

# Teenagers: Why You Might Consider Dentistry As A Career

Sadly, the summer is over, and it's time to return to school. There are a lot of things to consider and plan for: classes to choose, fashion selections, extracurricular activities, and what career possibilities to begin considering—because what you do in high school does have an impact on your career choice options.



Here's some food for thought: Have you ever thought of a career in dentistry? It's profitable. It's recession proof. And it can change the lives of people you treat.

Today, dentistry offers many exciting opportunities such as private practice, hospital setting, teaching dentistry, or dental research. The military offers the luxury of traveling the world and helping others with their dental health.

Intrigued? Click [here](#) for more details from the ADA about dentistry as a career. And Charlotte Dentistry® welcomes questions about our profession from young people (and their parents). Make a list and bring in with your next checkup. We'll be glad to provide answers.

Or you can visit the "[Ask the Expert](#)" page on our website to get answers. We'll also be doing more blogs about this topic in the future, so stay tuned!

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# Charlotte Dentistry: Continuing To Go Green

*As a part of our ongoing process, [Charlotte Dentistry®](#) continues to look for ways to make our business greener and more sustainable. We look for ways to better care for our world, we're not just caring for our patients' teeth – we're caring and preparing for the generations to come.*

In looking for ways to better care for our patients' and our staff, we find new "greener" technology to help us along the way.



Here's an example: We put procedures in place to protect our patients from germs and bacteria by using steam heat to clean dental instruments. This process has been around for years but businesses were not readily using the process due to the expense. We purchased a huge autoclave to ensure that instruments were thoroughly clean for the next patient.

The instruments for most prevalent dental procedures are placed in individual cassettes and cleaned in the giant autoclave. The cassettes also contain gauze and other materials that might be needed for the procedure so everything is sterilized together. Each cassette is wrapped in paper and sterilized for the next use. The steam cleaning is much more economical and efficient for cleaning the instruments as well as much better for the environment. This process also does not

expose our staff or patients' to harmful chemicals.

When your dental hygienist or dental assistant provides the wrapped cassette of instruments for your next dental procedure, you can be assured that it has been prepared especially for you!

Charlotte Dentistry is always looking for ways to make our business, greener, more sustainable and more efficient for our patients' and our staff. We invite you to follow our "green" journey in the next few blogs. If you have questions or suggestions, visit us at "[Ask the Expert](#)".

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## Seeing Your Practice Through Your Patient's Eyes

There's an old Native American saying about not judging a man until you've walked a mile in his moccasins. It's also wise not to make assumptions about your business until you see your practice through your patients' eyes.



That's actually easier said than done. You can ask your patients their opinions about how you're doing, but you may not always get accurate information. Why? Because patients may not tell you exactly what they think, even if they have a concern or complaint. They're more likely to try to maintain a good relationship with you. So they try to be helpful and tell you what they think you WANT to hear, rather than what you need to hear.

So sometimes you have to be indirect if you want to get the whole story about patient perceptions. You have to look for situations where your patients are communicating with you about other things, but where they're giving you accurate information about your practice.

The classic example of indirection is when a survey leader asked women to comment on a perfume sample. In exchange for their input, they could pick a scarf as a gift from a collection on a nearby table.

The survey leader got excellent information—about scarves. The women were telling him what they thought he wanted to hear about the perfume, but since the scarf was a personal choice, they were going to exactly the item they wanted.

So how do you go—indirectly—about getting a true feel about what patients think about your practice? One step is to hire an outside service to survey your patients. The patients think the research firm is conducting the survey, not you, so they are more forthcoming with information. Set up a questionnaire that asks about your practice, along with other dentists or other professional services that patients may be familiar with. Don't ask yes or no questions—instead, ask questions where they rate your service, location, staff, and other factors based on a one to five scale. Have the firm conduct the survey, either by telephone or mail, and look at the results.

In addition, have the survey ask this question (again on the one to five scale): How likely would you be to recommend this dentist to a friend or relative?

