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As we approach the end of the year, it's a good time to assess and plan. How do your expenditures stack up against your financial plan for 2006? As you develop your plan for 2007, take time to compare the new plan to past budgets as a way to help validate your new plan. It's important to understand your business and budget aggressively with contingency plans in place for unforeseen circumstances.

## In this Issue

- ▶ [Effectively Manage Office Supplies](#)
- ▶ [Compare Your Expenses with Other Dentists](#)
- ▶ [Dental Students and Recent Grads Face Tough Financial Transitions](#)

## EFFECTIVELY MANAGE OFFICE SUPPLIES



By managing supplies effectively you can reduce office overhead, improve productivity and serve your patients more efficiently. We provide you with some tips to establish a dental office supply management system.

[Full Story](#)

[Return to Top](#)

## What do YOU think?



What processes or steps are you currently using in your practice to prevent embezzlement?

[Respond Now](#)

[Last Issue's Responses](#)

## COMPARE YOUR EXPENSES WITH OTHER DENTISTS



Have you wondered how your expenses compare to other dentists? We offer the most recent information from the *ADA's 2003 Survey of Dental Practice*.

[Full Story](#)

[Return to Top](#)

## Hot Button

## DENTAL STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADS FACE TOUGH FINANCIAL TRANSITIONS



Everyone knows of that person in dental school who bought a new car or went to Acapulco on spring break courtesy of their student loans. But the reality is that student debt is rising, right in step with tuition and fees.

[Full Story](#)

[Return to Top](#)

[Save on Disability Insurance](#)

[Be Wise about Risk](#)

[CAPIR Award Winners  
Announced](#)

[Member Profile: Matthew  
Patterson, DMD](#)

[New Report: Salary  
Information](#)

[Check This Out: Ideas from  
the ADA Library Staff](#)

[Ensuring a Healthy Credit  
Profile in Five Easy Steps](#)

[How Much Is Your Practice  
Worth?](#)

[Change your e-mail  
address](#)



## SPEND WISELY: CHOOSE PRODUCTS THAT MEET YOUR NEEDS

Trial and error can be a costly and time-consuming way to find products that help you deliver top quality dental care. The *ADA Professional Product Review (PPR)* was developed to help you streamline purchasing decisions.

[Full Story](#)

[Return to Top](#)



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## ADA Community Brief

November, 2006

### This Issue


- [Effectively Manage Office Supplies](#)
- [Compare Your Expenses with Other Dentists](#)
- [Dental Students and Recent Grads Face Tough Financial Transitions](#)
- [Spend Wisely: Choose Products that Meet Your Needs](#)
- [Save on Disability Insurance](#)
- [Be Wise about Risk](#)
- [CAPIR Award Winners Announced](#)
- [Member Profile: Matthew Patterson, DMD](#)
- [New Report: Salary Information](#)
- [Check This Out: Ideas from the ADA Library Staff](#)
- [Ensuring a Healthy Credit Profile in Five Easy Steps](#)
- [How Much Is Your Practice Worth?](#)
- [What Do You Think?—Question and Responses](#)

### Introduction

As we approach the end of the year, it's a good time to assess and plan. How do your expenditures stack up against your financial plan for 2006? As you develop your plan for 2007, take time to compare the new plan to past budgets as a way to help validate your new plan. It's important to understand your business and budget aggressively with contingency plans in place for unforeseen circumstances.

### Effectively Manage Office Supplies

As small business owners and entrepreneurs, dentists are acutely aware of the relationship of costs to profits. By managing supplies effectively you can reduce office overhead, improve productivity and serve your patients more efficiently. Here are tips to establish a dental office supply management system:

- Identify the products and supplies needed in your office.
- Develop ordering guidelines.
- Select the vendors.
- Establish a receiving protocol.
- Organize the storage area for supplies and products.
- Comply with OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) regulations. ([www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) )

The challenge for the dental office is to maintain the appropriate amount of supplies while keeping costs down. The staff person who reorders supplies for the dental office also should have a working

relationship with supply distributors and area manufacturers' reps to stay on top of trends in the industry.

