



Designing a stress-free practice

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When every interaction reflects the same standards of care, patients experience a journey that feels seamless, professional and reassuring.

Introduction

Why is Dentally talking about stress-free dentistry?

Supporting more than 5,000 practices across the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Canada gives Dentally a unique perspective on the realities of modern practice life. Combined with Henry Schein One's Current and Future Perceptions in Dentistry 2025 research,¹ those insights have helped shape the recommendations throughout this guide.

Why this guide exists?

However, for many dental professionals, that ambition can feel increasingly difficult to realise. Patient expectations continue to evolve, teams are managing growing workloads and the operational demands of running a modern practice have never been greater.

The challenge is not usually one major issue. More often, it is the accumulation of small pressures that compete for attention throughout the day.

- A missed piece of information.
- Notes completed after hours.
- Time spent filling cancellations.
- Systems that do not communicate with one another.
- Repeating tasks that should already have been done.

Individually, these frustrations may seem minor but together they consume time, drain energy and distract from the reason most people entered the profession in the first place.

The impact is being felt across dentistry in ways that extend far beyond the working day. While many professionals remain passionate about patient care, fewer are convinced by the traditional model of practice ownership.

Henry Schein One's Current and Future Perceptions in Dentistry 2025 found that 71.5% of non-owning dentists in the UK have no plans to own a practice in the future.

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Almost half

of dental professionals expect to leave within the next ten years

18%

of respondents in the UK consider stress and disillusionment to be part of that picture

The future of dentistry depends on creating practices that are sustainable for patients, teams and future leaders alike.

At the same time, almost half of dental professionals expect to leave the profession within the next ten years with stress and disillusionment form part of that picture, cited by 18% of respondents in the UK.¹

These findings matter because they raise important questions about the future of the profession. If practice life feels increasingly difficult to sustain, attracting future leaders, supporting existing teams and encouraging the next generation of owners becomes more challenging.

There is no single answer, but the right systems, processes and technology

play an increasingly important role. When information flows smoothly, routine tasks are automated and teams have visibility of what matters, practices spend less time managing friction and more time focusing on patients, people and growth.

This guide explores some of the most common sources of pressure within modern dental practices and the practical steps that can help address them. From protecting time and focus to supporting team wellbeing, enabling confident growth and creating more consistent patient experiences, the goal is the same throughout: creating

Reference

1. Henry Schein One. *Current and Future Perceptions in Dentistry*. 2025. Available at: tinyurl.com/hs1-future-perceptions-2025

Protecting time and focus

When people talk about pressure in dentistry, they often focus on the challenges facing the profession. In reality, many drains on time and energy come from small interruptions throughout the day.

Missing paperwork, unfinished notes, cancellations and task-switching may seem insignificant but, collectively, they fragment attention, disrupt workflows and make it harder to focus on patient care.

Dentistry will always require record-keeping, communication and co-ordination. The challenge is ensuring those activities support patient care, not compete with it.



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Previously we could spend two to three hours a day ringing patients to fill gaps. Now, we rarely need to, because the system does it for us.”

Tom Massey,
Operations Manager, Your Dentist

Start every appointment prepared

The patient experience begins long before anyone sits in the chair. When forms are completed in advance and information is available before the appointment starts, clinicians can focus on the conversation in front of them rather than paperwork that should already have been completed.

For example, Dentally Portal enables patients to complete forms digitally before they attend, helping practices collect accurate, up-to-date information ahead of every appointment. Reception teams spend less time chasing missing details or re-entering information, while clinicians have the information they need from the moment the appointment begins.

Appointments start more smoothly, interruptions are reduced, and both patients and teams benefit from a more organised experience.