This is considered the most important question in surveying. The people who would recommend you to a friend or relative are active promoters of your business. The more people who do so, the higher your net promoter score and the more likely your business is to succeed.

There are some other ways you can get a feel for what patients think of your practice. Look at services like Angie's List or Yelp to see what people have been saying. Keep in mind that often, people who are unhappy are more likely to use these services. But make note of everything, and see if you can find a correlation between comments and problems that might be occurring.

Also look at your practice records and see if there are any patterns regarding problem areas within the practice. If you've been having a lot of insurance claim issues, for example, this may be affecting how your patients see your practice.

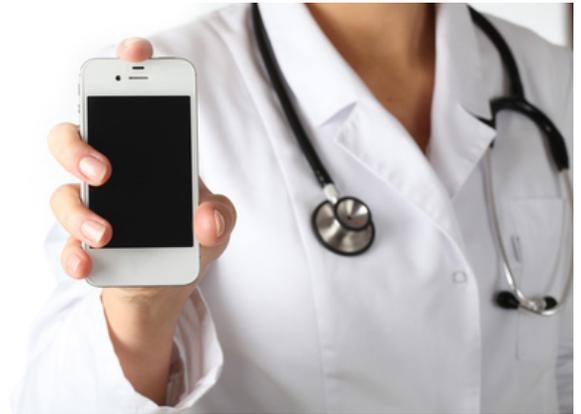
It never hurts to ask patients directly for their thoughts. But often, you don't get the information you need. By using resources such as online forums and customer surveys like Demand Force, you can get information you need to improve your practice.

Have thoughts you'd like to share? Use the "[Ask the Expert](#)" feature on our website.

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**Want More Patients? Go Mobile!**

Your website is one of your most important new business tools. The majority of new patients will visit your website before they make contact with you.



And many of them will be using their smartphones or tablets to get their first look at your practice. In fact, more people every day are relying on phones and tablets than computers to view the internet.

How many? Consider these statistics:

- More than 50% of U.S. cellular phone customers are now smartphone users—56% as of May 2013. Research shows that U.S. users crossed the 50% threshold in 2012, jumping 11 percentage points in a single year. That number continues to grow.
- The percentage of tablet users also continues to climb. Thirty-four percent of American adults now own a tablet computer.
- In the first quarter of 2013, conversion rates (people who bought something over the internet) for tablets exceeded desktop computers for the first time.

Are you prepared?

The first consideration is to make sure that your website is visible to mobile users. Many current websites can be seen on phones and tablets, but they may not be optimized for viewing on what are typically smaller screens. If your website includes Flash movies, you may want to consider changing the Flash content to something else—many mobile users won't be able to see it.

Most web developers today will present you with layout views of your website for computer viewing, tablet viewing, and phone viewing. And many website templates created for content management systems such as WordPress have layouts for all three platforms configured it—the view automatically changes depending on the device. This makes viewing simple and efficient.

In addition to optimizing your website, you may want to consider a mobile application as well. An app is critical content that has been designed for ideal smartphone and tablet viewing. It operates faster, and because it is downloaded to your patient or prospect's device, it's carried with them all the time. Depending on the app and the user preference, you may be able to send periodical updates or reminders to keep in contact with patients.

What kinds of content appeal to mobile users? Things that are practical and social appeal most to users. Your website/app should focus on utilities (the ability to schedule an appointment or deal with an emergency) and also provide ways for the user to interact with your practice and others who use your practice. Comments from patients that a user can read are important. So are connections to any social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that you may have. It's also good to include links to professional information about dentists and staff, and links to dental health information.

Keep content shorter and more concise if you're developing an app, or write website content so it breaks into shorter pieces that are easier to read on a small screen. This helps keep your reader engaged.

And provide the opportunity for the reader to sign up for special offers, if possible. This gives you a reason for contacting individuals as well as their reaching out to you.

