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The Complete Data-Driven eBook:  
**Recruitment Marketing  
Paradoxes and Benchmarks  
in the Dental Industry**

On a recent visit to a client's dental practice in Indianapolis, every chair was filled, and every team member engaged as lively music played softly throughout the place.

Rewind to 2015 when the founding dentist bought the practice; back then, it was a quiet, humble two-chair office in a historic home. Over the years, he engaged the [Scheduling Institute](#) and deployed a focused [One-Page Marketing Plan](#) and strategy year after year to achieve his vision of leading a 12-operator, 3-dentist practice employing 23 team members. Today, laughter and liveliness permeate the practice.

The practice is a good, fun place to be.

Recruitment marketing is an inside job. Our Indianapolis doctor is clear about his vision, shares it freely and is excited to reach his practice goals. He deploys the right tools and processes to keep the dental work and office culture flowing naturally. It is this energy that inspires team members to stay with the practice.

This energy calls new dental professionals to join his team when he has job openings and allows the practice to reach the doctor's vision and production goals. The client reported they had their highest-producing day of all time. Only a committed, productive team can make that happen.

It is easier to retain a good team member than it is to recruit a new one. Yet, in dentistry, leaders often scramble to get and keep key positions filled, frantically backfilling openings while barely keeping current employees satisfied—all in high-stress environments.

What if there is a better way? To find out, we turned to data from the American Dental Association, and we conducted our own survey of 86 dental professionals nationwide. In this eBook, we will explore paradoxes and benchmarks in recruitment marketing for the dental industry. Specifically, we will cover:

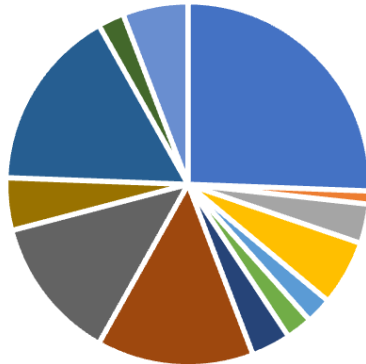
- [An Overview of Who We Surveyed](#)
- [Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues](#)
- [Paradoxes in Recruitment Marketing](#)
- [Industry Benchmarking for Recruitment Marketing](#)
  - [Top 3 Root Causes of Challenges in Recruiting](#)
  - [7-Step Recruitment Marketing Process](#)
  - [Top 3 Ways to Systemize Word-of-Mouth Marketing](#)
  - [Average Annual Budget for Recruitment Marketing](#)
  - [Most Common Employment Benefits Offered](#)
- [Lessons on How to Hire Better](#)
- [Peer-to-Peer Recommendations for Strengthening Employee Retention](#)

Let's get started.



