ASK about how cosmetic dentistry might benefit them using “zero-pressure” techniques. It’s not hard to do. It’s all based upon the triad of Informing, Power Educating and Motivating.

For example, many Health History forms ask if a patient wants to “change their smile.” Instead of asking a question that can easily be answered with a “No,” focus on the realities and condition of their teeth. First, fill out an updated Health History form with your patients that includes simple “Yes” or “No” fact-based questions that make it easy for the patient to share specifically what they perceive to be issues with the appearance of their teeth.

Questions like:

Do you have spaces between your teeth?
Do you have any chipped teeth?
Do you have uneven teeth?
Do you have pointed canine (eye) teeth?
Would you like to know how these conditions can be corrected?

The goal is to gather information that allows your team to inform patients how recent advances in dental technology can allow them to change their smile. Some patients already know what is available, but many do not. Don’t assume everyone does. This is a common mistake many dentists and team members make.

After your team member has reviewed the updated Health History form, this is the time for them to power educate the patient, sharing similar cases done in your office. Relate how the “before” and “after” pictures were done in one or two visits with no anesthetic (try using “no shots” instead since patients can relate to that) and no tooth preparation (or minimal when necessary). As the team is sharing this information with the patient, do NOT have the team diagnose, but DO have the team...
How to Create a Thriving Cosmetic Practice

Continued from page 1

let the patient know that you hope that he/she is a candidate — which will be determined by the doctor — and, if they are, they will love how beautiful their smile will look.

Through the team sharing sincere enthusiasm about the doctors’ skill in transforming unattractive teeth into dazzling smiles, patients become motivated to go ahead with cosmetic dentistry. Remember, by having full confidence in the doctors’ ability to create these transformations, the team is simply sharing their sincere conviction and belief. Otherwise they would be “selling” which is not what your team is trying to accomplish. However, the triad of informing, power educating and motivating has been successfully used by dentists wanting to expand the cosmetic dentistry component of their practice for over 25 years.

It’s also critical to gain sincere buy-in from your entire team if you are going to be successful. To do that, start by having a team meeting and ask each team member to fill out the updated Health History form (a sample form that your team can use for this purpose can be found at www.dharveysilverman.com/smileanalysis4.pdf). This exercise will accomplish two objectives. First, it gives you valuable insights into what your team wants to have done to improve their own smiles. Most dentists are surprised by how many team members have at least one tooth they would like to cosmetically improve. Some changes may be subtle, others more obvious. The same is true for your own patient population.

Do the cosmetic dentistry on your team members (I recommend doing it as a complimentary service). Take before and after photos. This helps your team power educate patients as they can now share their own before and after photos while describing how gorgeous your cosmetic dentistry work looks. This can be a major component in the teams’ ability to inform and share and NOT “sell.” Sincerity is the most powerful motivational tool that I know of and there is absolutely no need to sell when your team believes in your cosmetic dentistry skills.

Secondly, this helps create an atmosphere where team buy-in occurs. This is critical since your cosmetic dentistry program will not be very successful without this component in place.

It creates a comfort zone that lets team members sincerely share what you can do for the patient since they experienced it themselves. The more subtle the before and after photo done on your team member, the better it is to help expand the net of cosmetic services that other patients may also want to have done. Why? Because the obvious problems are a piece of cake. The subtle ones are where you can build a thriving cosmetic practice.

| Barrier #2: I Don’t Want to Spend Money on Advertising |

Many doctors believe that advertising is the key to a successful cosmetic practice. Some believe that their “inner nucleus” of patients does not want cosmetic dentistry, so the only way to do these types of procedures is to advertise. Here is some good news. You do not have to spend money on advertising if that is not in your comfort zone.

With the power education approach previously described, there is more than enough latent demand in your own practice. By having every patient fill out an updated Health History form that includes the Smile Analysis component and using the inform, power educate and motivate principles — you will see that there are a lot of cosmetic dental services to be done immediately.