It's quick and easy to order supplies online. Computer systems also can automatically track use of products. Manual systems are usually "indexed" cards (of the products) organized in a simple manner. They are as effective as computerized systems, but more time consuming. Whether the supply management system is manual or computerized is not important—just be sure your system is organized and everyone feels comfortable using it. The supply management system, and whoever is using it, should be able to tell staff when products need to be ordered and how long it will take to receive the order. Here are tips for inventory control:

- Make decisions about the supplies you need based on your patient load.
- Always check the return policy when trying new products. Companies may offer a liberal return or exchange policy if the product does not meet the needs of the dentist. Also, companies may offer you sample kits to try products before your office invests in large quantities.
- Some dental products and equipment are evolving at a fast pace. It's better not to order large quantities of these products
- When purchasing stationery, be sure your office's information will not change before the new order is used up.
- Select adequate quantities of products you'll use often and stock minimal quantities of products you use infrequently.
- Order supplies electronically to trim overhead costs and manage office inventory. Vendors can reduce their costs when you order supplies over the Internet or use direct-to-dealer online systems.
- Use supplies in the order they were purchased and replace stock from the back. Use the oldest items first (the FIFO philosophy of inventory control—first in, first out). Take note that some items may have expiration dates.
- Maintain a master list of products and where they're located in the dental office. It could be alphabetized, or categorized into broad areas such as infection control, restorative and disposable materials. Sometimes a simple list will do, such as using the categories business office and clinical.
- Store items in a central location where it's easy to monitor and manage them. Keep similar items next to each other. Stock more frequently used items at eye level and on lower shelves. The storage area should be well lighted, and shelves and bins should be clearly marked so all products can be found easily.
- Keep a want list in the storage area for all employees to update when an item is in short supply.

Time is money. Select vendors who deliver a great product in a problem-free, timely manner. Dental manufacturers' reps can provide information on specials that may be running on their products. Attending a large dental meeting can allow you to easily compare products from different companies, take advantage of trade-show specials, get some CE, and have a good time. Also, pay attention to the direct mail pieces and special promotions and sales on dental products routed to your dental office. Dental supply house catalogs usually offer lower prices as well. Products with a shelf life will go on sale close to their expiration dates.

### **Find Out More**

Order: *Basic Training III* (Item #PO58), [ADA Product Catalog](#)  or call 800-947-4746

## Compare Your Expenses with Other Dentists

Have you wondered how your expenses compare to other dentists? Here's the most recent information from the *ADA's 2003 Survey of Dental Practice*:

### Mean expenses as a % of gross billings, independent dentists

Expense	%
Rent	5.4
Mortgage	5.7
Employee salaries (non-dds)	21.8
Employee salaries (dds)	8.3
Shareholder dds salaries	31.4
Fringe benefits/employees	2.0
Dental supplies	6.2
Office supplies	2.0
Lab charges	6.7
Advertising expenses	1.0
Malpractice insurance	0.8
Equipment depreciation	2.5
Business taxes	0.9
Equipment repairs	0.8
Office insurance	0.7
Legal and professional fees	0.8
Interest on business debt	1.3
Drugs	0.3
Utilities	1.4
Professional expenses	0.9
Bad debts	1.4
Employee taxes for both dds and non-dds	5.6
Purchase of office equipment:	2.1
Other	4.5

If your fixed expenses are high and your collection is low, there may be little profit. But as production increases, fixed expenses drop as a percentage of production. Many fixed expenses are paid monthly, such as rent and salaries. Other fixed expenses are periodic, such as malpractice insurance and property taxes. Your business plan should provide a reserve to cover these periodic expenses.

To achieve your financial goals the profitability of your practice must increase consistently. Typically, profitability of a dental practice depends on production and collections. What can you do to increase production? Here are possibilities to consider:

- **Establish a Patient Flow.** Establishing your patient base takes planning, smart marketing and the cooperation of your team. Your dental philosophy will define your business plan and your team will be integral to promoting and increasing your practice profitability. External marketing efforts, such as participating in community activities, volunteering to speak before community groups or participating in career days for area students can help to grow your

practice.