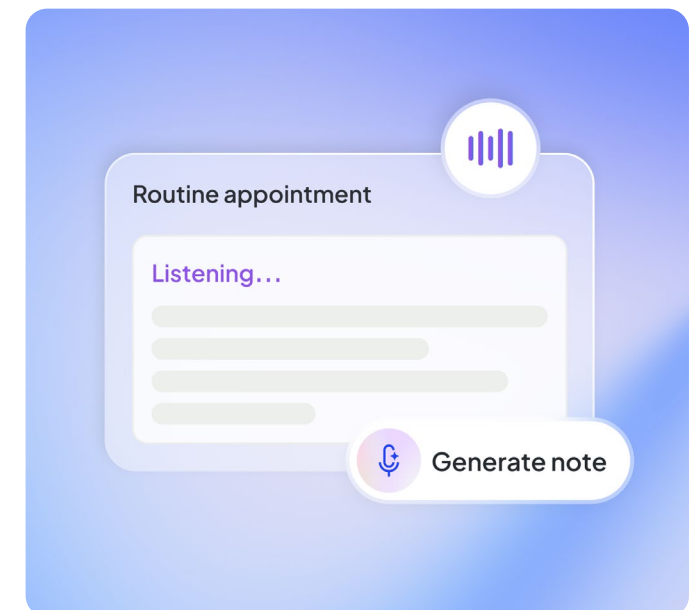
Reduce the burden of clinical note-taking

Few administrative tasks have a greater impact on workload than unfinished clinical notes. When records are left until the end of a busy day, documentation becomes another demand on already stretched time and attention.

To overcome this, Dentally Pulse supports note-taking during and immediately after appointments, transforming typed or dictated information into structured clinical records that align with existing templates and workflows. By capturing

key details while information is still fresh, clinicians can reduce their reliance on end-of-day catch-up and spend less time completing records after hours.

The result is more consistent record keeping, less administrative pressure and greater confidence that essential documentation has already been completed before the day comes to an end.



Key takeaway

Small interruptions accumulate quickly; reducing administrative friction creates more time for patient care and the work that matters most.

Keep your diary working in the background

Short-notice cancellations are an unavoidable reality for most practices. The challenge is not the gap itself, but the amount of time often spent trying to fill it.

Dentally's short notice filler automatically identifies patients who are happy to attend at short notice and contacts them when appointments become available. Rather than working through call lists and leaving voicemails, teams can remain focused on patients in the practice while availability is managed in the background.

Alongside short notice filler, automated recalls and reminders help ensure routine patient communication happens at the right time, without creating additional work for the team.

The result is fewer phone calls, less reactive administration and more

time for reception teams to focus on supporting patients and keeping the day running smoothly.

According to global Dentally customer data collected in May 2026, the average empty appointment slot is filled in under 20 minutes.¹

For Tom Massey, Operations Manager at Your Dentist, automating routine diary management has freed up valuable time that was previously spent chasing cancellations and filling gaps:

'Previously we could spend two to three hours a day ringing patients to fill gaps. Now, we rarely need to, because the system does it for us.'*

Protecting time and focus is about removing unnecessary friction, reducing repetitive administrative tasks and creating more space for the work that matters most: delivering excellent patient care.



Supporting teams for the long term

Protecting time and focus is important for more than productivity. Over time, the way a practice operates shapes how people feel about their work, their future and the profession itself.

Most dental professionals enter dentistry to care for patients, develop skills and build rewarding careers. However, growing administrative demands, unfinished work and reactive days can test even the most committed teams.

Creating a more sustainable working environment helps protect energy, reduce pressure and ensure talented people can see a future within the profession.



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With Dentally, we're able to see more patients with less stress and everyone is happier for it.”

Dr Wendy Hu
Practice Owner, WYP Dental

Reduce the burden that follows people home

For many clinicians, the working day does not always end when the last patient leaves. Notes still need to be completed, administrative tasks remain unfinished and time intended for family become consumed by catch-up work.

While some degree of administration is inevitable, practices should regularly challenge whether routine tasks are making the best use of people's time. Clinical note-taking, patient communication and diary management are all essential parts of running a successful practice, but they should not routinely extend into evenings and weekends.

