

Your Telephone

Your telephone is the one tool that opens or closes the door to your practice. It must be done WELL.

WHY?

Nothing else matters if your phone is not answered well.

Handled well means prospective patient callers schedule and keep their appointments. Established patients keep their appointments.

Just look at what happens *if* your phone is not answered well. The gate is closed. No marketing will matter.

When your marketing is handled well and your phone is answered well, you get the new patients you deserve. The gate is open.

So how well is your phone answered? How do you know? *It is not necessarily by the present success of your practice! It is not necessarily by the number of new patients on your schedule!*

Maybe your marketing is working so well that it has produced so many new patients that it has overcome your office's ineptitude in answering the phone!

What to do – MEASURE. That which you measure can improve.

How do you measure?

1. **Keep a phone log.**

Use just a plain spiral notebook. It need not be fancy. **Write down every call. Every call gets logged. Record the date, time, name of caller, callers contact info. staff member who took the call, result, dates for any follow ups.**

Look at the log. See what is happening. Track who does well on the calls. Who needs help? Train as needed. More training is better. Correct the staff that mess it up. Praise the ones who do it well.

2. **Create a written system for answering the phone.**

Script the answers. Get the ones doing it well to train the others using the scripts.

3. **Use a Mystery Shopper** to call your office 3-4 times a month. **RECORD** the call. You can get an inexpensive recorder at Radio Shack that will attach to your mystery shopper's phone. After recording the first 3-4 calls done in the first week, let your staff know what is happening with the system. Listen to them in the staff meetings. Be sure to create answers to the questions that all new patients are asking, if only to themselves: why should I choose you? Once you have the answers, practice with your staff on giving the answers. Once your staff knows that a mystery shipper is calling every so often, they will answer the calls better. **THIS WILL VERY OFTEN BRING IN MORE NEW PATIENTS WITHOUT SPENING ANOTHER DIME.**

Editor's note: How you answer your phone depends greatly on what type of practice you run. There is a big difference between check-up dentistry and complex dentistry patients. The amount of time required on the phone and the type of conversation will vary greatly depending upon this.