

Embracing the new generation of millennial orthodontists

Expectations and values may differ, but the future is in good hands

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It is anticipated that by 2020, millennials will represent 46 percent of the workforce. In the orthodontic market, millennials make up 23 percent of practicing orthodontists in the United States.

While many practices are focused on how to adapt and market to the millennial mom, it is just as important for the industry to remember how to embrace the millennial orthodontist. It is imperative that we understand this new generation in order to recruit and retain for our practices.

How do we welcome this new generation into our practice? First, we need to understand this new workforce and identify what they want. Contrary to popular opinion, millennial doctors don't mind working hard, but they do place a high value on the work-life balance relationship. They like incentives, and they desire meaningful engagement in their careers.

We tend to characterize the baby-boomer generation as having a workaholic mentality, taking pride in working long hours at the practice. The millennials, however, strongly value "working to live" rather than "living to work." This does not mean they do not have a strong work ethic, but it does mean that they value their time and work efficiently through technology.

It is important to understand this generation's desire to have a life outside of work, which includes family time, hobbies and other interests. Be mindful that, for millennials, it's not just about work; if you value their time outside of the practice and take their work-life balance into consideration, they will value you and invest more of themselves while they are in the practice.

I recently watched the movie "Jerry McGuire" (again) and cracked up during the scene when Rod calls Jerry and says, "Show me the money!" Yes, unfortunately, it is true that the average orthodontic resident carries more than \$400,000 in student debt, so asking about money is at the top of their list. However, money is not the greatest factor in determining how these young orthodontists choose a practice.

While being paid a good salary is still very important, there are a number of other incentives practices should consider offering a candidate. Research in the physician model currently shows that Millennials prefer to be paid based on outcomes versus the number of days worked.

This generation is gravitating toward



Understanding millennial orthodontists is the first step to welcoming them into our practices. Photo/Provided by Bentson Clark & Copple

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a new shift in the compensation model based on case starts, production and patient satisfaction. They have a strong desire to be rewarded for their work through recognition and bonus structures.

This new generation of orthodontists is highly educated, diverse and team orientated, but most importantly, they are socially conscious. While it is true this new generation is not as eager to own a practice right out of residency, that doesn't mean they want to exist as money-making drones in a practice, seeing patient after patient without being able to stop and engage with each one. It is just as important for employers to help associates cultivate and build relationships with patients, staff and referring dentists as it is to help them generate revenue for the practice.

Many millennial dentists and specialists are opting to practice as associates or employees rather than directly entering into ownership in private practice because they don't want the headaches of managing a practice. They would prefer to focus on patient care at the beginning of their careers. However, that does not

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mean they do not want to learn leadership and management skills for future ownership opportunities. It is important to engage in training, continuing education and mentorship programs to help build their confidence and promote ownership skills for future opportunities.

The future of orthodontics is in good hands — millennials have a strong desire to make a difference and help others. We should embrace them instead of focusing on how their expectations and perceptions of the practice of orthodontics differ from our own. If we choose to acknowledge and respect their values, we will create a loyal and dedicated workforce for our future.

About the author



Shannon Patterson, CPR, CMSR, is the director of practice opportunities and an orthodontic placement specialist at Bentson Clark & Copple. She is a recruitment leader in the orthodontic industry, specializing in placement and retention by engaging a proactive recruitment strategy, helping to place candidates where they will be a successful fit, not only for the practice opportunity but also the community. She is also a Kolbe Certified™ Consultant and expert in the Kolbe suite of assessments for selection of the ideal candidate match, specializing in strength-based relationships for both doctors. She believes great clients deserve great candidates and great candidates deserve great opportunities.