The 2022 State of Dental Staffing
The Latest Dental Staffing Trends & Tips to Power Your Practice
Introduction: The Crisis in Dental Staffing

Dental Staff Want Better Pay: Here’s What They’re Doing to Get It

The Impact on Patient Experience

How to Withstand Workforce Changes

Dental Practices Still Lag in Digital Transformation.
3 Ways to Modernize

Combatting Workforce Challenges with Weave

Methodology

Staffing shortages across the country have surged as more and more employees are resigning and leaving their jobs. This trend, also known as “The Great Resignation”, has impacted many industries heavily, some more than others. The dental industry has felt this shortage significantly as thousands of dental professionals have decided to leave their jobs during a tumultuous time in America.

Weave surveyed over 510 healthcare professionals, including dental practice owners & staff, in February 2022. The purpose of the survey is to understand the impact of labor and staffing shortages on small dental practices across the U.S. The results are included here in this ebook, The 2022 State of Dental Staffing.
Introduction: The Crisis in Dental Staffing

It comes as no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic has directly impacted medical professionals across all healthcare industries. According to Weave’s survey, 66% of healthcare professionals concluded that they were short staffed as of February 2022.

Taking a closer look at the direct impact of COVID-19 on dental practices during the pandemic, we examine a web-based survey conducted by the American Dental Association and the American Dental Hygienists Association.

These organizations surveyed 6,976 dental hygienists during the height of the pandemic from September 2020 to August 2021. According to their results, roughly 8% of dental hygienists who were employed at the very start of the pandemic (March 2020) were no longer employed as of September 2020.

It’s been over two years since the pandemic started and we are still clearly seeing the effects of staffing shortages among dental practices. According to the ADA, dental professionals have noted it has been “extremely” or “very challenging” when describing the process of recruiting dental hygienists and dental assistants compared to before the global pandemic.

The focus of this ebook is to take a closer look at staffing shortages for small dental practices and pinpoint a solution to combat them. Before we examine the impact of staffing shortages among dental practices, let’s first take a look at the working conditions of professionals within the healthcare space and why they are resigning.
Dental Staff Want Better Pay: Here’s What They’re Doing to Get It

It will come as no surprise, if you’re actively managing the staff within your practice, that compensation has been a major driver of staff turnover. According to Weave’s survey, 30% of healthcare workers left their jobs because they were unhappy with their compensation. It was also noted that 30% of healthcare workers left their jobs because they were unhappy with their compensation.

In Weave’s survey, healthcare professionals, including dental practice owners and staff, were asked the reasons behind staff resignation. Pay, increasing staff workloads and better work-life balance were the highest cited for this question and indicate the majority of the driving force behind staff resignation.

To combat staffing shortages and improve the overall happiness of dental staff, dental practices must invest in tools and operations that simplify the day-to-day workload of their team. Investing in the right tools would leverage employee workload and could also make up the difference when it comes to compensation.

Additionally, team members who feel more confident in their position and enjoy their day-to-day workload are generally happier. The happier your team members are, the better equipped they are to engage with your patients.

Let’s take a closer look at how dental practices are managing these interactions with their patients.
The Impact on Patient Experience

In Weave’s survey, respondents were asked multiple questions about the patient experience they were providing within their practice and questions revolving around staffing shortages.

“Do you feel your patients are more or less satisfied with their experience with your healthcare practice than they were a year ago?”

- More satisfied: 48%
- Less satisfied: 24%
- About the same: 28%

Compared to a year ago, almost 25% of small healthcare practices, roughly 35% of them being dental, believe their patients are less satisfied with their experience.

Although healthcare professionals can see the patient experience within their practice is being negatively impacted, within the last year only 1/3 of them are meeting once a quarter or less to understand the patient experience.

Weave’s survey also reported that 97% of small healthcare practices say delivering good patient experiences requires the right tools and technology. However, only 27% of these small healthcare practices invest in more tools & technology to aid in the patient experience.
How to Withstand Workforce Changes

Small dental practices need to adopt an efficient, digital model designed to automate processes and improve the patient experience. Doing so will reap multiple advantages including:

- Customer-driven insights
- Increased profitability
- Improved efficiency
- Automated processes
- Advanced analytics & data
- Improved team member communication & collaboration

Integrating your practice with an all-in-one platform and a suite of technological tools is key to keeping your patients happy and filling the gaps that staffing shortages create. Not only will this improve the areas mentioned above but it will keep your practice competitive and able to meet the changing market demands.
Dental Practices Still Lag in Digital Transformation: 3 Ways to Modernize

Weave asked respondents,

“In the past 12 months, what percentage of staff left your practice/clinic?”

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>76.06%</td>
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<tr>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>1.64%</td>
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Although ¼ of staff are leaving their role in more than 76% of healthcare practices, in the next 12 months, only 44% have hired fewer than 10 team members.

Regardless of the reasons many practices cannot fill these staffing gaps, hiring is a short-term fix to solving shortages and will be much more costly than retaining team members. Digital transformation is the long-term solution to combat staffing shortages and retain team members.

Utilizing an efficient, digital model will not only create a lighter, daily workload for teams but will help modernize your practice with efficient operations. Digital transformation integrates fast, technological processes into all areas of a practice to improve patient satisfaction and retain team members.

There are three significant, digital improvements that small dental practices say would help streamline their practice the most and create a better experience, according to Weave’s survey:

- Chatting with patients through the website
- Texting with customers to schedule appointments
- Patient directory access through texting
The central theme of these three areas focuses on communication with patients and automated processes.

Front desk workers might not have the time to focus on every single patient interaction while still completing day-to-day tasks. Improving patient and team communication will alleviate pressure from front desk workers and give them more time in their work day. Investing in a digital model and communication platform designed for the dental industry will help save time and speed-up operations.
Combatting Workforce Challenges with Weave

Weave is a patient engagement system that was designed and optimized for small dental practices. A critical part of serving dental patients is having their records and contact information in an organized location. Weave's software can integrate with most EHR and EMR systems so you don’t have to worry about losing patient information or transferring records into a new system.

Here are some of the best benefits for small healthcare practices:

### Digital Forms

[Weave Digital Forms](#) gives patients the required forms to fill out before they even walk in for their appointment. Only 44% of small healthcare practices currently offer a way for patients to do this.

### Texting

[Weave Texting](#) allows you to engage with your patients with two-way texting to modify and schedule appointments. Weave’s Text-to-Pay tool allows patients to pay their bills via text so your practice can get paid faster and patients can easily manage their bills.

### Phones

[Weave Phones](#) empower front desk team members to stay one step ahead. You can view essential information such as customer names, upcoming appointments, overdue balances, and special notes when a new or current patient calls in.
Even when small dental practices experience staffing shortages, Weave’s single, unified platform connects all communication seamlessly so teams can work together and handle the day-to-day operations. Instead of focusing on hiring more team members, Weave gives your dental practice the tools to retain and engage your team like never before.

There are more than 14,000 small dental practices embracing the transformative power of Weave. With Weave’s suite of communication tools and world-class phone systems, your practice can remain mobile and modern to attract more customers and deliver a more impressive experience. Schedule a Demo today to watch Weave in action and see what our communication and engagement platform can do for your dental practice.