

Dentists should conduct a risk management assessment of their office to evaluate each staff member's awareness of what proper behavior is in various situations. Mock situations can be used to demonstrate how staff should respond. In addition, written policies, procedures, and protocols should be available that address risk management and liability. Staff members must be trained in how to implement these written guidelines. The practice should maintain a risk management resource library that includes the state dental rules and regulations, samples of appropriate documentation, and a guide to dental terminology and abbreviations.

Staff should also be instructed to inform the dentist of any patient complaints so that he or she can address them directly. The staff should not be relied upon to communicate with unhappy patients.

Practice owners should also remember that they are ultimately held responsible for any decision and action taking place in their facility. Each member of the team is to be considered an extension of the dentist's office philosophy.

Clinical Significance

Relationships between the dental staff and the patient can affect a patient's course of treatment as much as the doctor-patient relationship does. Each staff member should be carefully trained in the area of liability to help mitigate the risk that an adverse situation will develop. Staff members should clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, which will make them more confident in their decisions. They will be able to discern when they can handle things themselves and when they need to refer the situation to the practice owner.

TDIC Risk Management Staff: Depending on staff to manage patients? Educate them first. *Calif Dent Assoc J* 46:455-456, 2018

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UPCYCLING

Making your practice over



BACKGROUND

Upcycling is the term used to describe the processing of used goods or waste material in a way that produces something that can be better than the original. The application of the upcycling concept to a dental practice can lead to a renovation that current patients will notice and new ones will be drawn to.

APPLICATIONS

Marketing

Being aware of the practice website's search engine optimization is an essential part of marketing online. Activities to make one's presence more attractive can be as easy as keeping current with key words or as involved as keeping fresh content available, making navigation of the site easy and intuitive, and ensuring it is up to date. Monitoring the practice's social media presence and making changes to ensure it's appropriate and effective is another way to upcycle.

The personalized branding of the practice can also use a make-over from time to time. Core values should remain but how those are expressed can evolve over time. Having a personal brand can include identifying favorite colors and shapes and using them on business cards, staff uniforms, or website designs. This approach provides a way patients can readily identify the practice.

Community Involvement

Making the community aware of the practice can go beyond doing a standard presentation at various community sites. It's good to begin with what you know and find ways to engage the audience. With kids, for example, games, fun animals to demonstrate tooth brushing, or simple, healthy foods to share with them can create an experience that they will love and remember. Presentations should fit the audience but include some interactive elements that make the encounter memorable. Upcycling can take any number of directions and should be constantly reviewed to determine what works and what doesn't and to make sure the presentation doesn't become stale.

Practice Elements

Upcycling can be done in the instruments used, in the imaging methods employed, in customer service areas, and even in the operatory and storage areas of the practice. It's important to keep current with instrument manufacturers and be willing to try new, upcycled instruments and methods. For imaging, dentistry is moving toward cone beam volumetric tomography (3D). Other methods are also being developed to make x-rays safer and more precise.

Customer service should be upcycled constantly, seeking to be creative, thoughtful, and fresh. This can include any aspects

where there are interactions with patients and their families. A waiting room makeover may make the office more attractive. For example, all the chairs should be comfortable and in good condition. The operatory may also benefit from a simple design assessment and update. The walls may need to have attractive elements added, or there may need to be a patient resource center added. Any upcycling may include bringing in furniture that is simple, functional, and tasteful to help patients feel at ease. For the personal side of customer service, the interactions with patients should be handled well, especially if difficulties have arisen. Every effort should be made to hear what the patient is saying and to resolve the conflict quickly and completely.

Storage spaces can also be upcycled. The flow of the storage spaces and office routines should be carefully assessed to see what might work better. Binders to hold various information can keep paperwork in order and readily available. Containers for supplies such as toothbrushes, flossing supplies, or other take-home items should be functional and well designed with well-designed labels for ease of use. That helps everyone know where things are and will simplify inventory procedures. In addition, packaging material can be sent to a recycling bin so it doesn't create a cluttered space.

The primary site for a dental office may be its online presence, but the outdoor physical appearance of the facility can also use a makeover. Signage should be visible and attractive, a little landscaping may be helpful to dress things up, or new signs and greenery may be needed. It's also possible to send positive messages

with an outdoor space display such as a picnic table or a unique bike rack to encourage healthy lifestyles. The outdoor space should be just as inviting as the practice's online presence because it also reflects the values of the practice.

Clinical Significance

Upcycling may be a new term, but the practice of changing up your facility, your online presence, and your patient interaction spaces has been around for years. It may be time to step back and take a look at your environment and routines from the viewpoint of your patients. If you can envision—or with the help of your staff, envision—a fresher, more unified, and more “you” message that you want to send, it may be time to upcycle. Let your imagination (or that of a trusted staff member) come up with a new way to present your practice and see how it attracts new patients and impresses those you've had for a while. Other businesses renovate regularly to keep themselves looking current and inviting. Dental practices can often benefit from such a makeover.

Stein JM: Are you upcycling? *RDH Magazine* 38:24-26, 2018

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