



Get Paid On Time

Six Secrets for Working with Insurance
Companies and Patients



About the author

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What Profitable Dental Practices Know

Does your team spend too much time talking to insurance companies? More than an hour each day? Does your practice send more than 100 insurance claims and patient statements each month? Would you like more of your patients to pay on time? If you answered “yes” to any of the above, this eBook is for you.

Profitable dental practices know how to work with insurance companies and patients to get paid on time.

Getting paid on time increases your production because your team isn't spending time on collections calls or insurance claims. It also increases your practice's cash flow and profits. Sound good? Then use the secrets in this eBook—gathered from 20+ years of dental practice experience—to learn what profitable practices already know.





Secret 1:

Build Once, Use Many

Set up a fee schedule (or use the insurance management system in your dental software) for common dental procedures. Include your usual fee and the usual insurance coverage for each procedure.

This allows you to quickly estimate your patients' portion of the payment and **set accurate expectations** about the insurance portion of the bill.

If you have a major employer in your area for example, a manufacturing plant, company headquarters, large school district, university or military base—**group your patients by employer**. This allows you to update insurance information for the entire group, rather than individual patients, saving hours of time.

Grouping patients by insurance plan allows you to **make fee updates and apply them to the whole group**, again saving you from individually updating patient records.

An insurance management system can verify the insurance eligibility of your patients in real time, before a procedure is performed. It can also **automatically collect insurance eligibilities in advance** for an entire day's worth of appointments.

Knowing your patients' insurance status at the time of service can **improve their acceptance of treatment plans**. This also helps fill your schedule.

Tip\$

Review Your Practice Fee Schedule Semiannually

Evaluate your fee schedule twice a year to ensure your fees are comparable to dental practices in your area.

Try these resources:

- Dental Economics
www.dentaleconomics.com
- National Dental Advisory Service
<http://ndas.com>
- Udell Webb Leadership
<http://webbdental.com>
- UCR Dental Fees Report
www.dentalfees.com
- Fee schedules built into Easy Dental software www.easydental.com

To make sure you're being reimbursed fairly, update your fee schedule as often as the insurance companies update their coverage tables.

Adjusting your fees more than once a year allows you to raise fees gradually, making them easier for patients to accept.



Secret 2:

Go Paperless

File insurance claims electronically. Using an electronic claims service can cut weeks off the time you wait for insurance payments.

Paper claims sent by standard mail take from 3 to 6 weeks for insurance companies to process. **Electronic claims take 3 to 10 days** to process.

Your practice management software can **prefill electronic claim forms**. With one mouse click, you can bring up a claim form for all of a patient's procedures for the day. The software automatically includes all the pertinent information for that patient's claim.

Electronic claims are not only faster, they're also safer. You can attach electronic versions of X-rays, charts and photos instead of the actual hard copies. **No documents get lost** in the mail.

Going paperless saves you money on paper, envelopes and postage. It also saves the time of sorting, stuffing and addressing the envelopes. You can **send your electronic claims with a few mouse clicks**.

Here's another reason to go paperless: Today, **many insurance companies are demanding electronic claims**. It saves them money, too.

Tip\$

Track Your Electronic Claims for Free

Paper claims are basically untrackable. The only way to track a paper claim is to send it by certified mail and require a return receipt.

If your office sends 150 separate claims per month, you're paying almost \$1,000 a month in certified mail postage costs.

Henry Schein eClaims for Easy Dental gets claims to the insurance company sooner than paper claims and costs nothing to track.

The Insurance Manager feature in Easy Dental tracks eClaims and attachments in real time. You can see the status of each claim in process at any given time.



Secret 3:

Check the List

Give insurance providers all the data they need to process your claims. Follow a checklist to **make sure your claims are complete** and won't be rejected.

Here's an example of an **insurance checklist**:

- ✓ Fee schedules
- ✓ Employer information
- ✓ Insurance data updated
- ✓ Coverage tables
- ✓ Payments itemized by procedure
- ✓ Deductible applied to claim payment
- ✓ Treatment plan fees updated
- ✓ Administrative Contact Information
- ✓ Required Attachments, X-rays, Images, and charts

Though your practice management software may prefill your claim forms, it's worth the time to **go through the checklist before submitting your claims**.

Faster claim submissions and **fewer claim rejections** yield **faster results** from insurance companies.

Tip\$

Simplify the Claims Process

Easy Dental saves you time and money by simplifying your claims process.

With eClaims, you can create a claim, validate it and send it electronically—all from within your Easy Dental software.