Tools such as Dentally Pulse, automated patient communications and digital workflows help reduce the volume of manual administration that falls on clinicians and support teams, creating

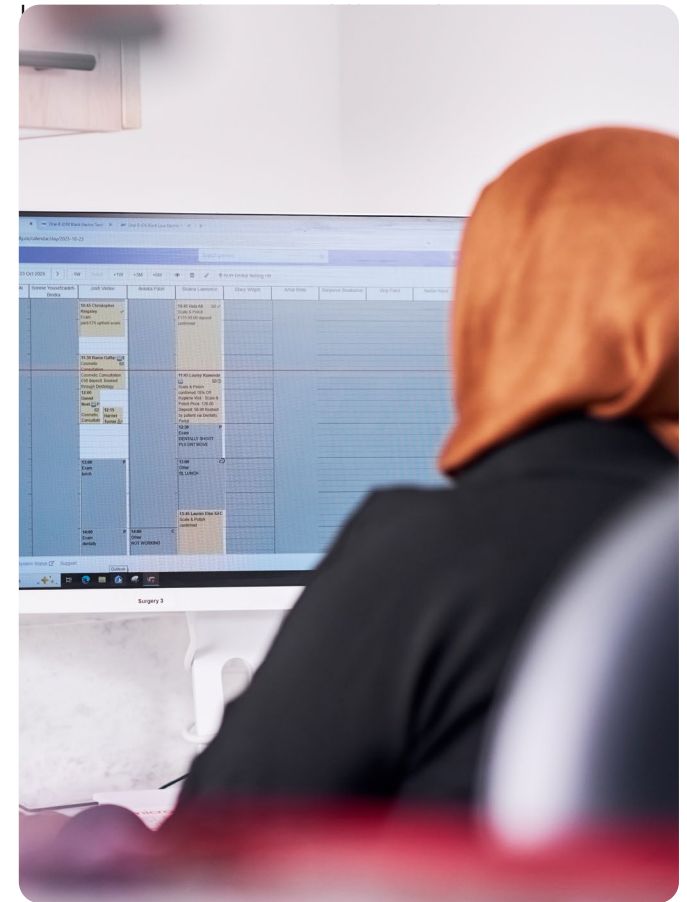
more space for the work that requires their expertise, judgement and attention.

Flexible access to information also plays an important role. Cloud-based systems allow clinicians and practice leaders to access records, schedules and key information securely when needed, without being tied to a specific location. For practices embracing more flexible ways of working, this can reduce unnecessary disruption and create greater control over how work is managed

