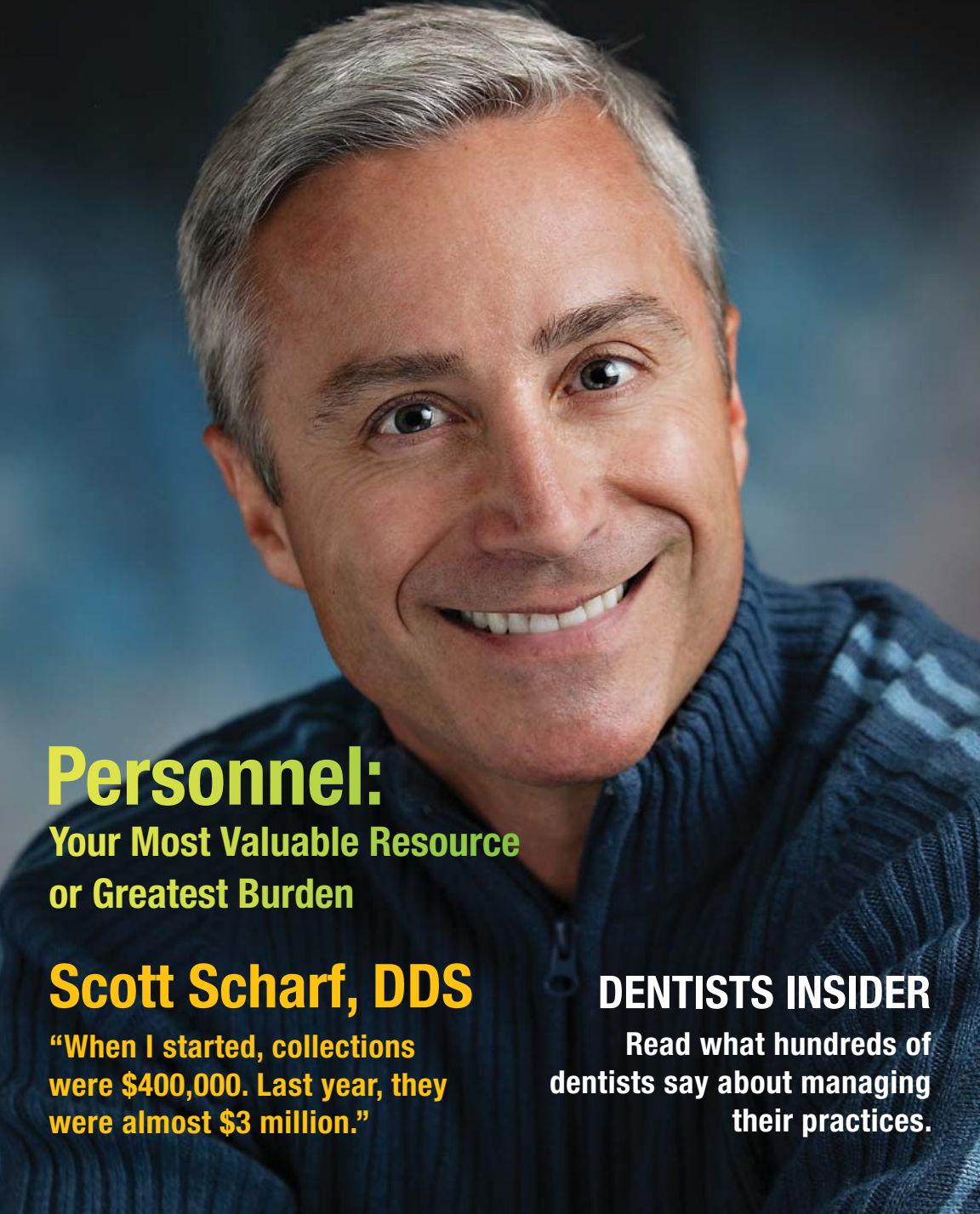




# SOLUTIONS



**Personnel:**  
Your Most Valuable Resource  
or Greatest Burden

**Scott Scharf, DDS**

“When I started, collections were \$400,000. Last year, they were almost \$3 million.”

