



Schedule Your Way to Your Ideal

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Last issue, I discussed how good things come to those who invest quality time in getting to know the patient first. By investing in the patient, you increase patient satisfaction. As satisfaction increases, so does the quantity of work patients want you to do over a period of time. Doing your best work requires you to see fewer patients because your best work requires time.

The way you schedule and organize your treatment plans can take your practice to another level. In this issue, we will explore a process for refining your schedule every six months. If you repeat this process, your practice will not look or feel the same in two to three years. The continually refined schedule takes you to a place yet unknown in your experience. The excitement comes later as you reflect back on just how far you have come in making quality time to know your patients and do your best work.

The Value Based Scheduling Exercise leads you through a strategic planning process in which you clarify what you do well, how your practice is unique, and what you want to spend more time doing. It next helps you analyze how you have been spending your time and set goals for how you want to spend your time six months from now. Finally, it has you outline your schedule to reflect your goals, and it charges you to implement and monitor usage of the new schedule.

An instructional document and forms for the Value Based Scheduling Exercise are available from the Pankey Institute. Feel free to email me if you would like them. A brief version of the instructions follows.

- 1) List, categorize and rank the procedures you do in order of the most enjoyable to the least enjoyable. When doing this, don't just list "endo." Be more specific: "anterior, bicuspid, and molar." Instead of listing "crown and bridge," list the number of units such as six or more. Ask yourself these questions when ranking the procedures in order of importance: "If I could sit a patient down and do a quadrant of operative, would I prefer that over a single tooth operative? If I could, would I prefer... over...? What is unique to my practice? What do I do that others do not? Which of the procedures are important enough to increase? Which procedures put a

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- smile on my face?” Generally speaking, we tend to do well what we like to do most.
- 2) Analyze your previous schedule for the last one to three months. Identify hours spent in each of your listed categories. What percentage of your time did you spend on each category?
 - 3) Decide what percentage of your time you want to spend on each major category six months from now. If category “A” represented 30% of last month’s total and you choose 36% as a target for six months from now, you will need to increase the percentage of time you spend on category “A” by 20%. Ask yourself if this is an attainable goal. If you set attainable goals, you will meet them. Each six months, set new goals and over time, you will move to your practice ideal.
 - 4) Outline your schedule to reflect your desired percentages and the individual uniqueness of your practice. We have found the following scheduling rules to be helpful:
 - a. In both the doctor’s and hygienist’s schedules, hold open every sixth workweek to allow flexibility in your schedule. You can begin to fill it as you enter the first week of the six-week period.
 - b. In the doctor’s schedule:
 - i. Save a half day each week and fill it in one week or less ahead.
 - ii. Save emergency time each day that only can be filled that day.
 - iii. Book “A” work as far ahead as necessary as long as you observe the sixth week rule.
 - iv. Book “B” work three to four weeks ahead.
 - v. Book “C” work one to two weeks ahead.
 - vi. Book “D&E” work one week ahead, or refer the work to someone else.
 - c. In the hygienist’s schedule: in addition to the sixth week rule, reflect the following items, depending on the type of recare appointment system you and your patients prefer. Hold time in the schedule for new patients, root planing and cur-retment, and those folks who like to schedule only one month in advance.
- By analyzing the number of new patients you see weekly and RP&C done weekly for a six-month period, you can determine the percentage of patients who make appointments in advance and the percentage who prefer to schedule one

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month in advance. Create time to care for your health-centered patients who value individualized care.

Have fun thinking through these steps. You are proactively creating your future desired practice.

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