Create the foundations for future leaders

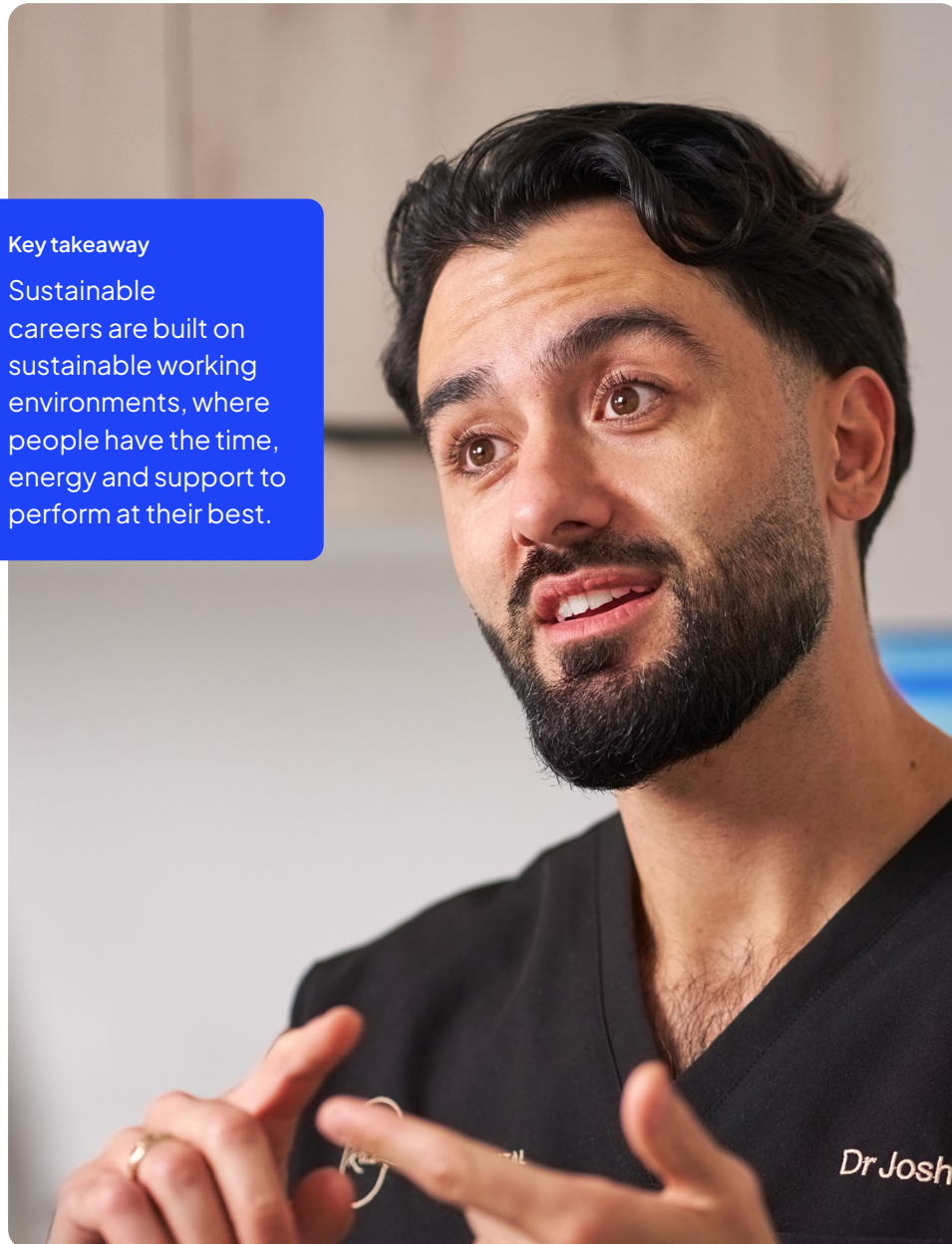
The future of the profession depends on attracting talented clinicians as well as encouraging them to take the next step in their careers.

Practice ownership and leadership have always involved responsibility,



Key takeaway

Sustainable careers are built on sustainable working environments, where people have the time, energy and support to perform at their best.



but responsibility is very different from unnecessary complexity. When information is difficult to access, systems do not work together effectively and leaders lack visibility across the business, ownership can feel more challenging than it needs to be.

Conversely, practices built on clear processes, connected information and reliable systems create stronger foundations for leadership. Greater visibility across appointments, workloads and practice performance helps leaders identify emerging pressure points, allocate resources more effectively and make informed decisions before challenges become larger problems.

As a result, owners and aspiring owners can focus more of their attention on people, patients and the future direction of the business, rather than becoming consumed by day-to-day administration.

Supporting teams for the long term is not simply about retaining staff. It is about creating an environment where people can build fulfilling careers, develop as leaders and continue contributing to the profession for years to come.

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Growing with confidence

Growth is something most practice owners aspire to, yet it rarely arrives on its own. A fuller diary, new clinicians and additional services create opportunities, but also increase complexity.

As practices become busier, maintaining visibility becomes more challenging. Information can be harder to access and small operational issues easier to miss until they become larger problems.

