

# 3 Things Every Practice Must Do in a Slow Month

Any month can be salvaged. When things look bleak, do these three things immediately!

## 1. Prioritize filling empty chairs

- **Reach out to the right patients first**
  - Patients who have unscheduled treatment and remaining insurance \$.
  - Pull your overdue recall list.
  - Rely on your ASAP list to fill gaps.
- **Prevent cancellations** by confirming every appointment
  - Identify cancellation risks in the next two weeks and text them. Ask them to confirm ASAP.
  - Reach out with texts and then leave Voicemail Drops.
  - **If they don't reply within 48 hours, schedule someone else!**

## 2. Increase production per visit

- **Increase case acceptance**
  - **Identify case acceptance weaknesses and address accordingly.**
  - **Add same-day treatment.**
    - If they have unscheduled family members, get them in ASAP.
  - **Increase patient financing options.**
  - **Try an education-dense approach.**
    - Individualized treatment plans catered to individual learning styles.
  - **Consult our case acceptance ebook - [How to Get Patients to Say Yes.](#)**

## 3. Reassess and improve to prevent future slow months

- **Strengthen patient loyalty**
  - Implement and/or market a patient loyalty program.
  - Take notes about previous conversations and refer back to them.
  - Add a personal, humanizing touch wherever possible.
- **Reassess your routines**
  - **Look for small changes that lead to big results.**
- **Consider extra small amenities for patients.**

# 3 things Every Practice **MUST DO** in a Slow Month



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It's just a fact of dentistry – some months are harder than others. It's different for every practice, but there always seem to be one or two anxiety-inducing months.

Some practices dread "Sucktember," when school resumes and more appointments get canceled. Some practices don't like January, when patients' holiday credit card bills come due. Some practices think summer is destined to be slow.

If you know a difficult month is coming, the best thing you can do is to get ahead of it, and consistently market to prevent a slow month before it happens. But what if it's too late? What can you do when a hard month is already here, and the schedule doesn't look like it should?

**Whatever you do, don't give up. You can't let a slow month go unchecked.** Why? Because slow months don't stay isolated. They have a ripple effect. When patients aren't seen, they don't get rescheduled, which means that six months later, your slow month is coming back as an echo.

So instead of getting caught in a vicious cycle of frustration, resignation, and regret, start pulling out all the stops! There are three main ways to tackle slow months, and all of them focus on controlling variables in the Profitability Formula®.



You won't stop collecting, and there's probably not much you can do to change your overhead costs – the last thing you want to do is start cutting staff hours. Instead, we want to drive visits up, get the most out of every visit, and look for areas of improvement.

## 1. Prioritize filling empty chairs

**Obviously, you want your chairs full at all times. But if you're in a slow month, that hasn't happened. So what can you do that's different?**

When the chips are down, not all patients are created equal. Instead of indiscriminately blasting out scheduling requests to every patient in your system, **reach out to the right patients first.**

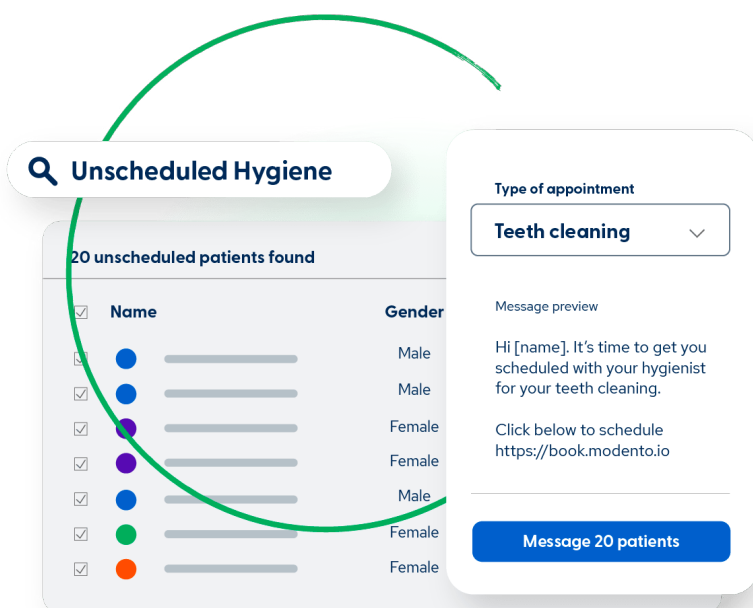
You want patients who are likely to respond. Your best bet will be patients who have unscheduled treatment, especially those with remaining insurance coverage. [Find those patients first](#), and reach out with a message that highlights their remaining coverage. This way, even if they don't respond, you have a template ready to use in later months.

