

# The Value of Dental Assistants to the Dental Practice

Dental assistants are the largest segment of the dental workforce. This research sheds light on the many ways that dental assistants bring value to the dental practice — and to the entire dental industry. Read on to learn more!



The **DALE** Foundation®



# PRODUCTIVITY

## DENTAL ASSISTANTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE DENTAL PRACTICE.

Overwhelmingly, dentists and dental office managers agree that dental assistants contribute to the productivity of the dental practice. They say that dental assistants make an impact in many ways, such as allowing the dentist to move to the next patient more quickly and making all team members more effective. They also can help to relieve some of the pressures a dentist faces in practice.

### What dentists and dental office managers are saying . . .

**99%**

agree or strongly agree that an effective dental assistant contributes to practice productivity.

**98%**

agree or strongly agree that an effective dental assistant contributes to team synergy and makes all team members more effective.

**97%**

agree or strongly agree that an effective dental assistant allows the dentist to move to the next patient more quickly.

**86%**

agree or strongly agree that an effective dental assistant helps prevent dentist burnout.



“Our assistants give more support to the hygienist – which is big for production. We’re doing 25% more hygiene as a result.”

“I work much faster and more efficiently with four hands instead of two.”

# PROFITABILITY

## DENTAL ASSISTANTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROFITABILITY OF THE DENTAL PRACTICE.

Dental assistants contribute to the practice's profitability in many ways, according to dentists and dental office managers. They say that dental assistants can positively impact patient retention and treatment plan acceptance.

What dentists and dental office managers are saying . . .

**97%**

agree or strongly agree that an effective dental assistant contributes to patient retention.

**91%**

agree or strongly agree that an effective dental assistant makes it more likely that a patient will accept the dentist-recommended treatment plan.



“Patients can be stressed, so it helps to have the dental assistant talk to them and get them settled and comfortable before the doctor comes in. This is a big thing with patient retention.”

# INFECTION CONTROL

DENTAL ASSISTANTS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN KEEPING THE DENTAL PRACTICE SAFE.

Busy dental offices see hundreds or thousands of patients each year. Keeping those visits safe for everyone is essential. That's why infection prevention and control is of critical importance for the safety of patients and for the dental team members who serve them.

According to dentists and dental assistants ...



99%

say that sterilization and disinfection duties are delegated to dental assistants.

“I strongly believe as the infection control person, dental assistants **MUST** have proper education, not just on-the-job training.”

“Infection control is one of the most important aspect of the job. The safety of the public is at stake.”

# PURCHASING POWER

## DENTAL ASSISTANTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE PURCHASING DECISIONS OF THE PRACTICE.

Many dental assistants report feeling overlooked by sales reps who call on the dental office. Dental assistants also say that sales reps sometimes ignore them in the exhibit halls at dental meetings. This is unfortunate because a majority of dental assistants report that they play a role in the purchasing decisions of the dental practice. Dental sales reps should make sure to take the time to speak with dental assistants about the products and services they offer.

According to dental assistants ...



# 74%

of dental assistants are involved in recommending products.

# 72%

of dental assistants are involved in placing orders.

**DANB Certified Dental Assistant™ (CDA®) certificants are particularly influential.**

Dental assistants who hold DANB CDA certification were more likely to independently meet with sales reps, make recommendations for purchases, and place orders for some products and services.

**“I have a lot of buying influence in the practice. The doctor wants me to be knowledgeable about the products out there.”**

# TRAITS OF AN EFFECTIVE DENTAL ASSISTANT

BEING KNOWLEDGEABLE AND PROACTIVE IS  
IMPORTANT FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS.

Dental assistants are responsible for many areas within the dental practice and often wear a lot of hats. With broad roles like these, it may seem impossible to find a dental assistant who can do it all. However, dentists and dental office managers identified some of the most valuable traits of dental assistants.

According to dentists and dental office managers ...

99%

agreed or strongly agreed  
that an effective dental  
assistant anticipates the  
dentist's needs without the  
exchange of words.

96%

agreed or strongly agreed  
that an effective dental  
assistant does it right the  
first time.



**“The strongest dental assistants take ownership of their work and consider the well-being of the practice.”**

# MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES IN A DENTAL ASSISTANT

DENTAL ASSISTANTS SHOULD BE GOOD WITH PEOPLE AND EAGER TO LEARN.

The best dental assistants have a mix of the right emotional qualities, like being caring and cooperative, as well as being eager to learn and diligent in their work. Finding a dental assistant with this combination of qualities is the goal for many dental practices.

According to dentists and dental office managers ...



## TOP 5

### DENTAL ASSISTANT QUALITIES

1. Good patient care skills
2. Team player
3. Willing to learn
4. Takes ownership of work
5. Initiative

“Good patient care is about going beyond expectations, like bringing the patient a cup of coffee or a blanket.”

“Dental assistants must earn the trust and confidence of patients.”

# MAXIMIZING PERFORMANCE

DENTAL ASSISTANTS CAN BRING A GREAT DEAL OF VALUE TO THE DENTAL PRACTICE — IF THEY HAVE THE PROPER SUPPORT. TRAINING AND EDUCATION ARE KEY.

Dentists and dental office managers agree that dental assistants can bring tremendous value to the dental practice. Dental assistants contribute to practice productivity and profitability. They also play a critical role in infection control. However, it is important to remember that dental assistants need support and resources in the practice to maximize their contributions.

According to dentists and dental office managers ...

85%

agreed or strongly agreed that in their practice, dental assistants are cross-trained to do whatever is needed.

84%

agreed or strongly agreed that dental assistants should do everything the state allows them to do.



“We aim to have the dental assistants do everything possible.”

# THE IMPACT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

PROVIDING CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS HELPS THEM MAKE A BIGGER DIFFERENCE IN THE DENTAL PRACTICE.

A majority of dentists believe that continuing education (CE) benefits not only the dental assistant, but the profitability of the practice. Providing continuing education for the whole team, including dental assistants, helps the practice thrive.

According to dentists, dental hygienists and dental office managers ...



## 90%

agreed or strongly agreed that dental assistants who complete CE are more likely to contribute to the profitability of the practice.

## 89%

agreed or strongly agreed that CE is critical to maintaining the dental assistants' skills.

**“It’s highly important to continue to learn. Doctors need to make this investment if they want the practice to grow.”**

### About the Research

The Value of Dental Assistants to the Dental Practice survey was conducted in November 2016 by Association Laboratory, an independent research firm, on behalf of the DALE Foundation. Results from nearly 3,000 dentists, dental office managers, dental hygienists, and dental assistants underwent thorough statistical analysis and validation in 2017 and 2018 to identify trends and key takeaways. The Value of Dental Assistants to the Dental Practice research was generously sponsored by Benco Dental and Henry Schein.

