FROM THE DESK OF GEORGE S. LEE, MD, DDS continued...

answering service, who will promptly contact the on-call physician. This number is (931) 552-3292. To keep the Doctor Line clear for emergencies only, we do ask that it not be used for staff members to schedule regular appointments or shared with patients for their personal use. All routine calls to schedule appointments, that are not emergent, will be directed to contact our primary office number for assistance. We want to keep this line dedicated to you, our valued professional colleagues.
Thank you again for the privilege of caring for your patients. It is a pleasure being a part of this professional community of dentists and we look forward to many more years of being of service.

Hire Smarter

5 Secrets of Checking References

by Paul Edwards[1]

As colleagues in dentistry, you are congenial. Someone needs advice on a difficult case, and you are happy to help. But call someone for a reference check on a potential new hire and suddenly your buddy down the street starts speaking in code, if he will say anything at all.

We employers have a serious quandary. We all want to know the "goods" on a new hire, but we're all gun shy to tell each other the truth when the next prospective employer calls. And for good reason. We have been wisely advised that we can be sued for saying something we shouldn't, and also for not saying something we should have said. To complicate our loyalties, we know if we discourage the hire, we may end up paying the person's unemployment benefits for up to a year or longer, or worse - in a lawsuit for telling our version of the truth. So, how do we take the pressure off our colleagues, get the goods and still hire smart?

Without a doubt, the easiest way to avoid a "problem" employee is to not hire them in the first place. But often the best of the manipulators/deceivers/embezzlers are also the best at interviewing. Trusting our gut with people gets harder and then harder again once you get burned by a lawsuit. And employers are getting burned by employee lawsuits more and more.[1] The level of risk now associated with making a bad hiring decision has exponentially increased over the past ten years. Plainly put, mistakes in hiring are costly.

We often field calls in our HR Solution Center that sound something like this:

> *"Look, I know I did this backwards, but I hired someone and now we have a problem. She seemed great in the interview, but after we hired her, we discovered [insert inappropriate/shocking/stupefying/scary behavior here]. So, I decided to call her references, and you are not going to believe what I found out…"*

You may be surprised how often this situation arises in dental offices. The doctor or manager failed to check the new employee's references or do a background check, only to discover she/he had been dismissed from multiple businesses for suspicious or inappropriate conduct, served time for embezzlement or fraud, is working under a suspended license, or has sued four out of five of their last employers.

The idea that you are too busy to check references is a myth you embrace that perpetuates the bad hire problem. You are busy. It's true. Business owners and managers often feel they don't have time to call each reference, or believe checking references is a waste of time. Okay, but how much time will it cost if you have to fire this person and start over? What about to defend a lawsuit or audit of your practice? Bad hires turn into disgruntled workers who can suck the life out of your production, even after you fire them. Moreover, the idea that high unemployment rates result in a larger and better pool of candidates is just not true. Many employers rely on this false sense of security or have too much faith in eager job seekers, and forego reference checks. In fact, there are more people to weed through, and more desperate workers doing more unscrupulous things to get jobs.

Before we get to the secrets of reference checks, a caution about background checks. I've been quick to warn you about the ramifications of conducting your own clandestine background checks. You must conduct background checks legally and with consent. Simply "Googling" someone's name, checking someone's Facebook page, or otherwise conducting your own unauthorized internet investigation may violate that person's rights, or land you in a discriminatory hiring lawsuit. There are strict federal laws, guidelines, and permissions that must be obtained in writing before you can check into someone's background. We highly recommend you hire a professional background check company to ensure you obtain the appropriate consent and comply with the myriad of state and federal laws.

But, wait, don't close your browser window just yet. Using the internet to verify specific information provided to you, if done with restraint and caution, is perfectly okay. Provided you're not pursuing confidential, sensitive information or obtaining credit information, you can use the internet to verify the information an applicant has provided to you. We'll talk more about this in our "secrets" below. Bottom line is that you must resist the temptation to conduct your own credit check or find the applicant on Facebook. This is a

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The Eight Biggest Drip Marketing Mistakes

by Colin Receveur[2]

One thing that I've noticed in my years of marketing is how often different practices using different forms of media all repeat exactly the same marketing messages.

"Our prices are the lowest in town!" "Our business has been running for X years!" "Our customer service is the best you'll ever experience!" You get the picture.

Creating an attention grabbing marketing message that will stand out from the crowd is a difficult task. It's a task that most people struggle with, but fortunately there are ways that you can improve your marketing message. Here are the top eight mistakes that dental practices make with their drip marketing. Avoid making these and be left with a great end result.