People universally want better smiles. Why? Because having a better-looking smile makes people feel better. And these people are right in your patient files. Your existing patients are the best place to start building your cosmetic practice.

This is when power educating becomes your most valuable tool. To help patients uncover their desire for cosmetic dentistry, you must look at their eyes. When you talk about the cosmetic transformations you have done and show them “before” and “after” photos, are they animated, excited or distracted? If their eyes are not locked onto the pictures or you, have you lost their attention and interest. Now is the time to stop and simply ask, “How do these types of smile transformations make you feel?” You will then be able to uncover what is causing their reluctance, distraction or confusion.
Barrier #3: Patients Don’t Want to Spend Money on Cosmetic Dentistry

Often one of the reasons patients become distant or distracted during a discussion on cosmetic dentistry is their fear of cost. Most patients think all cosmetic procedures cost thousands of dollars. But, even though completing a large, “home run” smile renovation is exciting for you and your whole team, base hits can also add up to winning games, and may make your patients much more motivated. I believe that you can make more profit on less expensive cases.

Offer patients alternatives to porcelain veneers. Combine tooth whitening with just one or two veneers and you can turn many unattractive smiles into self-confident smiles at a fraction of the cost. This is a great way to provide a valuable service that patients can truly benefit from and can afford to do today, without having to think it over.

Another key to making cosmetic procedures comfortable for patients is to make sure you offer financing options. And, make sure patients know upfront that these financing options are available. You don’t want patients to close their minds to the opportunity of cosmetic dentistry — just because of perceived cost barriers — before you even get the chance to discuss it with them.

Be Prepared for Success

We have all heard that success comes from hard work and dedication to being your best. To break through the barriers and create a thriving cosmetic dentistry practice — in any economy — will require you have creativity, imagination, sincerity and a burning desire. You will need to surround yourself with people who have positive energy and contagious enthusiasm. You will need to set goals and prioritize. And, most importantly you will need to stop procrastinating and take the actions necessary to break through the barriers that prevent growth. It truly is up to you.

Take the first step and in no time you will be doing more cosmetic dentistry than you have ever done before. Start with the updated Health History form. It’s going to bring back more fun and patient appreciation than any other service you have available. Enjoy!

Top Take-Aways

1. If you focus on patients’ “wants” in addition to their “needs” you won’t have to “sell” cosmetic dentistry.
2. It’s important to inform patients how recent advances in dental technology can allow them to change what they don’t like about their teeth.
3. Share before and after photos of your cases with patients.
4. When the team shares sincere enthusiasm for the doctor’s skill, patients become motivated.
5. Do cosmetic dentistry on your team members. It helps them share their own experience with patients.
6. Sincerity is the most powerful motivational tool.
7. To grow the cosmetic portion of your practice, you don’t have to advertise more. There’s more than enough latent demand in your existing patient base.
8. One of the reasons patients become distracted during a discussion on cosmetic dentistry is fear of cost.
9. Make sure patients know up front their payment options, including financing plans.
10. You can create a thriving cosmetic practice if you have creativity, imagination, sincerity and the desire to succeed.

Harvey Silverman, DMD, FASDA, FABAD
President,
Silverman Institute of Cosmetic Dentistry

Dr. Harvey Silverman is a Fellow in the American Society for Dental Aesthetics and a Diplomat of the American Board of Aesthetic Dentistry. In addition to being a successful dentist with two thriving practices, Dr. Silverman was the inventor of Vanna White’s Perfect Smile System, brought to the public by the Guthy-Renker Corporation. Dr. Silverman is a widely published author on cosmetic dentistry and a highly sought-after lecturer, having given more than 200 seminars, including the popular How to Immediately Expand Your Cosmetic Practice Without Ever Selling. For additional information, visit www.drharveysilverman.com
For your convenience and ease of reference, file this white paper in the folder that was provided with the first mailing in the series.

Compliments of CareCredit
800-859-9975
www.carecredit.com