The most successful practices are not necessarily those growing the fastest. More often, they are the ones that retain a clear view of the business, allowing leaders to make informed decisions and plan for the future with confidence.



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It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the number of systems and solutions available. Instead of starting with technology, start with the problem. Take time to understand what is really slowing your practice down and where time and energy are being lost. Once those challenges are clear, it becomes much easier to choose technology that genuinely helps, rather than trying to force a solution to fit.”

James Harker,
Executive Director UK and APAC,
Henry Schein One International

Make decisions with clear, real-time insight

Good decisions depend on good information. When practice performance is only reviewed retrospectively, opportunities can be missed and challenges can take longer to identify.

Having access to real-time insight allows practice owners and clinical leaders to understand performance, capacity and emerging trends as they develop. Pressure points can be identified earlier, resources can be allocated more effectively and planning becomes grounded in what is happening across the business today rather than what happened weeks ago.

Dentally's reporting tools provide visibility across the metrics that matter most, helping leaders make informed decisions based on current activity

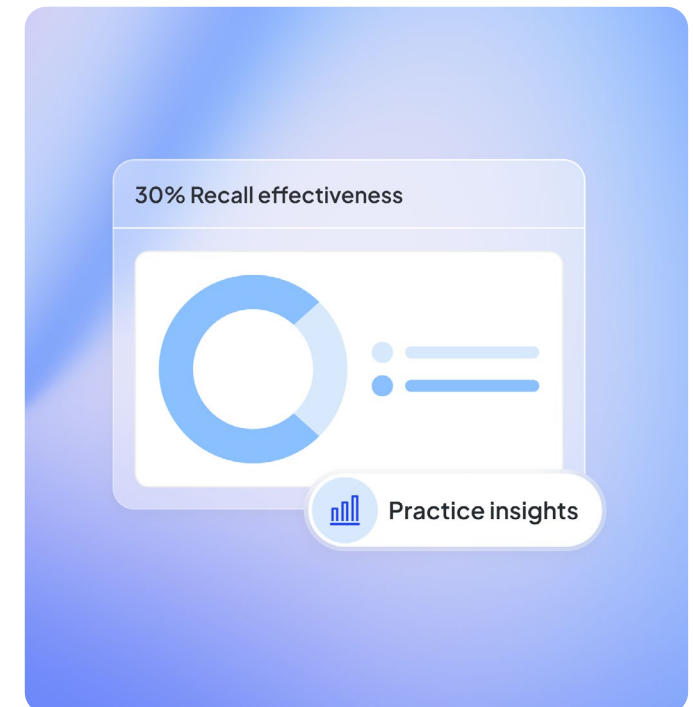
rather than historical assumptions. The result is greater clarity, stronger planning and a clearer understanding of where growth opportunities exist.

Build consistency as you grow

Growth places pressure on processes as much as people. What works well for a small team can become increasingly difficult to manage as new clinicians join, responsibilities expand and activity increases across the practice.

Consistency becomes increasingly important, and appointment booking, patient communication and clinical record-keeping all need to remain reliable, regardless of who is carrying out the task or where it is taking place. Without shared ways of working, small variations can quickly become sources of frustration for both teams and patients.

Maintaining that consistency becomes much easier when teams are supported by shared workflows, templates and automated communications. These help ensure standards are maintained across the practice, supporting a reliable patient experience and reducing operational complexity.



Key takeaway

Growth becomes easier to sustain when decisions are guided by visibility, consistency and connected ways of working.

