DEVELOP YOUR OWN
SOFTWARE TREATMENT PLAN

Identify your goals, assess your pain points, and establish a personalized solution

PATTERSON®
DENTAL

As a dental professional, you already know how much a connected, personalized software system can positively impact your workflow. From increasing production and elevating the patient experience to expanding locations, software is at the center of everything you do. And because you do so much, it needs to be reliable, intuitive and tailored to your needs.

When your patients need help, your office presents them with a treatment plan. Because you deserve the same exceptional treatment you give your patients, why not take that same approach? In this white paper, you'll explore the key elements to developing your own software treatment plan.

PREPLANNING: GOAL SETTING

What does success look like for your practice? From practice growth to improved patient experience, and from work/life balance to increased productivity, it's important to keep the long-term vision front and center.

With the days of simply opening the doors and watching the operatory fill up (and stay full) long past, continuous improvement is crucial. Whether the dream is multiple locations, or a thriving, single-doctor practice, or something in between, establishing and articulating that vision is the first step toward achieving it.

Inexorably linked to practice goals, individual employee goals are important too. Is the goal to increase your patient base by X% per year? Consider how each member of the team can materially contribute and make sure everyone understands — and is on board with — what is expected of them.

BE SMART

Goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound are more likely to be reached. To review this tried and true concept, let's use "Growth" as a basic example.

- **Specific:** Is obtaining one new patient enough? Probably not. Attaching a number and some more detail to this goal will give it more validity: Increase patient base by X%, for example.

- **Measurable:** Again, "growth" is hard to measure without numbers. However, knowing your current patient base and setting a goal for a 10% increase in new patient appointments is easy to quantify.

- **Attainable:** While you may dream of gaining 50% more patients this year, if your area doesn't have the population to support it or your staff can't handle the increased workload, this number may be unrealistic.

- **Relevant:** Is growing your patient base practical right now? If you're already bursting at the seams and working overtime, perhaps increasing efficiency or productivity is more important.

- **Time-bound:** When should this growth be measured? Set a calendar goal (such as 6 months, 2 years, etc.) and make sure all staff are aware of it.

With well-thought-out, SMART goals and your whole team on board, the groundwork for your treatment plan is well laid out.

## EVALUATION PHASE: DIAGNOSE WHERE YOU STAND TODAY

Just as your practice can't begin to help a patient until the doctor gets a look inside their mouth, you can't help your practice without taking a look inside, either. Where are your gaps? How about your pain points? Like CBCT for the inner workings of the practice, take an in-depth look at patient experience, attraction and retention, current tools and their efficacy, process efficiency and more.

Look over this list of commonly voiced pain points. Which ones resonate with you and your team? What other pain points have you/your team identified? (Be sure to spend time identifying what's going well, too!)

- Cancellations
- No-shows
- Treatment plan acceptance
- Staffing and training
- Filling chairs
- Increasing production
- Improving patient experience
- Practice efficiencies and workflows
- Business insights
- Feeling overworked

You've seen how patients react to learning they have a mouthful of disease, but you've also seen how much their health and their lives improve when they face that disease head-on. It's never enjoyable to look at what needs fixing, but taking the time to do so is a vital part of the healing process.

How many of your primary pain points could be relieved through better systems? Something as small as implementing text reminders can greatly reduce cancellations and no-shows, while digital forms and more efficient scheduling make a huge impact on both staff and patient experience.
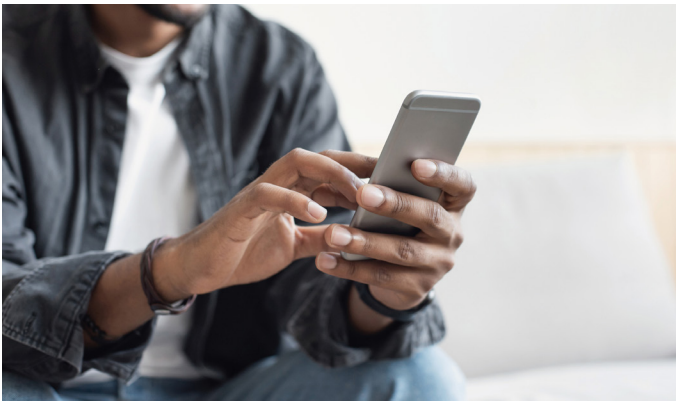
Using our SMART goal of growing the patient base as an example, what's your current plan for attracting new patients? Whether you rely on word of mouth or you have a professionally written marketing plan, chances are there is room for improvement. Don't know where to begin? There's a software solution for that, too.

