

SINGLE DENTIST, UNEXPECTEDLY DISABLED

Background:

This practice has 5 operatories and is on a busy thoroughfare in the Pacific Northwest. The owner, a female dentist, needed support to change the culture of the office. The practice is open M-F with the owner dentist working 3 days in one chair and an associate working 4 days in 2 chairs. They had 2 hygienists that were fully booked each day, with a lot of patient engagement on the hygiene side. It was busy and consistent, but there were layers of strained relationships in the office, which had a history of turnover and crisis hiring.

Problem:

About 8 months into our annual contract, the owner dentist had a stroke, at 51. She was unable to close her thumb and forefinger together on either hand and could no longer hold a handpiece or explorer. She wanted to remain in an ownership position as long as possible to maintain continuity, though her work shifted to administrative tasks. I believe her presence and interaction with patients helped pave the way for a future, exceptionally profitable, sale.

Implementation:

- The owner dentist first addressed a major source of team dissatisfaction: a male associate's inappropriate relationships with female staff. The associate ultimately chose to leave the practice, and a highly qualified locum tenens dentist was brought in to cover his shifts. This transition eliminated perceptions of favoritism and helped restore teamwork, trust, and camaraderie among the staff
- The associate's ownership of the building complicated the relationship. We assisted with the purchase of the property, followed by remodeling and upgrades to improve workflow. We later supported the client with tenant agreements, as the building had additional space that was available to rent.
- We sourced, interviewed, and negotiated the contracts of three Locum Tenens dentists and the eventual associate who purchased the office.
- We led all internal and external communications during a period of change, introducing new dentists, transparently addressing the owner's condition and ongoing commitment to the practice, and ensuring patients received a clear, steady message that their care and interests would remain the top priority.
- We placed advertising for specific roles, interviewed, hired, onboarded, and trained replacement staff as we experienced attrition during uncertainty.
- Remotely managed workflows and processes as we navigated new and unexpected territory.
- Supported acquisition and deployment of a high-exposure LED sign reaching approximately 40,000 daily commuters. Oversaw remote content management and scheduling, delivering targeted, event-driven messaging to maximize patient interest and round-the-clock visibility.
- Gave existing staff more accountability and agency to make decisions and enhance their individual performance. This was most notably seen in the collections column,

as her team took it upon themselves to excel in scheduling, collections, case acceptance, and collaboration.

Results:

At the close of five years of working together, I had a meeting with the owner dentist and her significant other immediately prior to the sale of both the practice and the building. **They showed me her accountant's statements where she had consistently grossed \$250K or more each year, despite the adversity of losing her ability to see patients.** Knowing we had a hand in her success and eventual sale is one of our greatest achievements. Every person on our team learned something through this process. **Our biggest takeaway is that a shocking, unplanned event is not the defining moment for most of our clients. We can, and do, recover from adverse events.**