If you have a need, use the "[Ask the Expert](#)" feature on our

website.

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# Become A Leader For Your Dental Practice

There are good managers and then there are good leaders. These are two different things. As the owner of a practice, it's more important for you to focus on being a good leader. You can hire good managers but it's very difficult for anyone other than the owner to become a good leader.



Don't think that you have to be "born" a leader—that happens sometimes, but most good leaders are people who have worked hard to earn the respect that a leader must have. Becoming a leader for your dental practice is something that you can do too. Even if you may not feel comfortable with the role, over time working with your staff, it becomes a part of you.

It's critical to your business. Everyone in your practice ultimately looks to you for guidance. That doesn't mean you have to come up with all the ideas (in fact, it's better if you don't), but it does mean that you have to be behind the ones that will be used to move your practice forward.

Here are some important characteristics of leadership that you can use to help build your leadership skills:

**Take ownership of your practice's performance.** You are ultimately responsible to your people (and your bank) for how

well your practice does. Be aware of how the actions of everyone in your practice can contribute to its success or failure. Be prepared to handle the consequences of not making changes that point you toward success.

**Be accountable.** That may be to yourself, to your stockholders, or to your family, but know that you must regularly report to someone and explain your actions. Even if you need to use a friend or professional colleague as a sounding board, accountability helps you stay on track towards better performance.

**Never stop learning.** Our profession is changing faster than it ever has, so learning about new techniques and products is critical to your success. Look for things that make you uncomfortable and figure out why. This is how you keep yourself—and your practice—fresh.

**Accept change.** Change is the only thing that never stops. When a practice doesn't understand how to embrace change and adapt, they stagnate, resulting in patients going elsewhere. Be looking at how your practice will be different in five years, two years, or two weeks, and work on getting better at making adaptations.

**Apply new ideas.** Many practices stay abreast of new concepts and techniques, but they are still hesitant to apply them. "New" may mean new dental procedures, but "new" can also mean new office equipment, new ways of advertising, or new customer service. Keep investigating what might be better.

**Keep at it.** Most successful people know that for every success, they have to weather a few failures. Those who take a punch and keep going are the ultimate winners.

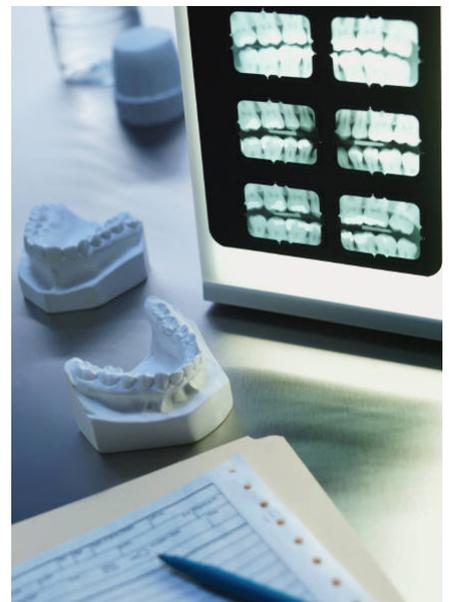
**Bring others with you.** David Ogilvy, the advertising great, said "hire people bigger than you, and you become a company of giants." Never hesitate to encourage your staff to explore big ideas, and give them credit when they do.

. A positive attitude makes everything easier, and you're in a business that can be tremendous fun—you're helping people take care of their health. Never forget to enjoy that privilege.

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## **In-House Or Outside? Your Practice's Approach To Dental Labs**

When you start your practice, unless you have much-better-than-average funding, you'll most likely outsource dental lab work. And there are plenty of well-qualified dental labs around the country whose job it is to make things easy for dentists.



But, as your practice grows, you may want to think about establishing your own in-house dental lab. There are a number of reasons for this.