Now that you've identified some areas that need improvement, ask yourself some hard questions — and answer them honestly. Where will you be in a few years if you don't address your pain points? How will this affect the staff and the practice professionally, financially and even personally? While not a pleasant activity, it is a highly motivating, ultimately rewarding one.

With the care you'd place into a long-term treatment plan for your patients, use the information you've gathered so far to put together a holistic plan to get your practice in optimal health. Carefully and logically sequenced, the treatment plan is a direct response to identified problems, and a blueprint for future success.

ACUTE PHASE: THE SQUEAKY WHEEL

What do you need to address most urgently? This is your abscessed tooth; until you get that under control, nothing else is going to work well, either. Is scheduling a constant headache? Imagine the benefits of automated reminders and confirmations. Does the mere sight of the word "insurance" tense up your jaw? Real-time eligibility checks and automated claims processing free up incredible amounts of time. Identify the biggest problem first, then go after it.

CONTROL PHASE: CHRONIC CONDITIONS

You wouldn't place implants without addressing underlying gum disease, and you shouldn't implement a suite of new software strategies without getting your daily flow under control.

It would be difficult to overestimate the value of improved efficiency. Freeing up time for your team, increasing revenue, decreasing stress and optimizing the patient experience are all huge benefits to a more efficiently run practice. In addition to the already-mentioned automated patient engagement solutions, there are digital solutions for training, record-keeping, conversing with patients and so much more. Take a good look at your processes and workflows, identify gaps in software solutions/capabilities, and address them in this phase.

RE-EVALUATION PHASE: LOOK BACK BEFORE MOVING FORWARD

Once acute problems are solved and any chronic inefficiencies are rectified, it's time to take stock. Are things actually better? Have any new problems arisen? Are your patients happy? It's a cliché because it's true: Sometimes, you just don't know what you don't know. The best way to find out? Ask.

- For your team: Get honest feedback regarding the changes you've made and run numbers-based reports to assess bottom-line improvements.

- For your patients: Online reviews, patient satisfaction surveys and follow-up phone calls go a long way toward understanding what you're doing well and where you can improve.

DEFINITIVE PHASE: RESTORATION

In this phase of a dental treatment plan, you are straightening crooked teeth, placing implants and further beautifying their smiles with veneers or whitening treatments. In your practice, you now have the stability to revisit the pain point list and address the less-acute issues that are impeding your forward progress or diminishing your overall practice health. Maybe now is the ideal time to implement additional marketing strategies. This could also be the perfect time to consider a move to cloud-based operations, setting you up for seamless expansion as you achieve those growth goals and add new locations. With your long-term goals in mind, create a road map to continuous improvement – and follow it!

MAINTENANCE PHASE: TRACK, MONITOR AND ADJUST AS NECESSARY

You wouldn't want a patient to stop coming in for regular checkups once their smile was fully restored. Similarly, it's absolutely critical to continue monitoring your systems and how they are helping you achieve your goals.

Tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) is considerably easier and more effective with the right software. At a glance, you can see where you are, where you're going, and even what obstacles await. A consolidated database, especially if you're a multipractice location, will offer a holistic view of your practice health and keep all team members on the same page, regardless of turnover.

For a more in-depth exploration of KPIs, *click here*.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Dental practice software is a journey that will evolve with your practice, and you should never have to go it alone. Make sure your software treatment plan includes not just onboarding support, but ongoing training, updates that reflect the progress of both technology and the dental profession, and dedicated, educated professionals behind the software.

Just as a treatment plan may feel like "a lot" to your patients, creating a software treatment plan may feel that way to you. But by devoting the same care and expertise you use to take your patients through every step of their treatment process, you're certain to come up with the right plan for your practice.

Ready to get started? From planning to training, implementation and ongoing support, the Patterson Software Solutions experts are here to help.

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