Bring your practice together on one connected system

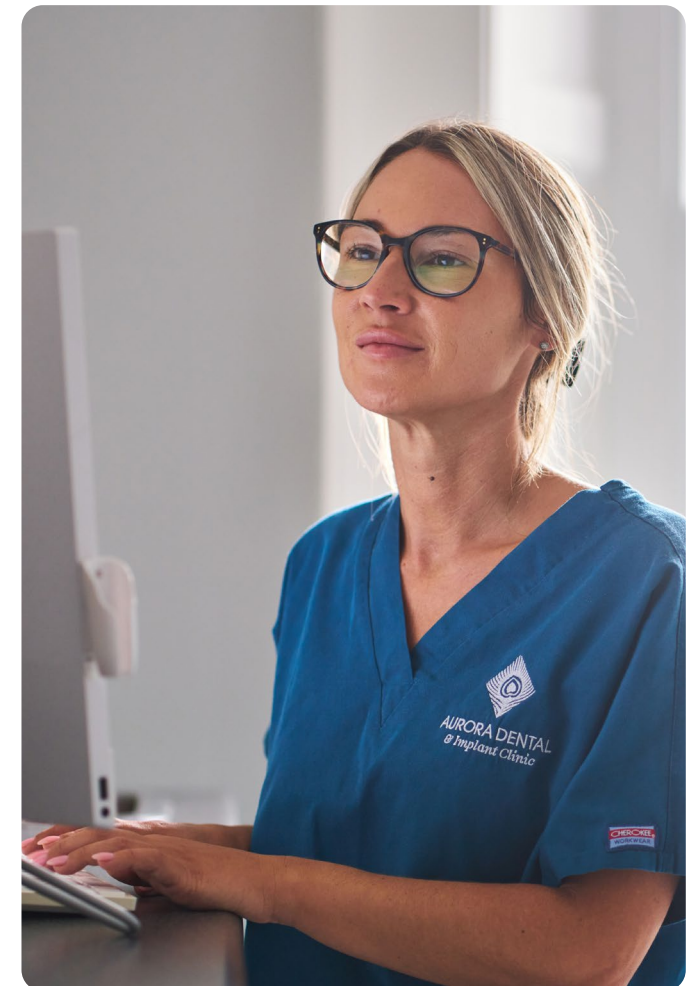
Many of the challenges associated with growth stem from disconnected systems. When scheduling, patient communication, reporting and clinical records sit in different places, teams spend valuable time searching for information, switching between platforms and duplicating tasks that should only need to happen once.

Bringing those functions together creates stronger oversight, smoother handovers and greater confidence that everyone is working from the same information. It also reduces the operational friction that can emerge as practices expand, particularly across multiple locations.

Dentally brings these essential functions together within a single cloud-based platform, while the Dentally Partner Marketplace allows practices to connect with the tools and services they rely on every day.

As James Harker, Executive Director UK and APAC, Henry Schein One International, explains: 'It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the number of systems and solutions available. Instead of starting with technology, start with the problem. Take time to understand what is really slowing your practice down and where time and energy are being lost. Once those challenges are clear, it becomes much easier to choose technology that genuinely helps, rather than trying to force a solution to fit.'

Growth should create opportunities, not additional pressure. When leaders have visibility across the business, teams are working from consistent processes and information flows through connected systems, growth becomes simpler to manage, easier to sustain and ultimately more rewarding to achieve.



Keeping everyone connected

As practices grow across multiple locations, complexity can emerge in unexpected ways. Processes evolve independently, information is stored in different places and teams develop their own ways of working. Over time, even small differences can create inconsistency, making it harder for leaders to maintain visibility across the wider business.

The challenge is ensuring that information, processes and people remain connected, regardless of where they are working. When teams have access to the same information, work to the same standards and understand their responsibilities clearly, consistency becomes easier to achieve and maintain.



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If I have any emergency calls on the weekend, I can access patient information without having to ask redundant questions, they feel like I'm taking care of them and that I know their case before we even get on the phone.”

Dr Brandon Scott
Practice Owner, Riverwalk Dental

Establish shared foundations across every location

Consistency starts with clarity: when appointment workflows, patient communication processes and record-keeping standards vary between locations, teams can find themselves spending unnecessary time interpreting processes rather than following them.

