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HYGIENE SUCCESS: THE OBSTACLES THAT MIGHT BE HOLDING YOU BACK

by Rachel Wall, RDH, BS¹

PART ONE

Have you ever experienced this? You're trying to implement a new product, procedure or service and for some reason, it just won't stick. It works fine for a little while but then you go back to your same old ways. Chances are there are some hidden obstacles that you haven't yet identified. There are lots of things that stand in our way of success but I'm going to reveal the most common obstacles that I see, in both my own clinical practice and with my coaching clients.

THE 5 MOST COMMON BARRIERS ARE:

1. *Your Schedule Is Out of Balance*
2. *There Are No Systems*
3. *There Is No Accountability*
4. *No Training Is Taking Place*
5. *You're Holding Onto Old Information and Beliefs*

OBSTACLE #1: YOUR SCHEDULE IS OUT OF BALANCE:

I recently gave a tele-class to our High Performance Hygiene Mastermind members on this very topic. Whether your schedule is wide open or jam packed, each situation presents its own set of challenges.

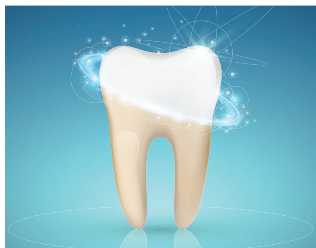
If your schedule is wide open then every hour of open time cuts into your production per hour. Even if you're doing everything you can with the patients you have, it may be difficult to reach your hourly production goal. Over a long period of time, this chips away at team morale and motivation. And too much of your admin team's time may be spent moving patients around to make the schedule look full or trying to recover from a day that's fallen apart.

If this is your challenge, find the true reason for the open time. Here are a few items to analyze:

- *How many patients do you have that are not in recare? This is your reactivation pool.*
- *Begin an aggressive reactivation program.*
- *Begin an internal marketing campaign.*
- *Work with a marketing specialist to analyze the success of your current external marketing systems and track where your high quality new patients are coming from.*
- *What percentage of the open time is unscheduled*
- *vs. cancellations or no-shows? Is your confirmation process working?*
- *Determine if the number of hygiene hours match the demand for patient care.*

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HYGIENE SUCCESS:

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If your schedule is jam packed, you have a challenge of abundance. A good problem to have but it too can be very frustrating. When you have more patients than you can handle, appointment times tend to get which results in less treatment enrolled and fewer adjunct services. Also, when there are no appointments reserved for perio therapy, often it just doesn't happen. We realize that if it's going to be 2-3 months before we can get a patient back for perio treatment, maybe we should just scale really well today and check them next time. And so a cycle of "perio prophies" begins ... but that's an article in and of itself. Again, with this situation you may be very busy but you may not have the time to deliver the very best treatment and hygiene may not be reaching their production goals.

If you find yourself in this situation, here are some solutions:

- *Add more hygiene hours.*
- *If you're already at maximum capacity, look for creative ways to utilize your current facility.*
- *It may be time to consider assisted hygiene with a highly skilled dental assistant.*
- *You may want to utilize Power Hygiene days.*
- *Take a good look at the quality of each patient and their commitment to your practice. Perhaps you decide not to pre-appoint those patients that have a habit of canceling at the last minute or not showing up – be sure you're tracking this on each patient.*

Take time to sketch out your ideal hygiene day including the procedures and production you'd like to see. It's exciting to see what's possible when you get your schedule into balance.

OBSTACLE #2: THERE ARE NO SYSTEMS:

A few weeks ago, I stepped into the office of one of my clients and I was pleasantly surprised. Based on their analysis, I expected to find a hygiene team that was not performing a complete perio exam on every patient and was not aware of each patient's condition. Very quickly, I realized this was not the case.

This team was doing a fabulous job with calling out the perio numbers and recording each number on the chart

along with bleeding points, recession and furcations. They had a threshold for the number of bleeding before they recommended some form of periodontal therapy. But that's where they hit their biggest obstacle. There was no system.

Although it seems intuitive to some of us, it is critical to have a clear system for:

- *Distinguishing health vs. disease*
- *Placing patients into gingivitis and/or perio disease treatment*
- *Presenting treatment*
- *Properly coding perio procedures*
- *When and how to follow up on therapy*
- *What adjunctive products/services to use*
- *Keeping those patients in periodontal maintenance*

This is especially true when there are multiple doctors and hygienists in the practice. Everyone must be on the same page and using the same system. What happens when we're confused is we do nothing, we shut down. This is true for patients as well. When patients are confident and clear on both the problem and the solution, they say yes!

The great news is that when we put a system in place for taking periodontal patients into active therapy and maintenance, this team sky rocketed. They already had a strong foundation in place. They didn't have to start from scratch.

Here are a few signs that this is one of your obstacles:

- *Low perio percentage despite thorough periodontal exams*
- *Low perio treatment acceptance*
- *Not starting treatment until the disease has progressed to a moderate/advanced stage*
- *Most of your perio patients are referred immediately to the periodontist*

If this sounds familiar, sit down with your team and talk about it. Decide what help you need. We offer support from our High Performance Perio webinar series all the way up to private in-office coaching programs. Spending time with a high quality CE program and gaining more knowledge is a great place to start.



COACHES AND CADDIES: *An Essential Part of Your Business Success*

by Ralph Laurie²

In golf, one of the most humbling of sports, the pros don't play any game without a caddy. You know the guy who carries the bag, and gives insightful advice and moral support. The very best golf professionals also have coaches that continually guide them, review their swing, ensure that they don't develop bad habits, and help make their professional life more effective, efficient, and yes, more profitable. Professional golfers are in the practice of refining their game so that they can be the very best at driving long distances, maintaining accuracy, and finessing their shots for the purpose of shooting the lowest score possible. Caddies and coaches are at the pro's side throughout their entire career. Why? Because the very best players know that they can fall into bad habits at anytime and require someone besides their intuition to keep them on course.