The first (and perhaps most important) is patient service. An in-house lab focuses just on your practice's patients, not those of dozens or hundreds of dentists. As such, your lab

will be more responsive in terms of turnaround time and in terms of being able to make adjustments to crowns and other [prosthetics](#) that ensure better fit and better patient satisfaction. You'll be able to better manage all aspects of patient care, and that always gives your practice a competitive edge.

Another key reason for considering an in-house lab is that it becomes a significant profit center for your practice. Consider the margins you currently make on prosthetics, which can be an important part of your profitability. Then consider how much additional margin you could make if you were operating your own lab. It can change your financials considerably. It also gives you the ability to be more flexible in your pricing should you find yourself in a more competitive marketplace.

However, to operate your own lab, you'll need to invest in equipment, space, staffing and training and this can be substantial. Once you make your lab investment, it may take quite a bit of time before you start to see return.

But—if your practice is generating the volume of prosthetic business that would warrant investing in an in-house lab, it can be a very smart choice. Charlotte Dentistry operates its own in-house lab, and it is an important part of our business.

Would you like to know more? Ask questions using the "[Ask the Expert](#)" feature on our website, and our professional staff will respond.

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# Why Your Hygiene Recall System Is Critical To Your Bottom Line

Getting new patients is an important part of any practice. But it is much more cost effective to keep your current patients—and make sure they come back for regularly scheduled appointments.

That's why your Hygiene Recall System is an area of your business that needs continuing attention. If you can get your current patients back again every six months for a checkup and cleaning, you not only give them better care, but you create opportunities to provide additional services—both in fixing problems and in offering cosmetic improvements.



Ideally, every patient who comes in for a hygiene appointment should not leave without your staff making his or her NEXT appointment. This is key, and it's a practice that many offices can improve upon with just a little work.

Many practices have hygiene recall software in place that make it relatively simple to schedule future appointments and send patients prompts to remind them. Yet in some offices, the software goes unused, either because of its complexity or lack of training. This is a serious problem. Insist your staff use your system properly, and if an employee struggles with it, provide guidance to correct the problem.

An often-overlooked area that can improve appointment setting is the language employees use to interact with patients.

“Recall” is an industry term—it means nothing top patients, or (worse) it implies that something has gone wrong. Referring to the process in more patient-friendly terms, such as “preventative care” or “continuous care” is more beneficial.

As is working on the assumption that the next appointment is a foregone conclusion. Instead of asking the patient “when would you like your next appointment,” which opens the door for procrastination, the proper continuous care program would instead have your staff member say “Your 6 months continuous care appointment is due June 1. Would Monday morning or Wednesday afternoon work better?”

Your patient walks out with the next appointment. That’s a win for both of you.

In a future blog, we’ll look at how your recall system helps ensure patients keep this appointment. Would you like to know more? Use the [“Ask the Expert”](#) feature on our website.

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## Excellent Customer Service Is A Team Effort

Giving your patients excellent customer service as well as a positive experience from the moment they enter your office, until they leave, requires the right attitude. But it also requires planning and coordination—like any team sport. If one member of your staff slips up, it kills the experience for the patient, and everyone else’s work is for naught.



Most failures in customer service are accidental; after all, no one wants for a patient to have a bad experience. But it's important for everyone in the office—from dentists to receptionists—to know that every staff member has to contribute. And that like any good team, that means stepping up to take a little extra responsibility from time to time.

For a dental assistant, this might mean spending a few extra moments with a patient after dentist leaves to work with another patient, to avoid the first patient feeling as if the dentist was being too abrupt. Answering the patient's questions, or just explaining that the office is exceptionally busy and that you want to avoid having other patients wait can be the extra bit of teamwork that keeps things positive.

Or for office staff, stepping in if you see that another employee too much going on and lending a hand keeps patients happy—and also keeps the team in a good mood. Even a quick heads up to a staffer that a patient might be getting restless can avoid a conflict that's unnecessary.

Role-playing practice with potential problem scenarios among staff members is a good idea to help everyone learn how to counteract issues before having to deal with them when it involves real patients. And if there ever is a patient problem, make sure you record it and review what caused it so that it can be avoided in the future.

