



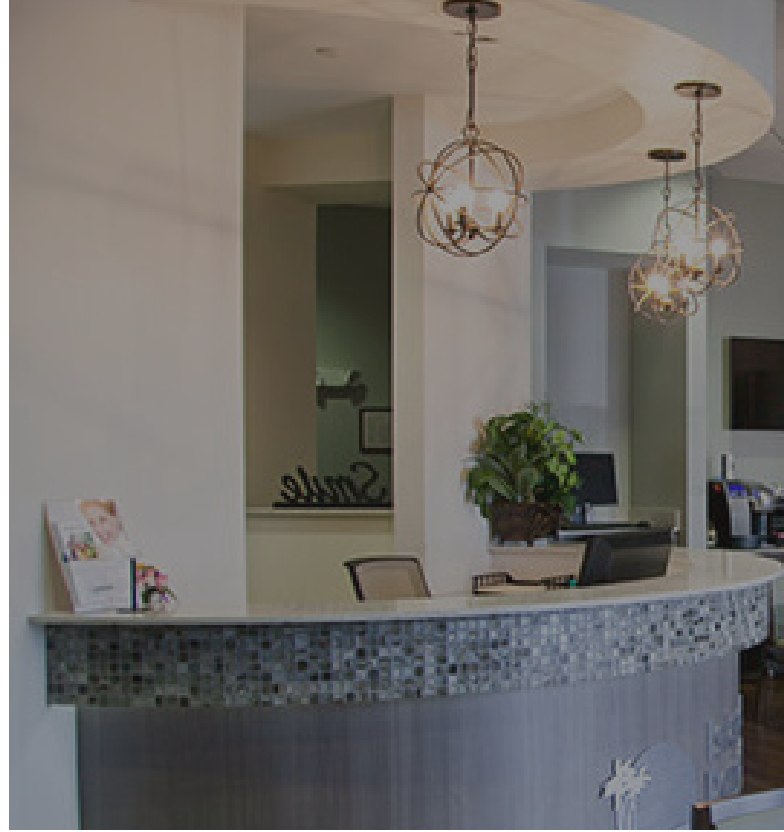
Mastering Short Notice Cancellations

Guide

Is Technology Putting a Wedge Between You and Your Patients?

In modern day practice, it's nearly impossible to come by a patient that doesn't have access to a smartphone. Reaching your patients has never been easier, so why is it hard for practices to reduce, or prevent, last minute cancellations? Before we can strategize ways to improve appointment fulfillment, we need to look at the broader reasoning behind why patients cancel.

Let's explore 4 reasons why patients could be cancelling or no-showing.



01

Don't Look Out, Look In

Your staff is constantly bombarded by patients flowing in and out of your office. They have countless administrative tasks making it easy for appointment reminders to slip the mind. If your appointment reminders are not timely, or are absent, then your patients will likely forget they had an appointment scheduled. We're all human, we get busy, and not all patients fully commit to their oral care. Around **80% of no-shows never contact the office**, and if you don't have processes to reach these patients then they'll never show up.

02

Your Reminders Cadence Is Off

Your patients are busy people, just like you. It's a fine line when structuring your reminder cadence, and is a conversation you should have with each patient. Automated messaging is a vital tool for your practice, but if the reminder is too early, or too late, they'll likely forget about the appointment. Knowing when to send reminders, and how often, can be the key to your success.

03

It's Not That Serious

This can be a common belief amongst patients when they don't feel responsible for their appointments. As a practice, and as a business, we need to convey the importance of oral care so our patients understand their responsibility in keeping appointments. In addition, it's common to not have any policy for cancelling last minute, so why would the patient feel obligated to keep appointments? But this isn't to say the fix should come in the form of cancellation fees.

04

No Pain, No Problem

As a patient, when you're not in pain it's easy to assume that nothing is wrong. While this couldn't be farther from the truth in dentistry, our patients may not realize this. If a patient isn't taught the importance of proactive oral care then they are more likely to cancel their appointment and wait until they feel discomfort. Responsive dentistry is not easy to fix, and when the pain starts, it's often the result of an underlying issue that may require more extensive treatment that could have been prevented during routine check ups.



“

You can't expect everyone to have the same dedication as you.

