

A group of five dental professionals, three men and two women, are smiling and looking towards the camera in a clinical setting. They are wearing blue scrubs or lab coats. The woman in the foreground is wearing a light blue surgical mask that is pulled down to her chin. The background shows dental equipment and a clean, bright environment.

Five Dos and Don'ts

That Will Have You Winning at Dentistry



My very first week of practice in 1988. My practice and I have come a long way since then, and you should, too!

DON'T DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID IN DENTAL SCHOOL

I once had a colleague proudly tell me he was practicing dentistry exactly how he had been taught in dental school. What?! Who wants to be treated with dental techniques and technology from the 1980s?

“WHO WANTS TO BE TREATED WITH DENTAL TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGY FROM THE 1980S?”

Of course, you may choose to sculpt your practice however you wish, as long as you're treating patients safely, but if you want to maintain a private practice (or even work in a corporate practice) you have to distinguish yourself and your office.

Can you continue to treat patients doing the same things you were taught in school 10, 20, 30 years ago? Sure. But there's no denying that there are now easier, safer, faster ways of doing things. You can't deliver an extraordinary level of care if you're stuck in the past.

1980s	2018
Film X-rays	Digital radiographs
Goopy impression material	Digital impressions taken with intraoral scanners
Limited infection control awareness (think no gloves)	Heightened infection control precautions
No intraoral photography	Digital intraoral cameras
The birth of implants	Virtual implant planning and placement
Porcelain fused to metal crowns	All-ceramic crowns
Paper charting	Practice management software
2D imaging only	Cone beam computed tomography



2.

DO COMMIT TO INTRAORAL PHOTOGRAPHY

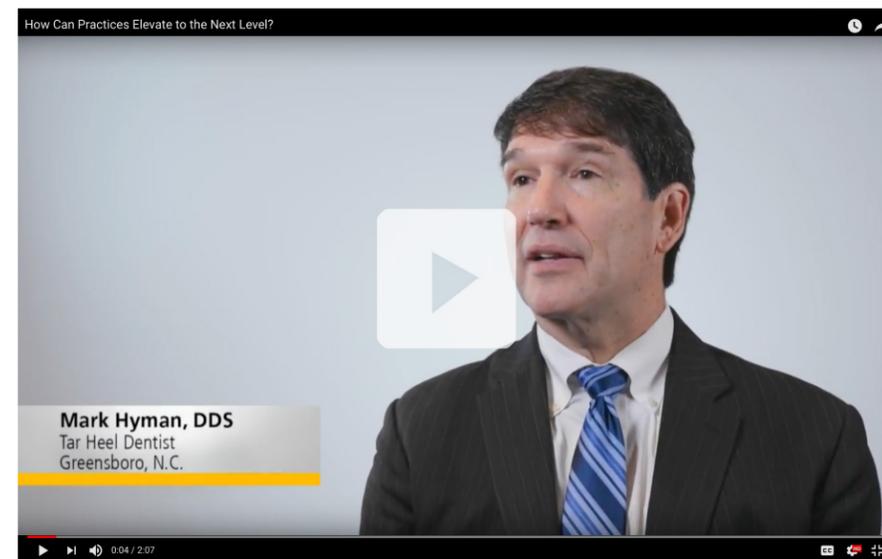


In this selfie-obsessed world we live in, who doesn't like having their picture taken? One of the pieces of technology I use to distinguish my practice is the intraoral camera. Humble as it may be, I use it on every single patient.

A picture is worth a thousands words and it helps gets a conversation going. It's particularly helpful for patients who don't have the gift of gab so they can point out exactly what they'd like corrected about their smile.

I can also use it to aid with case acceptance if a patient doesn't understand or want to accept how serious an issue is.

Click below to hear more about how the simple intraoral camera differentiates Dr. Hyman's practice.





3.

DO A CONSULTATION WITH EVERY PATIENT

Who has time to talk these days? What could possibly be more important than the Netflix show your patient is streaming on their phone?

Make your patients realize the value of putting down their devices and having a conversation with their dentist; it doesn't cost anything but time.

If after you've asked these questions and they still say "no" to your proposed treatment plan, don't take it personally. They're not saying "no" to you, they're saying no to timing, or cashflow or a number of other circumstances.

The important thing is that you took the time to differentiate yourself so that when they are ready to say "yes" it's you they'll remember and return to for treatment.

I ASK THESE 10 QUESTIONS BEFORE EVERY NEW APPOINTMENT:



Who can I thank for referring you?



How can I help you?



Can you tell me more?



How does that make you feel?



What did your last dentist tell you?



Why now?



What are your long term goals for your health, your teeth and your smile?



Who else has input here?



Do you have a budget?



When would you like to be finished?



DON'T ASK ABOUT INSURANCE

“ULTIMATELY, PATIENTS WILL SPEND MONEY ON WHAT THEY VALUE AND WHAT THEY WANT.”

You'll notice one question that was left off the list in #3 that a lot of professionals mistakenly think is the most important: What insurance do you have?

That's the wrong question to ask. Instead, you want to create the sense of urgency, so your patients will choose comprehensive, optimal care, regardless of the limitations and restrictions of their dental benefits.

Unfortunately, dental insurance has been lumped in with medical insurance, creating the illusion of coverage for all needed treatment. However, the limitation of \$1,000 set in the 1970s is essentially the same today—despite costs of care increasing by at least five times—translating to a level of benefits of approximately \$200/year in today's dollars.

This sets an arbitrary ceiling on the level of care many practitioners will offer, and what patients feel is an appropriate expenditure per year.

Ultimately, patients will spend money on what they value and what they want. That's why #5 is so important...



5.

DO MAKE YOUR SERVICES INVALUABLE TO PATIENTS



It's up to you to make your patients realize how valuable your services are. I'm sorry to say it, but between trendy direct-to-consumer subscription services like Smile Direct Club; emerging fields like dental therapy; and even Instagram stars with DIY health advice, society is sending the misguided message that skilled oral health professionals with years of education and experience are no longer necessary.

You and I know better. There are vital services that Dr. Google just can't provide—preventative care, oral cancer screenings, TMJ screenings and CBCT interpretation to name just a few. Make yourself invaluable by investing in your patients; sit down with them, show them you care.

“MAKE YOURSELF INVALUABLE BY INVESTING IN YOUR PATIENTS; SIT DOWN WITH THEM, SHOW THEM YOU CARE.”

When the pendulum swings the other way—when so many services have moved online that consumers crave that face-to-face human connection—it's your practice that will stand out. But why wait until that day? Now is the time to start differentiating your practice: Brush up your techniques, take an inventory of your technology and most important, connect with your patients.

After all, you don't really win at dentistry until the patient wins.



DR. MARK E. HYMAN

Dr. Mark E. Hyman is a renowned dentist in Greensboro, NC, and a public speaker whose work is characterized by his warmth, enthusiasm, sense of humor and passion for dentistry.

As an accomplished seminar speaker, he has lectured throughout North America and Europe at every major dental meeting. Since 2001, Dentistry Today magazine has selected Dr. Hyman as one of the top speakers in dentistry.

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