Aligning key workflows and standards across locations helps reduce unnecessary variation, enables teams to work more effectively together and creates a stronger foundation for sustainable growth.

Give people access to what they need

As organisations grow, ensuring the right people have access to the right information becomes increasingly important. Too much access can create confusion and unnecessary risk; too

little can slow decision-making and frustrate teams.

Clear roles and responsibilities help ensure people have access to the information they need, without creating unnecessary complexity. This improves accountability, protects sensitive information and gives teams greater confidence in the decisions they make every day.



Key takeaway

When information, processes and people stay connected, teams can work with greater confidence and leaders can maintain control as practices evolve.



Bring performance into one view

Visibility becomes more difficult when information is spread across multiple locations, systems or reports. Leaders can spend significant amounts of time gathering information before they are able to act on it.

Dentally's reporting dashboard brings performance data together in one place, providing oversight across the wider business while still allowing leaders to explore individual locations in greater detail when required. This makes it easier to identify trends, spot inconsistencies and understand where support may be needed.

For Dr Brandon Scott, Practice Owner at Riverwalk Dental, having access to the right information at the right time has strengthened both patient communication and continuity of care: 'If I have any emergency calls on the weekend, I can access patient

information without having to ask redundant questions, they feel like I'm taking care of them and that I know their case before we even get on the phone.'*

When information is connected, visibility improves, decisions become easier and teams can work with greater confidence. Most importantly, patients experience a more consistent standard of care, regardless of which location they visit or which member of the team they see.

Creating consistency

Patients rarely judge a practice on a single interaction. Their experience is shaped by dozens of small moments, from booking an appointment and completing forms to receiving follow-up communication and attending treatment.

When information is difficult to access or processes vary between team members, inconsistencies can appear. Patients may be asked the same questions more than once, communication can feel fragmented and valuable details can be missed.

Collectively, these moments can undermine confidence, create frustration and place unnecessary pressure on teams.

The most consistent patient experiences are built on clear processes, connected information and teams working from the same understanding.



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Dentally has enhanced the experience we deliver to our patients. Communication stays clear, nothing gets lost and the journey feels professional from start to finish.”

Dr Kunal Patel,
Principal Dentist, Love Teeth Dental

Keep patient information connected

Consistency becomes much easier to deliver when everyone is working from the same information. When forms, medical histories, treatment notes and patient updates are accessible to the people who need them, unnecessary duplication is reduced and conversations can continue seamlessly from one interaction to the next.

Linked patient records help eliminate avoidable repetition, reduce the risk of information being missed and create a smoother experience for both patients and practice teams. Instead of spending time searching for information, teams can focus on using it, ensuring patients feel known, understood and supported throughout their journey with the practice.

Create consistency in every interaction

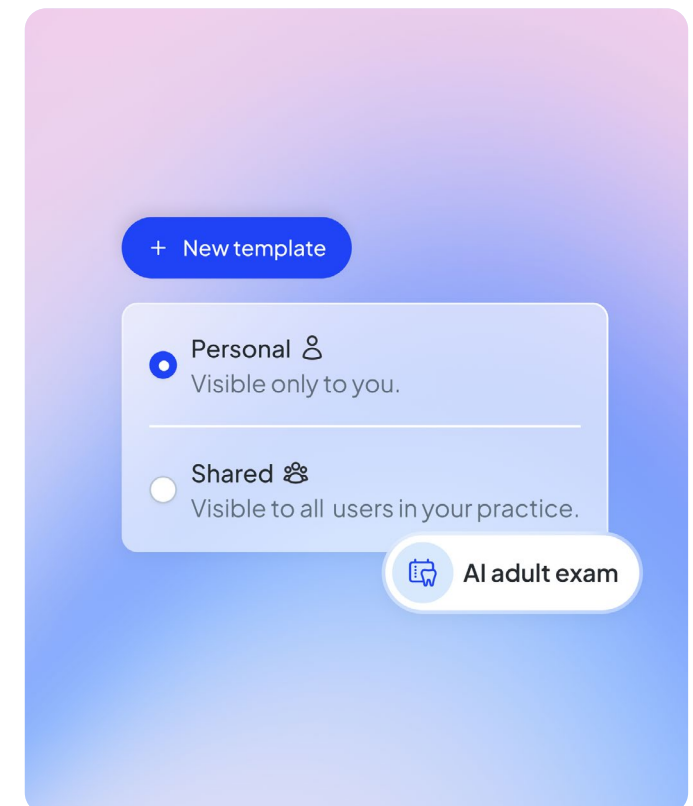
Patients should receive the same standard of communication regardless of who they speak to, which location they visit or where they are in their treatment journey.