- **Increase Your New Patient Flow.** New patients are the lifeblood of every practice, and usually come by referral. One of the best ways to increase patient referrals is through internal marketing, which requires a friendly, sincere and team motivated doctor and staff. Invest and build on that foundation with consistency and honesty. Consider the impact of good personal communication, gracious thank you notes for referrals and individualized patient education materials.
- **Motivate Your Patients to Accept Your Treatment Plans.** You may be a skillful dentist, but unless your patients accept your treatment plans, your skills will not be fully used. Let patients know that their oral health needs are your primary focus. You can relay this message by explaining the value of a treatment plan that has been tailored to fit their individual concerns. Include alternative treatment approaches and consequences. Train your team to be knowledgeable and supportive of your treatment plans. Listen to your patients' concerns and address them satisfactorily. Offer flexible payment plans and accept credit cards.
- **Identify Your Service Mix.** To maintain patients and attract new ones, you must be able to deliver the services you are marketing. Determine which treatment services you enjoy and prefer to perform, target market those patients who would best be served by these treatments, stay current through continuing education courses and knowledgeable regarding supporting materials and equipment.
- **Maximize Your Team.** Your employees can be a significant factor in enhancing profitability. Use them and their skills, within your state's legal parameters, to work with you in achieving the financial goals of the practice. Hire people who share your vision of dentistry and spend time sharing professional and communication skills with them.
- **Change Working Hours.** To improve profitability, you may need to increase your office hours – although working longer need not always increase net profit, and sometimes decreases it. As you set your annual production goals, use a large calendar to determine how many days you plan to schedule yourself and others. Starting with 365 days, deduct the holidays, vacation days, weekends, education days, sick and personal days that the office will be closed. Divide the working days into your annual production goal (do not simply divide it by 12; all months are not equal). Consider unconventional scheduling such as early mornings, evenings and weekends to increase your production. Be careful to consider all the costs involved before you do this.
- **Keep Up With Inflation.** Obviously, your dental fees affect your financial success, so they need to reflect your costs and provide a profit margin. While they should be competitive, consider that patients are looking for much more than the lowest price when selecting a dentist. You should consider refiguring your fees annually to offset the increases you absorb due to wage inflation, supply costs, etc.
- **Monitor Overhead.** Overhead rates commonly vary 5 percent to 15 percent among dental practices of similar size. Consider that a 5 percent decrease in overhead rate for a practice averaging production of \$35,000 per month would save \$21,000 per year. That might be just the amount to help you fund a retirement plan or make personal investments. Remember that fixed expenses drop as a percentage of collection increases. Two major reasons for high overhead are poor control of discretionary expenses and overstaffing without the patient volume to support it.
- **Improve Your Collection Ratios.** Good collections result from good financial policies. Give your patients a clear understanding of their financial obligations at the time they commit to a treatment plan. For credit arrangements, consider accepting charge cards. Finally, follow up on past due accounts with collection letters and personal telephone calls.

**Maximize Your Schedule.** Increase your daily production through effective scheduling. Your office should function in a way that maximizes use of your equipment and team. Schedule service providers as efficiently as possible; divide the day into tenths of an hour if necessary to avoid non

productive time. By knowing each service provider's average time on different procedures, you can schedule to minimize stress for the producers and maximize attention to the patients.

**Note:** Edited content from *Practice Options for the New Dentist: A How-To Guide*

### Find Out More

Order: *Practice Options for the New Dentist: A How-To Guide* (Item #J088), *The Power of Internal Marketing: The Key to Dental Practice Success*, *Develop a Dynamic Web Site for Your Practice*, *Increasing Your Bottom Line with Effective Marketing* and *The Ultimate Dental PR Kit* available at 800-947-4746 or online at [ADA Product Catalog](#) .

[Return to Top](#)

## Dental Students and Recent Grads Face Tough Financial Transitions

“Live like a doctor when you're a student, and you'll live like a student when you're a doctor,” is the current adage cautioning dental students when taking out student loans. Everyone knows of that person in dental school who bought a new car or went to Acapulco on spring break courtesy of their student loans. But the reality is that student debt is rising, right in step with tuition and fees.

The vast majority of today's dental students must concentrate exclusively on classes and clinic and are graduating with significant debt. According to the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) Survey of Dental School Seniors: 2005 Graduating Class, the average educational debt on graduation was \$129,639—and only 8.4 percent of new graduates were able to finance their dental education without taking on debt. With the ADA 2004-05 Survey of Dental Education showing tuition alone averaging about \$85,000 for four years of dental school for state residents (and almost \$130,000 for four years at out-of-state rates), it's easy to see why the average graduating debt is so high.

Most new graduates ultimately desire to own a practice—and that's where smart financial decision-making comes in. Racking up credit card or other non-educational debt, missing even one payment, or making the wrong assumptions about the grace period before the new graduate has to start making student loan payments can all have a negative affect on that all-important credit score. Although many students have a good grasp of the basics of financial management, it's a message that bears repeating.