1. Creating a Bland Headline: Your headline or subject line is your first opportunity to catch the attention of your readers; make it powerful and filled with emotion so that your readers actually want to learn more.

2. Ignoring What Your Patients Need: What are the top three motivators for those people who will be reading your content? Do they need a customized solution on a budget? Are they interested in how much you charge? Make sure the theme of your campaign is focused on those things that motivate your prospective patients.

3. Making Your Copy All About You: Of course people want to know what you do, but only if it actually benefits them. Make sure your copy is all about your reader by recognizing who you are actually writing to. Count how many times you use words such as "I," "me," "our," and compare it to the amount of times you use the words "you" and "your." You should be using the latter set more to effectively attract a reader's attention.

4. Forgetting Your Marketing Themes: Any campaign will have a theme, be it sales, education, information or anything else. When establishing an email campaign, for example, you should consider mixing and matching your themes to keep your readers interested and coming back for more. Too many sales pitches and they will quickly lose interest.

5. Losing Track of Existing Marketing Copy: It is important to keep track of how many email campaigns you are sending out over a year, and how many were educational, how many were informative, and how many were direct sales. Your emails should fall into this approximate pattern: 50% educational, 25% sales and 25% informative.

6. Failing to Include a Risk-Free Offer: The risk-free offer you include doesn't need to be money off or a guarantee, it can simply be a buyer's guide or some sort of educational report. The key is to make sure you have a highly visible risk-free offer that a reader can easily take advantage of.

7. Leaving Mistakes in Your Copy: Spelling, grammatical and syntactical mistakes within your copy can cost you customers. Try sending your writing out to at least three people before publishing it to make sure it is free from mistakes and actually makes sense.

8. Not Emphasizing Your Key Subjects: For proper emphasis you should ensure that your campaign is restricted to three key concepts or less. If you try to fit any more ideas into your writing than this it will simply confuse your audience. When contacting your database of existing or prospective patients it is vitally important that you have something useful to say and that you say it clearly. Run every campaign past these eight common mistakes to help your email messages be well received by all of your readers.

Colin Receveur is a nationally recognized speaker, author and internet marketing expert. He has been pioneering the way dentists market themselves online since founding SmartBox Web Marketing over a decade ago. Colin is the author of 3 bestselling books: "The Dentists' Strategy Guide to Video Marketing," " How to Stay In Front of Your Patients Until They Are Ready to Buy:' and "Web 3.0: What Every Dentist Must Know to Thrive in the New Economy". For more visit www.smartboxweb.com.

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Hire Smarter... *continued from page 2*

minefield of potential problems. Information available on the internet can be inaccurate, outdated, or false. If you rely on it, you risk eliminating qualified candidates based on useless information.

Additionally, because you can't "unlearn" protected information you discover on a personal webpage, like the applicant's sexual orientation or that he's a cancer survivor, you could end up being accused of discriminatory hiring practices. If there's a provable indication that you knew of the applicant's protected class and allowed it to affect your hiring decision, you may end up party to a lawsuit.

Now to the 5 Secrets of Checking References...

***SECRET 1:* Get the Applicant Talking.** Before even trying to verify references from third parties, why not get the information from the source. Near the end of your interview, tell the applicant that it is your standard policy to verify references and ask them if there is anything they want to explain before you do. You will be surprised how many confessions you get. The process also gives you insight into the kind of person you are dealing with and how they handle stress. It will go something like, *"Well, they will tell you that I threw the doctor off the building but I want you to know he jumped. I swear!"*

***SECRET 2:* Make Applicants Back it Up with Documents.** If the job requires a state certification, license, or the applicant claims she/he has a certain level of education, get supporting documents. Require a copy of the license, degree, transcript, or diploma. Then, check it thoroughly. Anyone can pay around $200 for a credible and professional looking counterfeit diploma with transcripts. So, do look for signs that the document has been altered, faxed from a different number than the granting body's published fax number, or has any spelling or name discrepancies.

***SECRET 3:* Don't Take Their Word for It.** Ask for the prior employer, school, or accrediting body's address and contact number. Then, use the internet to confirm the address provided isn't in the middle of the Hudson River, and verify that the address and phone number are published numbers for the business, and not just their buddy posing as a manager.

Though you should always ask for specific, detailed contact information to confirm work history, prior employment, and education, you must dig a little deeper. Call the numbers, and don't just ask for the name provided. Ask to speak with the person responsible for verifying transcripts, hire dates, etc., and get the person's title and name that you speak to.

