every dental office team should consistently strive to become more productive and profitable. In my time working in dental offices, I was fortunate enough to witness the growth and many rewards brought to a dental office in both of these aspects. That success was achieved by having good, intuitive practice-management software to support our team.

To realize these benefits, every member of the dental team should take advantage of features their practice software has to offer. Here’s how:

1. **Make use of scheduling software** — My practice was originally working with a paper schedule, which created many frustrations for the entire team. Paper schedules can lead to inefficient communication within the office, feeding into a number of greater problems. While there are many advantages to computerized systems in the dental office, improved scheduling is a key benefit. Scheduling is the platform for so much of the office workflow. A smoothly running scheduling system can help positively impact many other areas of the practice.

2. Use the features available to you with your scheduling software. Your software program may allow any staff member easy access to a short call list, and it may track how long patients are kept waiting for their appointments.

For more information on this topic, go to [www.dentaleconomics.com](http://www.dentaleconomics.com) and search using the following key words: *practice-management, software, scheduling, documentation, production, treatment-planning, Jana Berghoff.*
Also take advantage of provider “busy time” features which allow the office to track when the best times are to fit in quick checks and hygiene exams. Block time so that patients with large cases can get started with treatment quickly.

The ability to schedule appointments from the operatories gives team members much needed control and flexibility.

For example, a hygienist or assistant who knows that certain patients’ appointments often run long can allow extra time in the schedule, or avoid booking one difficult case right next to another. With software, these staff members are empowered and encouraged to take control of their own schedules and production goals.

2. Use your software to easily communicate and document your patient treatment plans — Use your computer software to communicate what treatment the patient expects to be accomplished during each appointment, what was done on each patient during the appointment, and the next steps for the next appointment. Software best documents this type of information.

By using your practice-management software to record each step of the patient’s treatment-plan process, you not only benefit from clearer documentation in the patient record, but you also allow each team member easy access to that information without looking for charts or filed paperwork.

Once treatment information is recorded in the patient digital record, you can pull reports of all unscheduled treatment or reports of patients who started but did not finish treatment. Imagine the advantage (both financial and legal) of simply getting a report of all patients who had scaling and root-planing and never followed up with a perio maintenance visit.

The software can also help you track patients that have not had a panorex within a determined time frame. You can even get a report of patients that were referred for other treatments and never followed through.

It is the responsibility of each office to document and follow through on patient treatment recommendations. Computerized patient records most easily allow for this process.

3. Build personal production goals for each team member — Meeting production goals in the dental practice does not happen by chance. To meet overall production goals, each staff member must have clearly defined individual production goals and an easy path to track how they are doing in meeting these goals.

In Eaglesoft 16 Practice Management Software from Patterson Dental, production goals are easily entered into the scheduler so staff members can track how each day’s scheduled production meets with the expected production goal.

At the end of the day, reports can be produced for each clinical staff member to personally review and assure that all production was recorded, the patient record is complete, and production totals can be reviewed and measured against any daily goals.

Date-based reporting features are also helpful in providing the ability to run financial reports for any date range. This is especially useful for determining if goals are being met.

Now the practice is running smoothly…

To really learn what your software has to offer, commit to software training and attend webinars and seminars to learn how to maximize the features in your software. Follow through after any training sessions by reconnecting with individual staff members to be sure everyone understands these features and that they are implementing them.

The improved interoffice communication that comes with maximizing the features of your scheduling software will help the dental office function better in a number of ways. Using practice-management software allows the schedule to serve as the jumping-off point to access other necessary patient information and free up the staff to do what they do best — serve and treat patients.

The latest updates in Eaglesoft 16 are designed to help increase efficiency, streamline processes, and provide a customizable experience for the way each member of your team works. When everyone works most efficiently in their own role, the entire practice truly benefits.

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