After that, look at your ASAP list. If appointments have been canceled, it's a perfect opportunity to reach out to patients who want to be seen quickly. Send messages like, "A new time slot just opened! Would you like to schedule?"

Finally, pull your overdue recall list. Who hasn't come in for their regular visit? Who has a broken appointment that didn't reschedule? Find all those patients, and reach out with a message that aims to get them back on the schedule as soon as possible.

Once your schedule looks a little more full...

***Prevent cancellations – confirm every appointment!***



Confirmations are always important, but when it's a slow month, they're absolutely vital. Why? Here's a hypothetical scenario for you, courtesy of Dr. Steven Markowitz.

Imagine this: six months ago, you scheduled a lunch date with a friend. That lunch date is coming up fast, so two weeks before you're scheduled to meet your friend, you send them a text, "Hey, just checking to make sure we're still on for Tuesday!"


They don't reply. Oh well, maybe they're busy.

Next, you leave them a voicemail asking if they're still on for lunch. But they don't reply. You don't hear from them at all.

So when the day finally comes, do you go to that lunch? Of course not.

### **So why should appointments with your patients be any different? If they can't confirm appointments, schedule someone else!**

If you can send extra confirmations during difficult months, or at least send your usual confirmation messages earlier, you're in a great spot to prevent an empty schedule. This is especially true for patients who you believe might be a cancellation risk. Be sure to send them a [text confirmation](#) a week or two before the appointment, and ask them to confirm ASAP, so they don't lose their slot to someone else.



Jay, just a reminder that you have an appointment at Bright Smiles Dental on **July 10th at 3:15pm**. Please respond with **C** to confirm.

After you've texted them, if you don't hear back that day, leave a [Voicemail Drop](#).

If they don't reply within 48 hours, start looking for other patients who can fill that slot before a predictable cancellation/no-show happens.

## 2. Increase production per visit

This isn't as simple as diagnosing treatment for every tiny spot of incipient decay. In fact, over-treating can lead to a dip in patient loyalty over the long run. Instead, try some of these strategies first.

### Find weaknesses in case acceptance and address them accordingly

When do patients in your practice accept treatment, and when are they more likely to decline?

Are they accepting treatment in the chair? Are they accepting at the front desk before they leave? Are they accepting at a later date, after they've left the practice? [Provider Pulse](#) can help you find your strongest and weakest points in this equation. Find areas for improvement, and then try a few of these approaches.

### Add same-day treatment

Same-day treatment is especially valuable when there are holes in the schedule. If a patient can have their procedure done now, it helps a slow month and makes them less likely to fall through the cracks in the future. If they can't swing it today, offer them an open time tomorrow, and invite them to bring unscheduled family members in as well.

### Add patient financing options

Price is one of the primary factors that cause patients to put off or decline necessary treatment. Inevitably, you'll meet a patient who is unable to afford treatment. Financing can help ease that burden for your patients and your practice. In fact, dental practices that consistently offer patient financing close and serve 20% more patients.

The key is flexibility. A streamlined, fair financing experience with great interest rates can be the difference between patients accepting treatment or putting it off indefinitely.

In partnership with [Wisetack](#), [Dental Intelligence Patient Financing](#) provides great financing options that integrate with your existing systems and treatment plans. Patients get a great rate, and you can get paid with a single text or email.

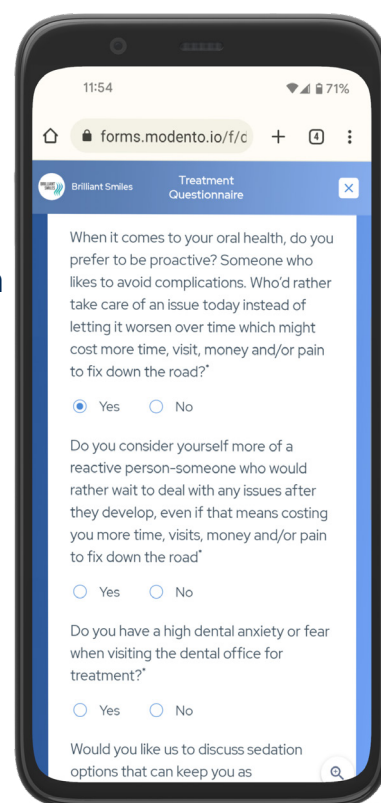
## Try an education-dense approach to treatment presentation

If patients don't understand why treatment is necessary, they have no reason to accept it. But one approach won't work for everyone, so make sure your treatment plans are individualized, and that they cater to every learning style.

If patients are auditory learners, talk through the proposed treatment verbally. If they prefer to read, present a written tx plan and email a copy to them. If they're a visual learner, [Dental Intelligence Treatment Plans](#) allow you to embed video links, infographics, and intra-oral photos directly in their tx plan so they can more easily connect the problem to the solution. If they're kinesthetic learners, our digital Treatment Plans let patients and team members highlight, notate, and mark up tx plans to emphasize the most important areas.