***SECRET 4:* Read Between the Lines.** As the quandary suggests, many former employers are going to be close-lipped in discussing their former problem employees. But if you pay attention to the signals, you will learn a lot. Always ask the question, *"Is the person eligible for rehire?"* Even if they won't tell you the reason for termination, they often will tell you that much. Tone of voice matters, too. Many people will simply repeat their statement over and over in a monotone voice when they are trying not to say something negative. If they do talk and say positive things, pay attention to what is not said. Also, remember that opinions are often biased. If you do get the person talking, it is perfectly reasonable to take all opinions with a grain of salt.

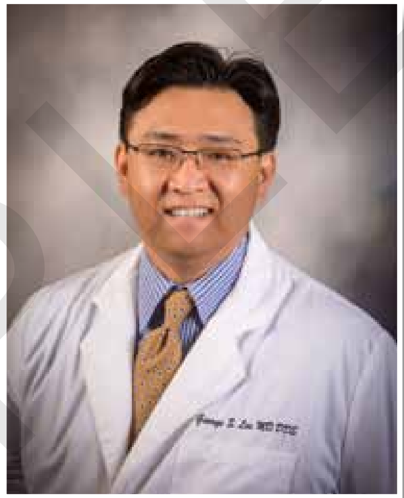
***SECRET 5:* Verify Information You Already Have.** Finally, former employers are more inclined to verify specific questions about information given by the applicant than to offer general answers or opinions. Applicants are famous for quickly jotting down information like, *"2008-2009 Acme Widget Company - Manager in charge of developing the black holes the roadrunner uses to escape."* Check the dates on the application against the dates the former employer provides. Also, using the example above, confirm that the Black Hole Division exists and that the applicant was responsible for creating new black hole technology. If Acme tells you they weren't producing black holes during the dates provided, it's a red flag.

The most costly mistake that employers make is to hire the wrong person in the first place. Don't make that mistake!

Paul Edwards is a Co-Founder of The Center for Employment Dispute Resolution, LLC (CEDR). CEDR provides solutions and customized employee handbooks to practices with 1 to 100 employees in all 50 states. Find out more information at www.cedrsolutions.com or 866-414-6056.

This article is an example of CEDR's free Employer Solutions Series trainers which you may gain access to by simply filling out the toolkit form at www.cedrsolutions.com. Take advantage of the considerable free resources and helpful guidance CEDR provides on a regular basis.

[1]The EEOC just reported that job discrimination complaints reached the highest number in its 46 year history for fiscal year 2011.



FROM THE DESK OF GEORGE S. LEE, MD, DDS:

We are in the midst of the busy summer season and continue to be grateful for the support of our colleagues. Thank you for the privilege of being able to participate in the care of your patients. As we continue to evaluate our practices, we have found several opportunities to improve our patients' experiences at Cumberland Surgical Arts. First, we redeveloped our website, **www.CumberlandSurgicalArts.com**, to provide more educational materials, including videos and animations, for our patients. Embracing technological advances in patient communication has facilitated a better exchange with our patients regarding appointment confirmations and ability to complete their registration paperwork in the comfort of their home. Second, in addition to improving our website, we are utilizing patient engagement programs and social media to reach patients using their preferred means of communication. From Welcome to Our Practice emails, appointment confirmations, and post appointment surveys, we have been able to optimize the patient experience and facilitate relationships. Having the feedback from our patients following their appointments with a survey has allowed us to respond to their needs quickly and efficiently. We are extremely proud of the positive testimonials and are thankful for their kind words. All of our post appointment reviews can be found on our website. As a referring provider, you can submit referrals through our online system and submit radiographic images electronically. You may also email patient related information to frontdesk@cumberlandsurgicalarts.com. And finally, to complement our technological enhancements, we just finished an update of our front lobby, redesign of our guest check in desk, and expansion of a surgical waiting room to allow for more comfortable seating for families waiting for their loved ones during surgery.

As the landscape of healthcare and dentistry changes due to advances in technology and insurance payer stipulations, we promise to strive each day to provide exceptional surgical and anesthetic care. We are also committed to assisting our patients as they navigate the invariably changing labyrinth of insurance carriers and third party regulations. Our primary responsibility is to our patients, not to the insurance carriers. We will continue to prescribe and deliver care based on the patient's unique condition and best practices to ensure an optimal outcome. We thank you for being a part of this process through your appropriate and timely referrals to us for specialized care.

Should you ever need to reach us for emergency care of your patients, we have a dedicated Doctor Line. This number is for our colleagues to reach us to discuss a patient care issue or refer a patient for emergency care. The number is (931) 472-9300. This line will be available during our normal business hours, 8:00am-4:30pm Monday - Friday. If Dr. DeFelice or I are not available due to performing a surgery, our nurse or office manager will relay the message to us immediately and we will respond as soon as we are available. After hours emergency assistance will continue to be via our

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