



Make a 2018 Resolution for Both Yourself and Your Practice

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New Year's Eve causes each of us to reflect on the previous year and look forward to the uncharted waters of the next. Personal life coaches have long touted this to be a very healthy habit if done correctly. I wholeheartedly agree and recommend we take it a step further to include our professional lives in the field of dentistry.

I propose we each make one resolution for our dental practice and one for ourselves as a dental professional. You may be tempted to make a long list of resolutions, but don't do it! Creating a long list of resolutions will tempt you to pick and choose which ones to keep. Instead, limit your list to one or two.

Consider a brainstorming session with your staff to help determine the biggest problematic issues you may have within the practice. Talking with your staff is a great way to get a clear view of your practice. Once the resolution is decided, post it prominently in the break room so it can be viewed daily. Although simplistic, writing it down and keeping it in plain sight will greatly improve the probability of keeping it until 2019.

Your practice resolution could cover any topic or concept. Options are truly endless, and all will likely benefit the practice. Here are just a few ideas and examples you might consider using:

1. Conceptual vs. material examples

1. Conceptual: In 2018, our practice will focus on increasing the perceived value of each and every dental appointment in order to help reduce appointment rescheduling, cancellations and failures.
2. Material: In 2018, our practice will rebuild and modernize our website to better communicate with our patients.

2. Broad vs. focused examples

1. Broad: In 2018, our practice will rebrand and refocus our identity throughout all aspects of the office in order to better serve our patient population.
2. Focused: In 2018, our practice's front desk administrator will decrease open chair time by 50 percent during February and September.

In the same way as your practice resolution, your individual professional resolution can cover an immense span of topics. You might consider one of the following examples, or perhaps one of the examples might stimulate your mind and lead to the ideal 2018 resolution.

1. Professional education/self-improvement through the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD).
 1. Year after year, you've been meaning to take the AGD's Fellowship Exam but you never get around to it. 2018 is the year! Promise yourself that you will sit down sometime in the next seven days and register for the next testing date.
 2. Already attained your AGD Fellowship? Commit to attending advanced courses containing both lecture and participation components to use towards your Mastership in the AGD. Courses such as the Illinois/Wisconsin Mastertrack are fantastic options that not only broaden and enhance your dental education, but your interpersonal relationships with like-minded colleagues as well.
2. Volunteerism/community improvement
 1. Commit to volunteer multiple days at a local free dental clinic or at organized free dental events. Find options through the dental organizations you belong to or by word of mouth with dental colleagues.
 2. Offer your sports dental services to the local high school or youth sports organizations. Why just sponsor a little league team with a monetary donation when you could provide custom-made athletic mouthguards while educating players, parents and coaches about the importance of these devices?

New Year's resolutions don't have to be a painful chores. Set yourself up for success by taking an afternoon to set your goals, and plan how you will meet them. Schedule periodic evaluations of your goals and overall resolutions throughout the year so your 2018 is full of mini victories.

Goodbye 2017, and hello 2018! Let's harness this sentiment and commit to one New Year's resolution for yourself and your dental practice. I wish each of you the best of luck and a very happy, healthy and prosperous new year!

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