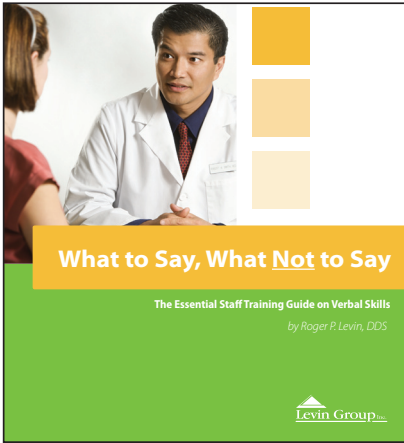


EXCERPT

From Dr. Levin's Book **What to Say, What Not to Say**



Your ability to communicate effectively will determine how influential and successful you become.



Roger P. Levin, DDS

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Welcome to the World of Verbal Communication

Communication affects every patient interaction in your office. Enhance your team's verbal skills with this critical how-to manual on practice communication from Dr. Roger P. Levin. Eliminate the miscues that can undermine superior care and great customer service. Turn every team member into an effective spokesperson for your practice.

Welcome to the world of verbal communication.

Superior verbal skills and communication play a large part in the growth of your practice. To achieve superior verbal skills, Levin Group Practices utilize hundreds of scripts for clear, effective communication in everyday situations. Practices experiencing exponential production growth know exactly how important verbal skills really are.

It would be no exaggeration to say that communication skills impact practice growth and can contribute to decline. Yet, dentists begin their professional careers with an extraordinary disadvantage. It's amazing to think that doctors receive an advanced education in dental school yet are rarely taught the most basic interpersonal skills that are absolutely essential for creating practice success throughout their careers. Without question, verbal skills are one of the most important success tools that an individual can develop. Whether you are speaking to one person or to an entire group, your ability to communicate effectively will determine how influential and successful you become.

The better you can communicate, the easier it is to achieve your goals. Communication plays a central role in every stage of our lives. If we wish to attend college, we have to go through an interview process to convince admissions people that they should accept us at that school. When we want to go out on our first date, we have to convince the other person to say, "Yes." When we want to become engaged, we have to ask the other person if he or she is willing to marry us. In each instance, effective communication can make the difference between failure and success.

All dental practices face a similar need to communicate effectively. But, there is a widespread problem. Most people believe that they are already excellent communicators. Consequently, they believe that if a listener does not understand or react appropriately, the problem is the listener's. This is not the case. Verbal skills do not come naturally to most people.

After working with so many practices through the years, I can tell you that it's no coincidence that all highly successful dentists have an excellent ability to communicate with their patients. However, it's not good enough for the dentist alone to be an excellent communicator. All members of the dental team must be equally well skilled.

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Every patient has multiple contacts with different individuals in the dental practice. Each of these contacts represents an opportunity to enhance the relationship with patients and add value to their overall dental practice experience.

Now we will examine a specific example of how the lack of verbal skills is detrimental to practice production. The goal here is to analyze the right and wrong ways to communicate verbally, and which verbal skills to apply to certain situations...

"That is impossible."

Nothing is impossible. To the patient, the word "impossible" means that you simply don't want to do something and you will not help. As far as the patient is concerned, everything is possible if you feel like it.

When a patient asks, "May I have an appointment on Tuesday" and your answer is, "That is impossible" then you are basically telling this person to go away.

You may know that you intend to help the patient with another option, but does your patient know that? Probably not. Based on your word choice, you have constructed a brick wall and directed the patient to run into it. The patient wants something and you just said it was impossible. Theoretically, it is not impossible since you could probably move the other patients or convince the doctor to come in on his or her day off. Admittedly, the second option isn't realistic for the practice but you can bet the patient is thinking it!

We have to manage patients, and somehow manage to always exceed their expectations. Telling someone that anything is impossible will not accomplish this goal. The key is to let the patient know what is possible.

If the patient asks for something that you cannot give, say to the patient, "It is possible for us to do that on Wednesday," or, "It is possible for us to structure a payment option," or, "It is possible for us to arrange patient financing," or, "It is possible to restore that area with one of three different options."

Focus on possibilities. Remember that you are a dental practice. When people come to your office, they really want their problem fixed. Patients expect the doctor and the staff to solve their problems and not tell them what is impossible.

What You Should Say:

Everything is possible. Instead of saying, "It is impossible," say, "It is possible that we could___."

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