

COVID-19 Update
Don't Sink the Lifeboat



Be careful. As you are moving forward in the reopening of your dental practice you are most likely experiencing Phase 1 of the Levin Group recovery timeline – pent-up demand. This is an opportunity to maximize production, recover a small portion of lost revenue, work out your recovery systems, acquire PPE and streamline your processes. Things may be chaotic but overall, you are probably feeling good that you were busy, back to work and productive.

The danger is that, being so busy, you may forget about the Phase 2. This is where the pent-up demand has been completed and most practices will note a *decrease in production*. This is also where some practices, that were not strong before the COVID-19 crisis, will start to panic. Panic is dangerous.

You are in a business turnaround. Business turnarounds have an academic science around how to do them successfully. Part of the science is understanding what kills a business. The most common action that will kill the business in a crisis or turnaround is making knee-jerk or “Hail Mary” decisions. When you enter panic mode you may go out and make a major investment that will allow you to theoretically expand your services and improve quality but actually does very little or nothing to help with the business turnaround. Or you may borrow large sums of money to fund the practice without taking the time to implement recovery systems, scripting and team training to make sure that funding yields the best return.

Many of us have seen this panic mode thinking before. We saw it in the 2008/2009 recession when practices raced to enroll in insurance plans without any forethought. What they didn't realize was once they enrolled it is very unlikely they would ever be able to successfully exit without losing massive numbers of patients. They effectively joined insurance plans AND reduced overall practice production. This is not a comment on whether insurance is good or bad or whether you should join a certain plan. It is a comment on knee-jerk reactions taken without giving proper thought or analysis.

If you find your practice in a lifeboat you don't want to sink it. You want to get the right advice and guidance from others who can help you. A good way to avoid entering panic mode is to create your Top 25 Advisors list. The concept behind this is list out the top 25 relationships of people who can help get you through your recovery. This accomplishes two important things. First, you will realize that you are not alone in this and that you do have people who are committed to helping you figure out the path. Second, it opens the communication channel between you and the folks who are critical to your recovery. Just the act of creating the list will lower your stress and provide focus.

When you're feeling challenged stop and take a breath. Then ask the two most important questions:

1. Will this decision help my recovery?
2. How quickly will this decision help my recovery?

These questions alone will help you to evaluate whether it makes sense to jump into a decision or not.

Stay safe and healthy
Dr. Roger Levin