Using eClaims reduces the number of rejected claims by verifying that all the necessary components are included with your claims. Everything you need to complete a claim, including digital X-rays, perio charts and photographs, can be attached in Easy Dental.



Secret 4:

Time It Right

To **improve your accounts receivable success**, send statements and make collection calls strategically. Use this proven collections strategy with your patients:

1. **Send three statements** approximately two weeks apart.
 - If Day 1 is the day your practice receives payment from the insurance company, send the first statement for the patient's balance on Day 1 (**due on Day 15**).
 - Send the second-notice statement on Day 15 (**due on Day 30**).
 - Send the final-notice statement on Day 30 (**due on Day 45**). Clearly state in the final notice that the balance will be delinquent after Day 45.
2. If the patient hasn't paid the balance in 45 days, **give them a courtesy collection call**.
3. If the collection call fails to get results, **submit the account to a collections agency**.

This strategy gives your patients more than six weeks to pay their balances—a more generous timeframe than their usual monthly bills.

Tip\$

Follow Up on Past-Due Accounts Your Way

The Collections Manager in Easy Dental lets you generate a report that lists overdue accounts based on the criteria you specify.

You can list accounts by:

- Billing type
- Balance due
- Insurance claim aging
- Last payment date
- Number of payments missed
- Number of days past due

After the Collections Manager report is generated, you can select an account name and initiate a letter, email message or phone call with a single mouse click.



Secret 5:

Make the Call

The courtesy collection call on Day 45 is easier to make—and gets better results—if you **follow a call script**.

Modify this collection call scenario to fit your practice.

1. **Offer your help.**

“Hi, I’m Cindy from Dr. Kessler’s office calling in reference to your overdue balance. This is a courtesy call, and I’m here to help...”

2. **Pause** and silently count to five. If the patient doesn’t offer a payment, say:

“I wanted to let you know our accountant is coming in next week and he will be turning our overdue accounts over to collections. I wanted to make sure you were not turned over to the collections agency.”

3. **Ask when**—not if—the patient will pay. Tell them you need the account to be paid in full this week. (It’s Week 7 by now.)

“If you’d like, I can take your credit card payment over the phone. We accept all major credit cards, tell me when you’re ready with the number.”

-If they can’t pay at the moment-

“When this week could you take care of your balance?”

4. **Pause again.** Wait for the patient to respond.

Usually five seconds of dead air does the trick. If they say they can’t pay you this week, tell them:

“I am so sorry to hear that. It will be out of my hands next week. If there is any way you can take care of this before next week, your account will be up to date in our office. Thank you for your time.”

Tip\$

In a Collection Call, Silence Is Golden

A pause is the most powerful tool you can use in a collection call. It’s human nature to fill the silence in a conversation.

When you call your patients about a past due balance, use the pause to your advantage. Let them fill the awkward silence.

Don’t give the patient an excuse or a way out by breaking the silence first.

Chances are they’ll offer you a payment during the pause—before you even ask for it.



Secret 6:

Maximize Cash Flow

To ensure a consistent cash flow in your practice, **fill your production schedule**. Improving the scheduling process fills the gaps while you wait for payment from insurance companies and patients.

To fill any holes in your schedule, use your practice management software to **create three go-to lists** for potential appointments:

1. **ASAP list.** Maintain a list of patients who want an appointment “as soon as possible” and call them first when a time opens up in your schedule.
2. **Unscheduled list.** Track appointment no-shows and cancellations. To get them scheduled again.
3. **Procedure list.** Fill open time slots with patients who need the same procedure as the cancellation or schedule opening was coded.

Keep your office busy to keep the money flowing in. A busy office is a happy office. As production increases, so will your bottom line. Having consistent systems and processes in place will assist in keeping your operatories full and your patients happy.

Tip\$

Use the Treatment Manager to Fill Gaps

The Treatment Manager in Easy Dental can help you fill gaps in your schedule.

Search for active patients who have:

- Unscheduled procedures in their treatment plan.
- Remaining insurance benefits over \$100 that need to be used before end of year.
- Not scheduled a hygiene appointment in the last six months.

From the search results you can easily contact patients by email or phone to offer them an appointment time.



The Simple Way to Practice Success

Practice management software can make it easier for your team to manage the collections process. It can also make it easier to communicate with insurance companies and patients.

Good dental software isn't enough, however. Getting paid on time requires an understanding of insurance processes plus the right approach to collecting from patients. Profitable practices know how to do both.

- **Work more successfully with insurance companies** by using a fee schedule or insurance management system, filing claims electronically and following an insurance checklist.
- **Work more successfully with customers** by sending statements strategically, following a call script and filling your production schedule.

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