



# Trust builders: Strengthening patient confidence in you

By Julie Parker

**I**n the world of dentistry, trust is the basis on which successful patient-practitioner relationships are built. Without trust, dental professionals risk encountering obstacles such as reduced treatment acceptance, limited word-of-mouth referrals and diminished team morale. Therefore, nurturing trust with patients is not only crucial but also indispensable for the sustained success of any dental practice.

Let's delve deeper into the impact of trust in dentistry and what you can do as a practitioner to build strong and maintainable trust with your patients.

## What is trust?

**T**rust is the patients' confidence in their dentist's competence, integrity and commitment to their oral health and well-being. It represents the belief that the dentist will act ethically, provide honest guidance and deliver high-quality care tailored to the patient's specific and unique needs and preferences. When patients trust their dentist, they feel empowered to make informed decisions about their dental care, communicate openly about their concerns and engage in long-term partnerships with the practice. Trust serves as the cornerstone of positive patient experiences, driving treatment acceptance, satisfaction and loyalty.

## The impact of trust in dentistry

**T**he importance of trust in dental practice cannot be overstated, as it underpins these critical aspects of patient care and practice success:

### Treatment acceptance

**P**atients are more likely to accept treatment recommendations from a dentist they trust. Confidence in the dentist's expertise and integrity instils patients with the assurance that they are receiving the best possible care, leading to greater compliance with treatment plans and improved clinical outcomes. Improved clinical outcomes also lead to more referrals.

### Patient satisfaction

**T**rusting relationships foster higher levels of patient satisfaction and engagement. Patients feel valued, respected and genuinely cared for when they perceive that their dentist has their best interests at heart. This positive experience enhances patient loyalty and encourages them to maintain ongoing relationships with the practice.

### Referrals and reputation

**S**atisfied and trusting patients are highly inclined to refer friends, family and colleagues to their dentist. Positive word-of-mouth referrals serve as a powerful endorsement of the practice's quality of care and integrity, attracting new patients and contributing to practice growth and sustainability. Referred patients do not need to be attracted through discounted fees!

### Anxiety reduction

**D**ental anxiety and fear are significant barriers to seeking dental care for many patients. Building trust with patients creates a supportive, empathetic and safe environment that alleviates anxiety and

fosters a sense of comfort and confidence. Patients who trust their dentist are more likely to feel relaxed and at ease during dental visits, leading to more positive treatment experiences.

### Team morale and cohesion

**P**atient trust not only impacts the patient-dentist relationship but also extends to the dental team. When patients trust their dentist, team members are less defensive and feel validated and motivated in their roles, leading to improved morale, job satisfaction and teamwork.

### Strategies for building and nurturing patient trust

**G**iven the high importance of trust, there are seven actionable strategies that you can implement that give your patients many reasons to trust you.

#### Deliver successful treatments

**N**othing builds trust like evidence that you know what you are doing! Continuously refine your clinical skills, stay abreast of advancements in dental technology and technique.

#### Effective communication skills

**G**eorge Bernard Shaw said, "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place". Communication is a skill that we learn. So read books, watch informational videos, enrol in courses (Toastmasters is a terrific communication development avenue), conduct team role-playing - anything to bring awareness around how you

communicate and how others receive your messages. Continual improvement in the area of communication will benefit many aspects of your life, not just trust-building with your patients.

### Professional team

**R**ecruit, train and empower team members who share the practice's commitment to excellence, professionalism and patient-centred care. Foster a positive team culture that prioritises patient satisfaction, teamwork and continuous improvement.

### Transparency and honesty

**W**e don't always deliver positive news to patients. Occasionally, we may recommend services that some perceive as costly. Moreover, treatment success can sometimes be compromised, or treatment may even fail. Embracing these difficult discussions enables us to communicate openly and honestly with patients about their prospects and what they can anticipate.

### Consistency and reliability

**I**mplement effective systems to ensure consistent service delivery and meet or exceed patient expectations at every touch-point of the patient journey.

### Positive reviews

**P**rospective patients rely on patient reviews of your practice and your expertise to guide their decision-making until they have the opportunity for direct interactions with you. It's essential to monitor your reviews closely and encourage satisfied patients to share their positive experiences, as these reviews play a significant role in shaping prospective patients' perceptions and early trust-building.

### Personalised post-operative follow-up

**W**hile many dental practices typically assign post-operative follow-up duties to auxiliary team mem-

bers, if you're a practitioner striving to strengthen trust with your patients, consider personally conducting these follow-up communications.

When patients receive a call directly from their dentist, it demonstrates your genuine commitment to ensuring successful treatment outcomes.

By implementing these trust-building strategies, dental professionals can cultivate strong, enduring and mutually beneficial relationships with their patients.

### About the author

*Julie Parker is a Dental Practice Management Consultant and Team Educator. At the age of 33, Julie became the first non-dentist to own a dental practice in Australia. Julie is Co-Founder of Julie Parker Practice Success and Co-Founder of Dental Business Mastery. Visit [julieparkerpracticesuccess.com.au](http://julieparkerpracticesuccess.com.au) and [dentalbusinessmastery.com.au](http://dentalbusinessmastery.com.au) to find how Julie can help your dental practice be more successful through consulting programs, online courses, podcasts and more.*