That's why the ADA offers the Smart Start program for freshman dental students. Presented at 29 dental schools during the 2005–06 academic year, the 90-minute Smart Start program incorporates information from the school financial aid office, offers examples of the impact of compound interest, provides insight into the average income of recent graduates in various occupations and encourages the use of a monthly budget—which includes the expected student loan payment—to guide decision-making.

Although the *2002 Survey of New Dentist Financial Issues* revealed that recent graduates average \$109,000 per year as an associate (full-time dds), it's easy to see how that \$9,000/month disappears when you factor in:

- \$2,700 taxes
- \$1,200 student loan repayment
- \$1,500 rent or mortgage payment

- \$500 utilities
- \$650 car payment and auto insurance
- \$1,000 life, disability, and malpractice insurance

The total of \$7,550 leaves just \$1,450 per month for groceries, clothing, gas for the car, health club membership and most important: savings. Getting married? Having kids? It all adds up.

Be realistic with your expenses and make smart choices. Cut expenses on big-ticket items and monitor your daily spending. For example, skip the great new car—even though you deserve it—and watch how often you eat out. Limit your use of credit cards. But don't put off buying insurance, because the financial consequences of not having it when you need it can be devastating. Monitor your credit reports, keep an eye on your credit score, and plan ahead so you can accomplish your long-term goals. It may be common sense, but it takes constant diligence. And it's just the start of a lifetime of sound financial decisions!

[Return to Top](#)

## **Spend Wisely: Choose Products that Meet Your Needs**

Trial and error can be a costly and time-consuming way to find products that help you deliver top quality dental care. The *ADA Professional Product Review (PPR)* was developed to help you streamline purchasing decisions.

Delivered quarterly with JADA to ADA members and available by subscription to non-members, the PPR typically reviews three professional dental product categories per issue. The reviews feature several products within each category, reporting laboratory test results, product descriptions and clinical input from dentists who have used the products in their practices. Some issues include additional information such as expert or practitioner panel discussions, buyer's checklists and technology updates. The [fall PPR offers reports](#) on LED curing lights, resin-based cements and nickel-titanium rotary endodontic instruments.

The PPR is designed to deliver clinically relevant information that is unbiased and scientifically sound in a user-friendly format. A volunteer group of more than 1,500 practicing dentists—the ADA Clinical Evaluator (ACE) Panel—is an integral part of this program. Throughout the year, ACE Panel members suggest products they would like to see tested and report their experiences with the products they use. ACE Panel members also may participate in panel discussions to offer more extensive input about products or product categories. For example, the winter 2007 PPR will feature an ACE Panel discussion on bonding agents.

### **Find Out More**

Online: <http://www.ada.org/goto/ppr>

[Return to Top](#)

## **Hot Button**

### **Save on Disability Insurance**

Disability insurance can be pricey, but there are ways you can save on costs and still be

adequately protected financially. John Ferguson, a Plan Specialist at Great-West (the company that underwrites and administers the ADA Insurance Plans), suggests three ideas to explore:

1. Maximize your use of business overhead expense insurance. This type of disability insurance reimburses you for covered office overhead expenses, such as rent, employee salaries, and business loans, if you can't work due to a total disability. Premiums are a fraction of the cost of a disability income policy, which makes overhead insurance particularly cost-effective as collateral for a practice loan. "Most lenders will accept business overhead expense insurance as collateral if you ask them," Ferguson says. "In addition, premiums may be fully tax deductible as a business expense under current law." He suggests that disability income insurance should be reserved as intended—to replace the dentist's lost income if disabled—rather than encumbered with a practice loan.
2. Extend the waiting period. This is the time between the date of disability and the date when insurance benefits can be paid. The longer the waiting period, the less expensive the policy. "If you can manage financially for 60, 90, or 180 days following a disability, instead of 30, you can reduce your insurance costs dramatically," Ferguson says. He recommends that established dentists re-examine the waiting period of their disability policies. "You might have chosen a short waiting period when you were starting your practice and were strapped for cash, but perhaps now you can comfortably lengthen the waiting period to trim your premiums." Most dentists under the ADA Income Protection Plan have a 90-day waiting period.
3. Review your options. If you're fortunate enough to have a policy where options can be purchased on an a la carte basis, you have some flexibility. "In many cases, optional coverage is worth the extra money, but in other situations, it can be foregone or delayed," Ferguson says. An example is a cost of living adjustment option, which increases disability benefits to keep pace with inflation. "If you are young and could potentially be disabled for many years, inflation protection is very important," Ferguson explains. "On the other hand, if you are close to retirement or have another source of income for your family, you might decide to eliminate this costly add-on." A future increase option is another particularly valuable feature for younger dentists, whose tight budgets may prevent them from buying all the disability coverage they need at once. This option guarantees the ability to increase coverage in the future even if your health deteriorates.