If everyone in the office is aware of his or her role (and responsibility) in customer service, then everyone knows there's never a situation where it's acceptable to say, "it's not my job." These 10 commandments of great customer service may be helpful to your staff. "[10 Commandments of Customer Service](#)"

Learn more about good customer service by using the "[Ask the Expert](#)" feature on our website.

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# Expanding Your Practice To Include Invisalign®

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Invisalign	Braces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear aligners are virtually invisible</li><li>• Smooth comfortable plastic aligners</li><li>• Aligners are removeable for easy cleaning</li><li>• Eat whatever you want</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires brackets and wires</li><li>• Wires can poke and irritate mouth</li><li>• Brushing and flossing require more effort</li><li>• Many food restrictions</li></ul>

**gn**® is a product that continues to grow in popularity as an alternative to metal braces. Celebrities of all ages are using Invisalign trays to correct their smiles, and the negative stories about metal braces over the years make many patients hesitant about them. So Invisalign offers a unique alternative.

Would Invisalign be right for your practice?

The answer is certainly **“yes,”** with the right preparation and understanding of the product. Invisalign can be a very strong profit center, but taking on the product requires an investment in resources and time to make sure you do it right.

The first thing to remember with Invisalign is that you’re not alone—more and more practices are adding Invisalign, which creates a very competitive marketplace. Another consideration is experience in traditional orthodontics (metal braces). Offering both procedures is extremely beneficial to a practice. Many patients assume that traditional orthodontics (braces) is their only option. Selecting a dental provider who has both braces and Invisalign experience could be the best

decision.

There are also equipment investment considerations. Scanners for digital impressions can provide exceptional accuracy for Invisalign, and give your patients better experiences. This equipment can also save time and resources when incorporated in other areas of your practice.

Since 2007, Charlotte Dentistry has held a unique distinction among practices offering Invisalign and [Invisalign Teen](#)<sup>®</sup>—designated an Invisalign Elite Preferred Provider. In 2012, Charlotte Dentistry<sup>®</sup> is ranked among the **Top 1%** of All providers in North America—the **only** office in the Carolinas to earn this ranking.

If you're considering adding Invisalign, research your market thoroughly. And consider contacting Charlotte Dentistry for extra information before making your decision.

Would you like to know more, simply use the "[Ask The Expert](#)" feature on our website.

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## **Determining Time Required To Perform Different Dental Procedures**

It doesn't take long for you to find a variety of resources that have recommended time allotments for different dental procedures. Insurance companies especially are willing to provide you with the time they believe it takes for you to do your work.



But to properly manage your practice, it's important that you keep track of your own time and look closely at how long it takes you and your staff to perform different procedures. This can have a tremendous impact on your bottom line.

For example, if the industry average for a procedure is one hour, and it takes your practice an hour and a half, you're probably not getting paid for that extra time. Or, if you are, you may be creating a competitive disadvantage for yourself if you're charging more for a procedure than patients would pay at one of your competitors. Conversely, if it takes you less time to perform a procedure than the industry average, you may be creating an advantage for yourself.

How do you know? Here are some guidelines:

1. Keep detailed records. Time keeping tells part of the story, but if you spend a couple of weeks making sure you add extra details (like amount of prep time, time for the procedure itself, and any additional time you spent), you could get a clearer picture.
2. If you're slower than the average, figure out why. Are you talking to patients too much? Is your staff slowing you down? Can you change a step in the procedure to gain the time back?
3. What's comfortable for you? You can always find ways to go faster, but are you maintaining patient comfort and

quality? Do you feel good about the work, or do you feel rushed? There's a balance.

Continually analyze your time records, and compare them with industry research. It's an ongoing process. However, done properly, it can make a big difference in your profitability.

Visit "[Ask The Expert](#)" for suggestions to improve performance and profitability.