”

How Do We Manage Short Notice Cancellations?

We can't prevent every patient from canceling, but we can do our best to minimize the occurrence. While there are seemingly endless reasons why patients would cancel, let's focus on what we can control; training staff, automated messaging, and patient relationships.

01

Training your staff to handle short notice cancellations is a valuable investment for your business. When a patient calls to cancel, your team must understand the importance of communicating their treatments, procedure(s), and any health conditions worth noting. The more the patient understands about their appointment, the greater the chance they'll show up.

If a patient truly can't make the appointment, your team should discuss their availability in-depth. If a patient isn't sure about their schedule, avoid placing them in prime appointment slots. Instead, schedule a later time and add them to the short notice list (also referred to as the Quick Fill or ASAP List). This ensures your appointment times are reserved for available patients.

02

Appointment reminder cadence is valuable. Having a good structure in place can greatly help reduce cancellation rates. A proven method is the 3-3-3 cadence. This means sending a reminder 3 weeks, 3 days, and 3 hours before an appointment. This has proven to be the most effective way to get your patients in the chair and starting with a sound cadence like 3-3-3, can help you uncover any trends in no-show rates and allow you to make minor adjustments to the cadence.

Lastly, if you have a cancellation policy, ensure you're giving patients enough time to cancel, if needed. Nobody wants to get a reminder but it's too late to cancel. Your front office is already swamped, the last thing they need is an angry patient calling them.

03

Putting together processes to educate patients will reinforce the importance of routine check ups and at-home oral care. With every patient you have comes a different amount of commitment towards their oral health. The majority of patients know they should visit their dentist twice a year, but how many of them know the 'why' behind their visits?

Your staff should place emphasis on teaching patients regarding their oral health. A simple conversation can go a long way. Lastly, it should be celebrated if your patients are putting in effort. Giving patients the recognition they deserve will undoubtedly give them a boost of confidence and commitment towards your practice.

04

The path of becoming an inactive patient starts with missing or cancelling an appointment, and/or not pre-appointing. The mindset of 'no pain, no problem' is not only hurting your patient, but you as a practice. If they need extensive treatment, but they're not in pain, can raise concerns from the patient if the treatment is necessary. Teaching patients that pain is not always a direct correlation to dental concerns will cut down the occurrence of patients that only come in when they feel discomfort.

Training your staff to handle short notice cancellations will not only help your practice, but will help keep your patients active. It's far more costly and time consuming to reactivate patients than to maintain them. Each conversation you have with a patient - whether it be over the phone, text, or in the chair - is an opportunity to educate. Even if the patient shows no signs of becoming inactive, take this time to build on the relationship and expound on their oral care.

Patients mainly rely on three things from your practice; keeping their mouth healthy, reminding them of appointments, and offering great customer service. Focus on these things and you'll better your chances of patients keeping appointments. Life does happen, so control what you can control.



How RecallMax™ Empowers Your Team



RecallMax™ Short Notice List

You may know of this feature as the Quick Fill or ASAP List, but the RecallMax™ Short Notice List is by far our most raved about feature in the app. With high customization at your fingertips, you'll always have the most accurate list of available patients to fill your last minute cancellations.

One practice utilized RecallMax™ to fill **65% of same-day cancellations**, and **rebooked 73% of cancelled appointments** in their first 3 months. Learn more [here](#).

How can this be?

The Beauty Is In The Details

With convenient access from the patient's chart in RecallMax™, you can quickly add any patient to the short notice list. It doesn't end there, we understand that patient's hate receiving mass texts that don't apply to them. With the patient on the phone, you'll have the ability to:



Select which days the patient knows they're available. This helps filter your short notice list when you need to fill a last minute appointment opening.



With the ability to set custom time ranges, you can accommodate any schedule. Whether they have the most open schedule or small windows of availability, that's no issue for the RecallMax™ Short Notice List.



If your patient has a preferred doctor or hygienist you'll be able to reserve them in case they have a last minute opening. This helps with creating a strong patient to practice relationship.

With this much customization, you'll never question if you can fill a last minute opening. RecallMax™ understands that life happens - your patients need flexibility and we can help. Messaging smaller groups of patients that fit the criteria of your opening will leave you feeling more confident that your empty appointment will be filled in no time.