"You also will pay less to begin with if you buy a policy directly from an insurer, rather than through a commissioned insurance agent or broker," Ferguson adds. "The ADA Insurance Plans fall into this category and are offered by the ADA on a not-for-profit basis—because the ADA is mindful about how much members have to pay for the products and services they need."

Editor's note: As is the case with this entire publication, this article does not constitute legal, financial or other professional advice. Please seek professional input appropriate to your situation.

### Find Out More

Online: ADA Insurance Plans, <http://www.insurance.ada.org> 

Call: ADA Insurance Plans, 888-463-4545

[Return to Top](#)

### Be Wise about Risk

One of the best and most fundamental ways to save money is to do things yourself. Nevertheless, there are times when doing it yourself is "penny-wise and pound-foolish." For example: If you live in

an area where snow falls, it's usually much wiser to pay someone to get the snow off your roof than to risk slipping, falling, and breaking one or both arms, having residual nerve damage, and being forced to limit your practice to two days a week. Spending several hundred dollars on a professional tree-trimmer is usually wiser than doing it yourself and taking the chance of falling and suffering a permanent back injury.

These things have happened to dentists. There must be something in human nature that makes us think bad things happen only to other people. It's a healthy thing to see ourselves as capable, strong, and powerful. The dentist who trimmed his own tree had no doubt done it before, and it may never have occurred to him to ask whether the money saved was worth the risk of paraplegia.

Your hands, your brain, neck and back and shoulders—are your most important practice assets. If saving money means taking a significant risk with them, no matter how remote a bad outcome might seem, it may be far wiser to pay someone else to take the risk for you.

[Return to Top](#)

## **CAPIR Award Winners Announced**

Congratulations to recently announced winners of CAPIR's (Council on Access, Prevention, Interprofessional Relations) 2006 Community Dentistry Award (supported by a generous grant from Johnson & Johnson Oral Health Products) and CAPIR's 2006 Geriatric Oral Health Care Award (supported by a generous grant from Pfizer Consumer Healthcare Group). These awards are sponsored through the ADA Foundation.

The Community Dentistry Award's first place program is **The Ben Massell Dental Clinic of Jewish Family & Career Services** in Atlanta, GA. Meritorious awards go to the **Spanish Catholic Center Dental Clinic of Catholic Community Services** in Washington, DC; the **Free Clinics' Adult Dental Extraction Clinic** in Hendersonville, NC and **Keystone Dental Care, Inc.** in Johnson City, TN. The Geriatric Oral Health Care Award goes to **The Ohio State University College of Dentistry Geriatric Program Oral Health for Seniors** in Appalachia. A meritorious award goes to the **Boston Oral Health Equity Project**.

### **Find Out More**

Online: [www.ada.org/goto/accessawards](http://www.ada.org/goto/accessawards)

Contact: Jan Babcock, x2673, [babcockj@ada.org](mailto:babcockj@ada.org)

[Return to Top](#)

## **Member Profile: Matthew Patterson, DMD**

Read the latest member profile about Matthew Patterson, DMD, an ADA member for 20 years who originally wanted to be a novelist.

### **Find Out More**

Online: [http://www.ada.org/prof/center/profiles/profile\\_patterson.asp](http://www.ada.org/prof/center/profiles/profile_patterson.asp)

[Return to Top](#)

## New Report: Salary Information

Dentists in private practice pay their full-time dental hygienists an average of \$29.30 an hour according to the latest report from the ADA's Survey of Dental Practice. "Employment of Dental Practice Personnel," from the ADA's 2004 Survey of Dental Practice, reports that the average salary of part-time dental hygienists was \$33.00 in 2003. The report also includes salary information on chairside assistants. For other dental staff, the report provides data on the number of full- and part-time staff employed (including 5-year trend information).

The full report (catalog number SDPE-2004) is \$80 for ADA members, \$120 for nonmembers and \$240 for commercial firms.