Is a patient scared of dentistry? Adjust your terminology appropriately so it doesn't sound as daunting. For example, instead of showing them a treatment plan with "scaling and root planing" (\*gulp\*) try using a more generic term like "deep cleaning." A less clinical approach can help strip away some of their anxiety.

Not sure what learning style they prefer? An intake questionnaire will let you tailor tx presentation according to patients' taste. It can easily be included in your new patient paperwork with [Dental Intelligence Digital Forms](#), and it will give you the information you need to ensure case acceptance is as high as possible.



11:54 71%

forms.modento.io/f/c

Brilliant Smiles Treatment Questionnaire

When it comes to your oral health, do you prefer to be proactive? Someone who likes to avoid complications. Who'd rather take care of an issue today instead of letting it worsen over time which might cost more time, visit, money and/or pain to fix down the road?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Do you consider yourself more of a reactive person-someone who would rather wait to deal with any issues after they develop, even if that means costing you more time, visits, money and/or pain to fix down the road?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have a high dental anxiety or fear when visiting the dental office for treatment?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you like us to discuss sedation options that can keep you as

## 3. Reassess and improve to prevent future slow months

If you've done everything you can to fill chairs and you've boosted production per visit as high as it can reasonably go, then there's one thing left to do – **make the most of your down time.**

## Look for ways to increase patient loyalty and retention.

Down time during slow months provides the perfect opportunity to take a deep dive into your operations. Every practice has something that can be improved, and small changes implemented now can snowball into big results down the road.

If you don't already have a [loyalty program](#), now's the time to build one. You can gamify the entire patient experience by offering points toward rewards in exchange for being a model patient. Everything from arriving on time, to [completing paperwork before their appointment](#), to paying promptly can be one more small step toward rewards. (And if you have Dental Intelligence, all of this can be automated in the patient [Mobile App](#)!)

Be sure to refer back to previous patient notes, and have conversations that make them feel valued and remembered. How was that vacation? How's the new job working out?

### **Alternatively, consider the patient amenities you currently offer.**

There's the usual options of coffee or tea in the waiting room, or the patient's favorite Spotify station, or a TV in the operatory. Some practices are doing hot towels or blankets for chilly patients. What can you offer that they haven't experienced anywhere else? Now's the time to get creative.

## Refresh your systems across the board.

Having a rhythm is great, but now's the time to look for small vulnerabilities and improvements.

One example could be the way you set up for cleanings. Do you set up while the patient is there? That can cause a lot of stress. If there's a way to preload the work, it becomes easier for everyone. That leads to greater efficiency and a better patient experience, since nobody has to wait those extra minutes while you set up. If you don't have setup checklists, now is the time to build them.

Do you use Dental Intelligence's [Voicemail Drops](#)? They're a great personal touch. But now that you have downtime, record some new messages! That way they don't lose any of their magic by getting stale. You have the time. Record some fresh ones.

Dental Intelligence makes staying ahead of the curve as easy as logging in. Our analytics and engagement software makes it easy to predict and prevent slumps, and when they do happen, we help you recover in just a few clicks. It's one software to manage and enhance everything about your practice, so you have clear, reliable goals for tomorrow.



To see it in action, schedule your free demo [here](#). We'll show you just how easy it is to thrive.

# What do practices think of Dental Intelligence?



"In the first few weeks of being a customer of Dental Intelligence and before we had even been fully trained, we were able to use the Patient Finder to schedule more than \$15,000 just in Hygiene Recare alone! We were so stoked to see how we could find the patients we wanted to schedule so quickly!"

**Scott Beard - Newton Dental Associates**



"We have scheduled \$9,350 of production back into their practice in our first three months using Dental Intelligence! We love all the information Follow Ups provides us! We can see which team members have called which patients, and it's much more concise and accurate of a list than taking notes and the paper lists we used before Dental Intelligence."

**Sonja - Beachwood Dental**



"In my town, about 6 months ago people got a little leery about COVID again (end of September/beginning of October) and we have some lighter hygiene days coming up. I prerecorded a voicemail saying I'd noticed they were overdue for a recall, we've noticed that when people push this out, they've had a lot more problems and I'd hate to see this happen. Call us to set up an appointment. We voicemail dropped it to everyone overdue for hygiene that's active in our system...that's like 400 voicemails done in a second. All voicemails left by me, the doctor. I saw we had at least 10 schedule in the next week, filling our holes. And I bet more call back tomorrow...all for a cost of like \$40. Worth it!! Way easier than having one employee spend all day making those phone calls!!!!"

**Dr. Sarah Swanlund - Swanlund Dentistry**