Shared communication standards, agreed messaging and consistent patient workflows help to create a more reliable experience at every stage. Appointment reminders arrive when expected, follow-up communication feels professional and patients receive a clear and recognisable experience from the practice as a whole.

For Dr Kunal Patel, Principal Dentist at Love Teeth Dental, consistency is about more than operational efficiency.

It shapes how patients experience the practice from the moment they

make contact: ‘Dentally has enhanced the experience we deliver to our patients. Communication stays clear, nothing gets lost and the journey feels professional from start to finish.’*



Key takeaway

Consistent patient experiences are the result of connected information, clear communication and teams working from the same understanding.

Start the day aligned

Even the best systems benefit from strong communication between people. A short morning huddle can help teams review priorities, identify potential challenges and ensure everyone understands what the day ahead requires.

These conversations do not need to be lengthy. Often, a few minutes spent reviewing the diary, discussing patient needs and highlighting potential pressure points can prevent far greater disruption later in the day. Teams are better prepared, communication becomes more proactive and small issues can be addressed before they affect patients.

Shared diaries, live updates and clear visibility of appointments can support this process by ensuring everyone is working from the same information and responding quickly when plans change.

Dentally's shared diary functionality helps make this visibility available across the practice, reducing the risk of important updates being missed.

Consistency is often associated with processes and systems, but its impact is ultimately human. When patients know what to expect and teams have confidence that nothing will be missed, experiences become smoother, communication becomes clearer and trust becomes easier to build.



Care without the chaos

Caring for patients carries responsibility, leading a team requires judgement and running a successful practice demands constant attention, so there will always be pressure in dentistry. No system, process or technology will change that.

What can change is the amount of unnecessary complexity that surrounds those responsibilities.

Too often, talented teams and practice leaders find themselves spending time on tasks that add little value, navigating disconnected processes, chasing information or managing frustrations that should have been solved long before they reached the surgery door.



While each challenge may look different, the underlying principle remains the same: when the systems supporting a practice work effectively, people are free to focus on what matters most.

Over time, those small inefficiencies do more than disrupt the working day. They shape how people feel about their work, their teams and their future within the profession.

The practices best positioned for the future are not necessarily the largest, the busiest or the fastest-growing. They are the ones that create an environment where people can do their best work, where patients experience consistent, high-quality care and where leaders have the confidence to focus on the future rather than constantly reacting to the present.

This guide has explored practical ways to protect time, support teams, strengthen leadership, improve consistency and create more connected ways of working.

While each challenge may look different, the underlying principle remains the same: when the systems supporting a practice work effectively, people are free to focus on what matters most.

For clinicians and reception teams, that means spending more time with patients and less time on administration. For teams, it means greater clarity, fewer frustrations and a more sustainable working day. For practice owners, it means having the visibility and confidence to lead, grow and plan for the future.

Ultimately, stress-free dentistry is about removing the obstacles that prevent talented people from delivering the care they are capable of providing.

That is what care without the chaos looks like.

If you would like to understand where time, energy and opportunity may be being lost within your own practice, a free practice review can help identify opportunities to create a calmer, more sustainable way of working. For more information, visit dentally.com.