### Find Out More

Order: [ADA Product Catalog](#)  or call 800-947-4746

[Return to Top](#)

## Check This Out: Ideas from the ADA Library Staff

The library's books and journals include published pearls of wisdom about setting up a practice and other practice management topics. Our librarians can help you find information on your practice management questions in journals, newsletters or books. Call one of our reference librarians who will recommend books or create a reference package of 5–8 journal articles specific to your needs. The fee for the customized reference package is \$25.00. Books are loaned for a shipping and handling fee.

### Find Out More

Library Services and Fees: <http://www.ada.org/members/library/feesum.asp>

Online: <http://www.ada.org/prof/resources/library/catalog.asp>

Call: 312-440-2653 or 800-621-8099, ext. 2653

Fax: 312-440-2774

E-mail: [library@ada.org](mailto:library@ada.org)

Visit: 211 E. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 6th Floor

[Return to Top](#)

## Ensuring a Healthy Credit Profile in Five Easy Steps

Good credit is the key to your financial investments, whether you're buying or building your first practice or your first home. While lenders look at a number of factors when making a credit decision, the most critical aspects of your financial profile are your personal debt such as student loans, credit cards and lines of credit. Your overall credit rating is based on amount of debt and timeliness of monthly payments.

Having good, well-managed credit will make it easier to secure the financing you need to purchase, build or expand your practice—and it's never too soon to develop a healthy financial profile. Following are five simple steps you can take to improve your credit rating:

1. Maintain at least two or three revolving credit accounts (such as credit cards and lines of credit). Demonstrate that you know how to use your credit wisely by not using all the credit available to you.
2. Avoid applying for credit from too many lenders. Multiple credit inquiries made within a short timeframe will negatively impact your credit rating.
3. Make on-time monthly payments on credit cards, mortgages, installment loans and student loans. Remember, most service providers such as doctors' offices, cell phone companies and others do report late payments and collections to credit bureaus.
4. If you are in dispute with a creditor, continue to make minimum monthly payments while working towards a resolution.
5. Protect your identity. Review your personal credit report at least twice a year to ensure accurate reporting of all accounts. Inform all credit bureaus of any discrepancies in writing.

Remember, all credit information stays on your records for up to ten years.

### **Find Out More**

Online: For more tips on improving your credit profile, visit <http://www.matsco.com/goodcredit> 

[Return to Top](#)

### **How Much Is Your Practice Worth?**

If you had to sell, would you know how to figure out how much your practice is worth? Or, if you're looking to buy a practice, would you like to know how the seller figured its fair market value?


The ADA's new edition of "Valuing a Practice" brings much-needed clarity to the murky area of determining fair market value. While most practice owners have some idea what their tangible assets would bring, the total value of a practice can be much more, and identifying all the components can be tricky. Are accounts receivable included? Should intangible assets such as the practice's reputation be considered, and if so, how does one put a price tag on them?

"Valuing a Practice" sheds light on these and many other valuation questions by addressing the following points:

- different valuation methods
- information required to conduct a valuation
- considerations such as associate buyouts, participation in managed care and dentist-owned real estate
- preparing for the sale and using advisors
- legal and tax issues of valuations

Put the ADA's expertise to work for your practice today. View the complete table of contents for "Valuing a Practice" online. It also comes as an e-Book, available for immediate download with no shipping charges.

### **Find Out More**

Order: [ADA Product Catalog](#)  or call 800-947-4746, item numbers: Book J060, e-Book J060D (To find easily, enter the title in the Search area), prices: ADA members \$49.95, nonmembers \$74.95

## What do you think?

**Question: What processes or steps are you currently using in your practice to prevent embezzlement?**

### [Respond Now](#)

#### **Responses to Last Issue's Question:**

Do you feel intellectually stimulated inside and outside the office? Share some of the ways you stay intellectually stimulated.

