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of the entire office. Take note of high energy consumption and inefficiencies, such as items blocking vents, old lightbulbs, appliances without power management features, and many more (refer to the checklist above). These observations will inspire immediate action items for energy conservation. Note the different energy types (i.e. electric, natural gas, etc.) as you review your list of hot spots. Then, take a look at a few recent energy bills and identify total energy consumption on each of the bills. Also, note other energy trends on your bills (e.g. total monthly usage). The data collected from recent energy bills serves as a baseline and should inform the new

goals. Now you are ready to create your energy conservation goals and draft an action plan!

Do you have an office energy conservation story to share? We'd love to hear from you! [Contact Dr. Normand Boucher at nsjboucher@gmail.com.]

For more information about energy conservation, visit: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/femp/federal-energy-management-information-resources>.

Office Energy Checklist, U.S. Department of Energy: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/femp/office-energy-checklist>. ■

CUOZZO'S CORNER EFFICIENCY: YOU TALKIN' TO ME?

Judy Dawes, R.D.A., Clinical Manager and Alison Slavick, R.D.A.

Let's face it, a high-volume practice is a successful practice. But how do you see 140 patients per day, stay on time, and provide superior customer service, all while appearing calm, cool, and collected? There are 6 major components that, once implemented, will enable your practice to run like a well-oiled machine:

- Unique language
- A realistic schedule
- Specialized systems
- Detailed scripts
- Proper staffing
- Detailed, well-documented treatment plans

Upon successfully implementing each of these six components, you will find that chaos has been eliminated, staff communication has improved, and the practice is able to handle a higher daily patient volume while still continuing to run efficiently. In this series of articles, we will discuss each of these components, why they are important to your practice, and how you can implement them.

This brings us to our first topic: language. In any well-run business, you will hear a common language spoken. Say, for example, you go into Starbucks and order a tall skinny vanilla latte, double foam, no whip. Imagine that instead of repeating your order exactly as you said it, the cashier yells out to the barista "small coffee, skim milk, sugar free syrup, extra foam, no whipped cream." It would be pretty obvious that the cashier does not know the "Starbucks language," right? This would leave the barista confused and in need of clarification, ultimately leading to a back-up in service and causing the staff to appear inexperienced. Plus, as the customer, you would probably be left wondering what kind of coffee you're about to end up with.

This same kind of situation can arise in your practice, but can be avoided by investing time into creating clear communication pathways within the office. Consistent language in an orthodontic practice is the first major step in achieving

efficiency and cohesiveness. In order to do this, start by creating a "practice dictionary" of the orthodontic vocabulary that you will use regularly, and identify what each word or phrase means. Also include images of each instrument and the name that you will be using to refer to it. Once you have compiled all of this information, you can have your employees read and refer to it, until it is memorized. Make sure that all employees use this common language when speaking to fellow team members and when writing up patient charts, to ensure that both intra-office communication and execution of treatment are effective. It is also extremely important that learning the "office language" is a part of the training process for new hires, especially if they are coming from another practice. Keep your "practice dictionary" somewhere safe and accessible, so that it can be used at any time, and make sure to update it regularly.

Consistency in the way team members speak with one another will save time and limit confusion. Take, for instance, a new orthodontist who has recently joined an established practice, but has not yet been taught the "office language." He or she may ask the assistant for a "ribbon arch," though the technical name for the plier is a 442, and the rest of the team usually refers to it as an "edgewise plier." The assistant will have no idea what the doctor wants, and will end up wasting valuable time searching for a "ribbon arch." If the new doctor had learned the practice's common language, he or she would have known to call for an "edgewise plier," and the assistant would know exactly where to locate it and be able to immediately deliver it to the doctor.

Although it is best to use common English when communicating with patients and parents, once you have successfully created your unique "office language" and put it to use in the treatment room, you will find that intra-office communication becomes clearer. If you and your team can effortlessly communicate regarding procedures and treatment plans, you will also be able to effectively communicate the same information to associates with more clarity and ease. Not only does this lead to a more professional and highly-educated team, it also takes some of the pressure off of the doctor, as he or she can trust that every member of the team is well-trained and has got it covered. ■