

## Whack-a-Mole Dentistry: Banging out Solutions

By Ronald F. Arndt, DDS, MBA, MAGD

If you've been to an arcade or carnival in the last 20 years, you've probably played Whac-a-Mole. As your date stood patiently by your side, feigning interest in what would - at best - win her a greasy stuffed animal, you bashed the plastic mole heads as soon as they popped out of their burrows, only to see them resurface again and again until your time ran out.

It's an addictive game, because you can't help but think that if you just keep whacking – in the right sequence, or with the right amount of force, the moles will go back to their holes and stay there. You never have quite enough time to figure out the pattern before the time runs out, so you play over and over again until your arm gets tired (or you notice that your date has wandered off with the guy who can ring the bell at the top of that big hammer game).

You'd like to think of this as a kid's game, one whose allure fades as adulthood and the cares of the real world take over. You're too old for games, you tell yourself – you spend your time making money, not wasting it; generating results, not handfuls of useless paper tickets or musty teddy bears. Whacking moles has its place, but certainly not in the life of a busy dentist, right? Those of us in the dental field pride ourselves on being logical and methodical, and certainly on being smarter than a silly arcade game. Well, try as I might, I never quite escaped that Whac-a-Mole game, not even at my dental office. I often found myself playing it on a much bigger scale and risking much more than a second date.

What am I talking about? Did I install an arcade game in the middle of my reception room? No, although reinventing the game as "Whack-a-Molar" has crossed my mind. The game I was playing was with the big issues I faced as a dentist and business owner – staffing problems, patient problems, money problems. One by one, they surfaced, and one by one, I reacted. Just when I thought I'd buried them, they'd come up again, and rather than invest some time and thought into a new strategy, I just did what I had done before – push them out of sight so I could move on to the next crisis.

What I want to do for you is put an end to your Whack-a-Mole game once and for all. You can resolve the issues that plague your office and keep them away forever; all it takes is a commitment to recognizing and eliminating the attitudes and behaviors that cause them. Most of my clients struggle with the same problems that I faced as a dentist, and most of them have come to me for help because what they're doing to fix those problems isn't working. After thirty-five years as a dentist and businessman, I've finally figured out what

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drives a successful dental practice, and I don't want you to have to whack as many moles as I have to get that insight. This "Whack-a-Mole Dentistry" series will give you simple, straightforward advice for overcoming these common challenges once and for all:

- Recruiting - not attracting the right candidates
- Interviewing - not hiring the right person for the right job
- Retention - not keeping your staff happy
- Cancellations - not being able to keep a full schedule
- Patient loyalty - not being able to keep loyal patients
- Patient feedback - not liking (or not knowing) what your patients think of you
- Finances - not growing or understanding your profits like you know you should
- Balance - not being able to find a balance between your personal and professional lives

If you think back on your career, how many times have you addressed these issues? Have you been able to immediately figure out what went wrong and fix it? Or, do you feel like these problems keep recurring and no matter what you try, it's impossible to maintain good results? I know how you feel, and I know how ineffective you can become as a doctor when you're constantly worried about your business.

Together, we can take your practice from stagnation to dramatic growth and prosperity, and you can retire your mole-whacking mallet for good. Keep watching for more articles in this series, and remember, ***"None of us is as smart as all of us."***