- I went back to school and got a Masters in Medical Humanities, which combines study of literature and medical ethics.
- I do feel very intellectually stimulated. I attend many CECs as well as 2 monthly study clubs. Minnesota Dental Association committees and boards are a big part of my learning and passion for our profession. I meet with specialists on my challenging cases regularly. I attend medical CECs with my husband's medical manufacturing companies. He and I also belong to YPO (Young President's Association) which has amazing speakers. I love to learn and will hang my hat up with dentistry when I am not learning. I also enjoy my children's career and college class conversations. Other passions are raising standard poodles, gardening and needle point.
- No, I have been taking a two-year CDE program at the University of Florida (three days per month on site) in an attempt to maintain my interest, but the state of our profession has pretty much guaranteed that, after 25 years of practice, I will change careers within the next two years.
- Playing a musical instrument (clarinet), woodworking, writing letters of some length and Harper's magazine cryptic puzzles
- Reading western novels, working with horses, planning and executing elk hunts to Wyoming, studying Spanish and music (banjo)
- I have conversations with people I think are 'smarter' than me and discuss everything from politics to religion.
- Inside the office, I love the constant challenges that each patient brings to my practice, whether it's a complicated molar endo, an undiagnosed pain problem or relationship and communication issues. The variety seems endless. Outside the office, I am always reading books, taking some sort of class, or learning skills that will help me in my personal AND professional life. The only problem is there's not enough time to enjoy it ALL!!!
- Strange you should ask! We just did a one hour television show on San Diego's ITV, on 'Adult Orthodontics.' This was sponsored by the San Diego County Dental Society, but it sure kept us intellectually stimulated!
- I think that too many dentists are full of bologna when it comes to being personally stimulated in the practice of dentistry. There is too much emphasis put on MONEY and PRACTICE SIZE and PATIENT LOAD and SUPER MODERN EQUIPMENT, etc. Not enough emphasis is placed on enjoying one's self and one's practice. The dental practice is not the end. It is the means to an end. It pays for all of your family activities, all your leisure time and all your toys. A dentist who addresses only his profit margin in the office has already lost the race. The race that I refer to is, who had the most fun and enjoyed life to the fullest. Personally I enjoy boating and fishing as a relaxing hobby. I also do extensive travel and mission work. I have set up many dental clinics, both stationary and mobile, in several

different countries. This brings me great pleasure. I suggest that dentists begin looking more outside of their offices for stimulation and relaxation. The most joy that one will ever receive is through his extended hand filled with help for one less fortunate than himself. Mix it up. Enjoy life. All the other stuff will come.

- Yes!! My patients lead infinitely varied lives and have a lot of interesting perspectives on a wide variety of subjects. There is always something new in our profession; I go to CE and read journals. Outside the office, my children are getting their education and I learn a lot from them. I am a musician and belong to two musical groups. I also read a lot; right now I'm reading C.S. Lewis' religious writings and also Joseph Ellis Founding Brothers. I have a horse and take riding lessons; you'd be amazed how much a horse can teach you about patience, forbearance, courage and self-sacrifice.
- Get involved in civic activities of your community. If you feel stifled and unchallenged in private practice consider leaving it for a public health position. It is a very rewarding experience. Increase your curiosity about everything. Set quality goals rather than financial goals. Make sure that every day you feel a sense of contribution to society, rather than just yourself.
- Yes. I set a goal to look up things that I am not certain of (e.g., spelling of a word; a fact of a process). I do this at work and at home. I have learned so many interesting things. I have been able to discuss a wide range of these topics with my patients. It has been very rewarding.
- By being a constant student, CE in dentistry, learning a new language with lessons every Monday and travel
- Outside the office: I read articles and magazines not having to do with dentistry (I read plenty of those, too). Examples: Discover magazine, Scientific American, U.S. News, Outside, Backpacker, editorial and op-ed pages. I also listen to NPR radio shows on Saturday/Sunday afternoons in the car: Commonwealth Club/Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me/This American Life/and, yes, Click and Clack. Inside the office: getting ready to install chairside computers and digital xray.
- By teaching a Senior Citizen's Bible Study - these people have been reading/studying their Bibles for 50+ years - so I have to be on my toes! Also, by serving in the Gideons - presenting programs in area camps, and speaking in various churches. Finally, by presenting a weekly radio program where I discuss various dental services and answer call-in questions.
- Being faculty at the dental school
- At home courses
- Join a service organization such as Rotary for outside the office friendship and worthwhile learning with other men and women. Or Join a toastmasters group. St. Paul has had one for 52 years of continuous weekly meetings. Meet colleagues for lunch when the office is slow or on a regular basis.
- Whew!! I am retired now for over five years and am working harder (physically and mentally) and continue to enjoy life and family. I thank God and the USA for allowing me to pursue a great career and exciting work in many and various places. If I were having any more fun I could not stand it!! I do wish that I had been more careful physically so that my shoulders, back and knee didn't hurt, however, IT WAS WORTH IT!!