



SPRING CLEANING FOR SUCCESS DUST OFF YOUR BAD HABITS

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Every vision care practice has habits: behavior or business patterns that are performed almost involuntarily. Your practice most likely has some good habits; but more importantly, you might also have *bad habits that might be negatively shaping the way your patients perceive you.*

Bad habits are not always easy to recognize, especially when you are busy with your day-to-day work routine. But if you want your practice to grow, you must identify those bad habits and replace them with good ones.

Successful practices have the following seven good habits ingrained into their daily, weekly, and monthly routines.

1. Know that consulting is selling. You know your practice has the best doctors, the best technology, and the best results, but potential patients do not. They need time to figure this out, both from their own research and from your staff. Consultations are not only a time to confirm a patient's candidacy for a procedure; they are also the time for your staff to use sales training techniques to encourage a patient to take the next step.

This sales process can be a fine line. You do not want to use pressure tactics or intimidation, but most patients need to be "sold" on why they should spend their hard-earned money on an elective procedure or a "premium" service. This can be accomplished through patient education.

Establish a seamless consultation flow that keeps patients on the right path. Provide tools to aid the decision-making process and increase conversions, such as brochures and flyers that patients can take home to discuss the options with loved ones.

Then create a system and timeframe for how to follow up with patients through emails and phone calls. Don't leave this process to chance or you run the risk of losing patients, either by contacting them too much...or too little.

2. Provide excellent patient experience. It is not uncommon for elective surgery patients to take two years to schedule a consultation or a procedure. During that extended timeframe, patients are forming an impression of your practice...sometimes without ever

stepping foot into your office. The internet allows patients to research anything and everything about your practice, your doctors, your staff and more with just a click of a button, so make sure you have a good online reputation. Phone calls to your practice will be scrutinized for hold times, irritating phone trees, unhelpful staff, and more, so secret-shop your practice to find out how your phone calls are being handled. Your physical office space must promote your professionalism and instill confidence in your patients, so ensure that it is clean, modern, and efficient.

3. Personnel investment and management. By hiring the right people, you will be creating a positive culture in your practice with people who are friendly, respectful, and helpful. Simply looking at a candidate's résumé doesn't really tell you the whole story. By giving job applicants aptitude and IQ tests, you can get a better picture of the applicant's personality, values, interests, skills, and intelligence.

Continually audit your staff to confirm you are matching the right

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people with the right job functions; don't allow friendships to skew your assessment. Staff interacting with patients must know how to answer commonly asked questions while also providing a "warm and fuzzy" but professional feeling. Include doctors in your audit and capitalize on each doctor's unique strengths. Make sure any outside consultants are also providing the level of service you expect of your own staff.

Empower your people to have a real stake in the overall success of your practice. Train them beyond their official roles and help them cross-sell with the power of suggestion.

4. **Utilize internal marketing.** Your patients are captive audiences; use the office wall space to cross-sell your services with informative, professionally designed posters and large-screen TVs featuring patient videos. If possible, provide a designated waiting area for elective patients; this extra attention to detail shows you care for their experience and it will also help them relax before their procedure.
5. **Cover the basics with external marketing.** Your website is the virtual equivalent of your brick and mortar location. It needs to convey the right image and message to convince patients that you are the right choice. Examine your site to make sure it is
 - Easy to navigate
 - Optimized to be viewed on small screens
 - Optimized for interaction (Live Chat, Online Scheduler, Online Self-Evaluations)
 - Ready for lead capturing
 - Search engine-optimized
 - Kept fresh with new content posted regularly

Online advertising through Pay-Per-Click (PPC) is a low-cost way to produce leads for your practice. Traditional advertising often averages a cost per lead of \$400; PPC can produce a cost per lead of \$100 or less. PPC advertising only works if you have a plan, manage your campaigns, and track the results. Know your competition in this arena. Make sure you are saying something different and unique to set your practice apart from them.

Finally, analyze your own market to determine what other forms of advertising will produce quality leads, such as traditional radio, internet radio, billboards, newspaper ads, emails, direct mail, and more.

6. **Understand the digital landscape.** There are more than 200 online social media sites today... Facebook is just one of many. Your potential patients are out there, researching your practice and forming an opinion of you even before they meet you in person. The more ubiquitous you are online, the more potential patients can't help but notice you and dig deeper into what you offer. If you have no strong social media presence (such as online reviews) you will be invisible.

This digital landscape is always changing; constantly monitor what's being said about your practice online so you can immediately respond to positive and negative reviews.

7. **Track results.** Track the results of your marketing efforts to know what is working, what isn't working, and what you need to change. Implement a system to track your phone calls, web visitors, walk-ins, lead sources, and conversions. When you have solid data to

review, you can begin to compare your current results to past results. Take into consideration external factors that could have a bearing on your results, such as a bad economy, severe weather, or holidays. Even if you absolutely love a certain campaign, you have to know when to cut the cord on campaigns that have worked in the past.

KEEP IN MIND

To be successful and grow your business, you must have certain good habits deep-rooted into the following practice areas:

- Staff's mindset
- Online presence
- Patient flow
- Physical office space
- Patient communication

Successful elective surgery practices take time to *analyze their personnel and processes, identify problem areas, and make changes...then do it all over again.* It's all about creating a positive patient experience that makes patients want to choose you. **AE**



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IN A BLINK

- Bad habits are most commonly found in your online presence and during phone interactions and face-to-face encounters.
- Make sure your habits are helping improve your bottom line...not stagnating your growth.
- Audit your practice often to identify and change bad habits.