Just like golf professionals, we need caddies and coaches to help keep us from falling into bad habits. In my career however, it took me 15 years to realize it. Why? Because I generally had a lack of trust for consultants. I didn't think that they knew more than I knew about running my business. Plus, I thought they were so expensive that I couldn't afford to retain them. I was wrong, it wasn't until I had someone who wasn't working in my business to keep me on the path to success that I actually achieved it. Selecting the right coach is not an expense, it's an investment that pays dividends for your entire life. But, how do you find someone you can trust, who has a fairly well rounded knowledge of your business, and one whose fees are not only competitive, but will give you such a great return on your investment that actually makes spending the money fun. This is not an easy task, but I've listed some tips below that might help you in your search. Before we start however, I need to let you know that I'm not applying for a job. I'm not a caddy, a coach, or any type of consultant. I'm merely offering to share some advice, that I hope you will consider. It could change your life. Coaching is Not Single Dimensional The very first thing that you must consider is the degree of coaching you want to have before you begin your searching process. When you consider all of the processes that are involved in running a successful dental practice, it's important to find a coach or a consulting company that can help you develop, implement and maintain each process. Running a dental

practice, as you know, is no easy task. Your coach must be able to guide you in attracting new patients, retaining existing patients, and resurrecting patients that have fallen through the cracks. It is nearly impossible for you and your team to keep your eyes on all of these functions. Once you discover this, then you can proceed to the next step.

EXPERIENCE:

When selecting anyone to help you out with your business, it is a good idea that you select a candidate that has plenty of experience in running a dental practice. How long has this coach or company been around the dental industry. What knowledge and real world experiences do they offer? It's important to review what they can do for you. It's one thing to be around for a long time and yet another to actually have proven experience. When interviewing a prospective coach, you need to ask about what experience they bring in the areas of marketing, in managing, in training, in implementing, and in monitoring the processes that they established. Ask, "Who will help in each area? Where is the coaching done? When or how frequent will you either see or speak with the coach? How do you go about implementing these processes? How much time do you need to take away from your practice in order to get started? What about the dental team? How do you go about mitigating their fear? What types of training programs do you offer?" Red flags should be raised when the same person who has extensive marketing experience, is also the person who is organizing the hygiene department, plus setting up the strategic management plan, and teaching phone skills to the team. Beware of the "Jack of All Trades, A Master of None" syndrome. I'm not saying that some coaches aren't really good, I just question whether they can do it all. Therefore, look for a coaching team that can bring all aspects of running a practice to the table. I've got a very detailed questionnaire that I'd be glad to send you that helps in finding the right coach to meet your needs.

TESTIMONIALS:

Part of interviewing a consulting firm or a single coach involves speaking with at least three past or current clients. Do not interview past clients who have not been using the coach for over a year because they do not represent the most up-to-date assessment of the coach's performance. Some questions to ask involve, what kind of

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COACHES AND CADDIES:

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experience has it been to work with the coach? What did you absolutely love about the experience? What would you change about the experience? Did he/she work well with the dental team? Was/is their service worth the money you've paid? I have several more questions to ask on my questionnaire.

HOW CURRENT ARE THEY?

There is nothing more devastating than a coach who is not up-to-date with the industry, business, communication, latest technologies, and marketing practices. It's essential that you research what topics and areas the consultant covers and make sure it meets your needs today. You don't want to sign up with someone only to find they are teaching scheduling with a peg board or can't talk about how to maximize technology outside of a dental chair. Make sure the consultant is always learning and growing, just as you plan to do. Ask about what books they've read recently? What courses have they taken in the last year? Nothing bugs me more than a person who professes to be an expert but hasn't read a book since college graduation.

WHAT IS THE INVESTMENT?

Not only do you want to find out the fees, but the length or time the consultant plans to work with you. It's advisable to look for a consultant that is not just providing a quick fix to a long term issue, rather look for someone who can help you implement all the information you gather from the web, seminars and your own experiences. In my humble opinion, the person or company you select, should become your caddy and your coach for life. It is essential to your long-term success that you select a coach who will be watching out for your practice well-being day in and day out for your entire career. Other important questions to

ask. How do I pay for the services rendered? Monthly, up front, financed through a third party? What if your strategic plan does not work for my practice, is there any form of guarantee? This is the question that can really distinguish those successful coaches from those who have plenty of ideas, but can't get them implemented. Remember, however, most of the time when a coach fails, it's because the practice doesn't follow the plan. My questionnaire has several more questions to ask in this area.

IMPLEMENTATION:

As my good friend Cathy Jameson, co-founder and CEO of Jameson Management says, "The difference between information and success is implementation." The absolute best coaches make a plan, implement the plan then monitor the results to ensure that you are moving forward. Just as your practice is reaching its goal, a good coach will work with you to set new goals, establish a new plan, implement new processes, and evaluate the results of those processes. Then the cycle begins again and will continue throughout your career.

SUMMARY:

- ◇ Everybody needs a caddy and a coach.
- ◇ A coach helps you stay straight throughout your career.
- ◇ A coach must understand marketing, practice management, strategic planning, implementation, and ongoing monitoring.
- ◇ A coach must be able to keep current and know when to modify the existing strategy to meet the current business climate so that you don't get caught by surprise.