

A Great Answer to One of Patients' Toughest Questions



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When the phone rings, the toughest question teams will tell you they get is, “Do you accept my insurance?” This may seem like a simple question, but the way your team handles it will either result in an opportunity to engage the patient and communicate the unique value you can provide them or a quick end to the call. Most of us have had patients whose insurance changed, but chose to stay at the practice because of the quality of care. So insurance often doesn’t — and really shouldn’t — drive a patient’s decision to choose a practice as their dental home.

Even though the question, “Do you accept my insurance?” appears to be a “yes” or “no” question, it is not. If you simply answer the question with a “no,” the patient most often will thank you, hang up, and go somewhere else. And it does not give the patient the opportunity to understand the attributes they really should consider when selecting a new dentist. With this type of phone call, the goal should be to create as much value as possible in the shortest amount of time. We want to answer the question truthfully and transparently and open the door to a conversation that enables patients to understand how the practice can uniquely and exceptionally meet their needs. We want to focus on telling the patient what your practice IS — an out-of-network provider — not what it isn’t. And finally, we want to tell the patient how it CAN work, not how it can’t. Always focus on the positive.

Here is what the dialogue might look like:

“Good morning, thank you for calling ABC Dental. My name is Sara. How may I help you?”

“Good morning. Do you accept XYZ Dental Insurance?”

“Well, I am so glad you called. First of all, let me be the first to welcome you to our practice. We’re considered an out-of-network provider for your plan. We have lots of patients who use that insurance at our practice and we’re very experienced with that insurance.”

Next, it’s time to quickly take control of the conversation and uncover the REASON the patient called. They are not just calling all dentists to see who is on their plan. They have a reason. Once you have the reason the patient is looking for a dentist, then, when possible, let the patient know why your practice is their best possible solution for their dental needs.

“Let me tell you how it works here at our practice, but first, may I ask why you’re looking for a dentist so I can provide you with the information you need to decide if we’re the right practice for you?”

“Yes, I just got a job promotion and will be speaking in front of people frequently. I’ve never been happy with the appearance of my teeth and need to do something about it.”

“You are really fortunate. You have found a skilled and welcoming practice to help you fix your smile. Our doctor is an experienced, accredited cosmetic dentist and many of our patients say he changed not only their smile, but changed their life. Having insurance to contribute to this type of work is great to have, but I know you also want someone who can do an amazing job, right?”

“Yes, I do!”

“Great. Let’s get you in so you can meet our doctor. Now, let me share with you how your insurance will work at our practice...”

Of course, you may not be able to convert all calls about insurance into a scheduled appointment. But, you may be able to capture those patients who value quality over cost — who in my experience are most likely to turn into long-term, loyal patients and advocates. 

Courtesy of:



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