**DENTISTS INSIDER**

Read what hundreds of dentists say about managing their practices.



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# “When I started, collections were \$400,000. Last year, they were almost \$3 million.”

*Using Sterling's marketing techniques, new patients increased by 400%*

Several years ago I became disenchanted with dentistry. Although I was a competent dentist, I had no idea how to run a practice. Despite working long hours, I couldn't get to the next level.

Hiring and managing the staff was an ordeal all its own. At one point, I needed to hire an office manager and interviewed a woman who had just moved into town. During the interview, she said all the right things and impressed me with her qualifications. Even though she had no references with her, she offered to get them to me. Convinced she

**“As the practice improved, I began to focus on the high-end dentistry I love ...”**

was perfect for the job, I hired her on the spot.

After she started, I noticed she kept the appointment book full but that we had a high number of “no shows.” The “no shows” included long-standing patients and even personal friends. I became angry with my patients for breaking their appointments and called

a friend to see why he had not shown up. He explained that he had never made an appointment in the first place. That prompted me to call other “no shows.” They, too, had never made appointments. As it turns out, my office manager was randomly going through patients' charts and adding their names to the schedule without telling them.

She stirred up trouble between me and the staff by telling lies about us to each other. Then, cash started to disappear around the practice. After catching on to all of this, I dismissed her. In just

three weeks, she had wreaked havoc in the practice. I should have never hired her in the first place but I had no idea how to distinguish a good job applicant from a bad one. I credited everything an applicant said, or put on their resume, as truth.

When it came to managing the staff, I didn't know what measures to take when they failed to do as I asked. If I questioned them, they became defensive and disagreeable. As a result, I walked on egg shells around them. Turnover was high and I wondered how I could make a good living with no staff at all.

Compared to what I had spent on dental school I was making little money. I did a poor job of presenting cases and was frustrated when patients declined the treatment I knew they needed. To make matters worse, the practice was heavily loaded with PPOs and other plans that required I write off a lot of money.

I had no time with my family and no life of my own. Fed up, I just wanted to earn enough to sell the practice without feeling like a failure. Before throwing in the towel, though, I checked into Sterling and sent away for their management DVD. Watching the DVD, I felt as if the speaker had studied my own practice; every issue he mentioned I had personally experienced. After an introductory consultation, I signed up.

The results of the Sterling program were fast and dramatic. In fact, I made back the cost of the program, and much more, in the first month. With the help of my consultant and Sterling's management courses, I gained the ability to observe and effectively resolve problems in the practice. I also learned how to manage the staff. I liked Sterling's customized approach. They addressed only the issues which needed to be addressed.

**“Because my associates and staff are caring and competent, I can be away for weeks and even months at a time.”**

One of the first steps we took was to set a monthly production goal for the practice and then motivate the staff to reach the goal by offering bonuses if we did. I had never before set any type of goal for my practice. In the past, if production was down, I would commiserate with my colleagues about it being a “slow time of year.” Formulating a goal and exerting a little pressure on the staff to reach the goal put me back in control of the practice.

Sterling's personnel hiring and testing procedures enabled me to attract and

hire the right staff, including two competent associates and an office manager whom I sent to Sterling for training. I have never had another hiring fiasco like the time I hired the malicious office manager.

Using Sterling's marketing techniques, new patients increased by 400%. As the practice improved, I began to focus on the high-end dentistry I love, such as full-mouth reconstruction. Sterling showed me how to present these cases so the patient understood the need for treatment and accepted it. I ditched the insurance plans and my practice is now 100% fee for service.

I have been a Sterling client for over 25 years. When I started, annual collections were \$400,000 per year. Last year, they were almost \$3 million. Even better is the freedom I've gained. My wife and I have five children and we lead very busy lives. Because my associates and staff are caring and competent, I can be away for weeks and even months at a time. Thanks to Sterling, I have been able to grow my practice without being chained to it.

Once I wanted to leave dentistry. Now I love my work and don't ever see myself retiring. I recommend calling Sterling and asking for their management DVD. They helped me end my frustration and got me on the road to success and prosperity.

Scott Scharf, DDS □