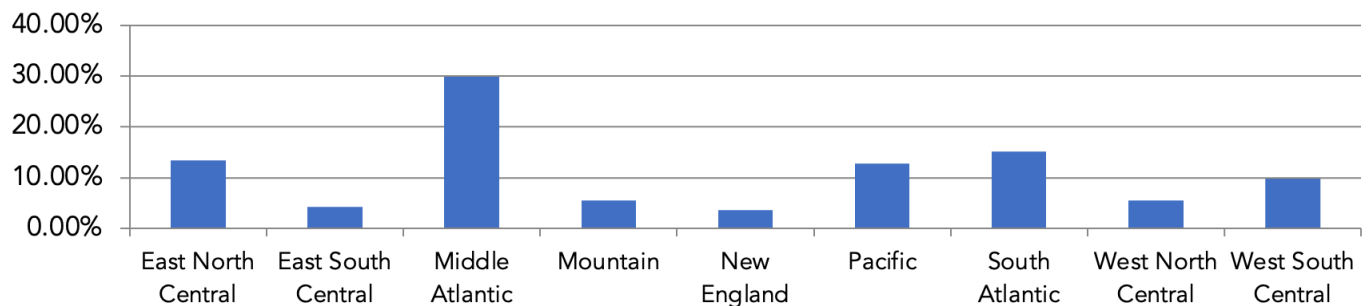
# AN OVERVIEW OF WHO WE SURVEYED

## By Profession

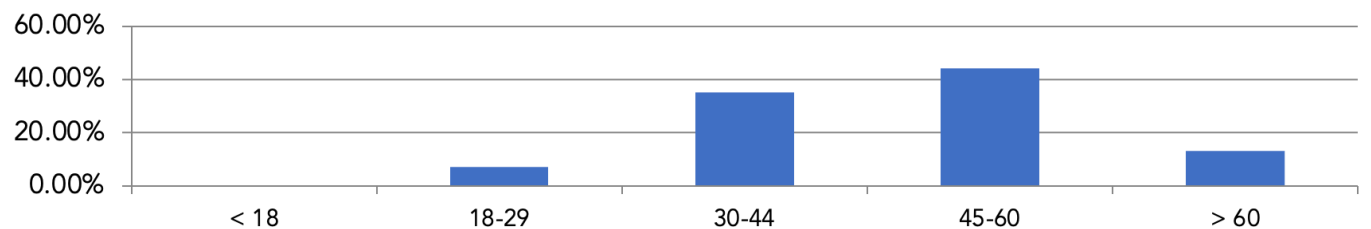


- General Dentist
- Endodontist
- Periodontist
- Pedodontist
- Dental Assistant
- Student in Dental School
- Dental Practice Marketing Executive
- Orthodontist
- Oral Surgeon
- Prosthodontist
- Dental Hygienist
- Dental Front Office Manager
- Dental Practice Owner

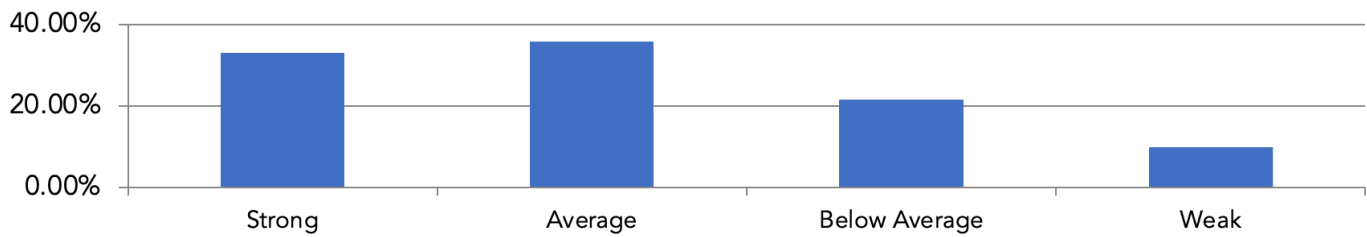
## By Region



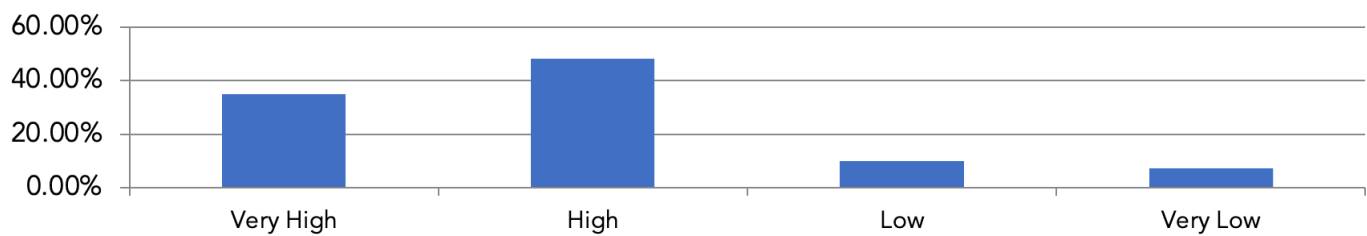
## By Age



## By Knowledge of Recruitment Marketing



## By Employee Retention Rate



## ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND EMERGING ISSUES

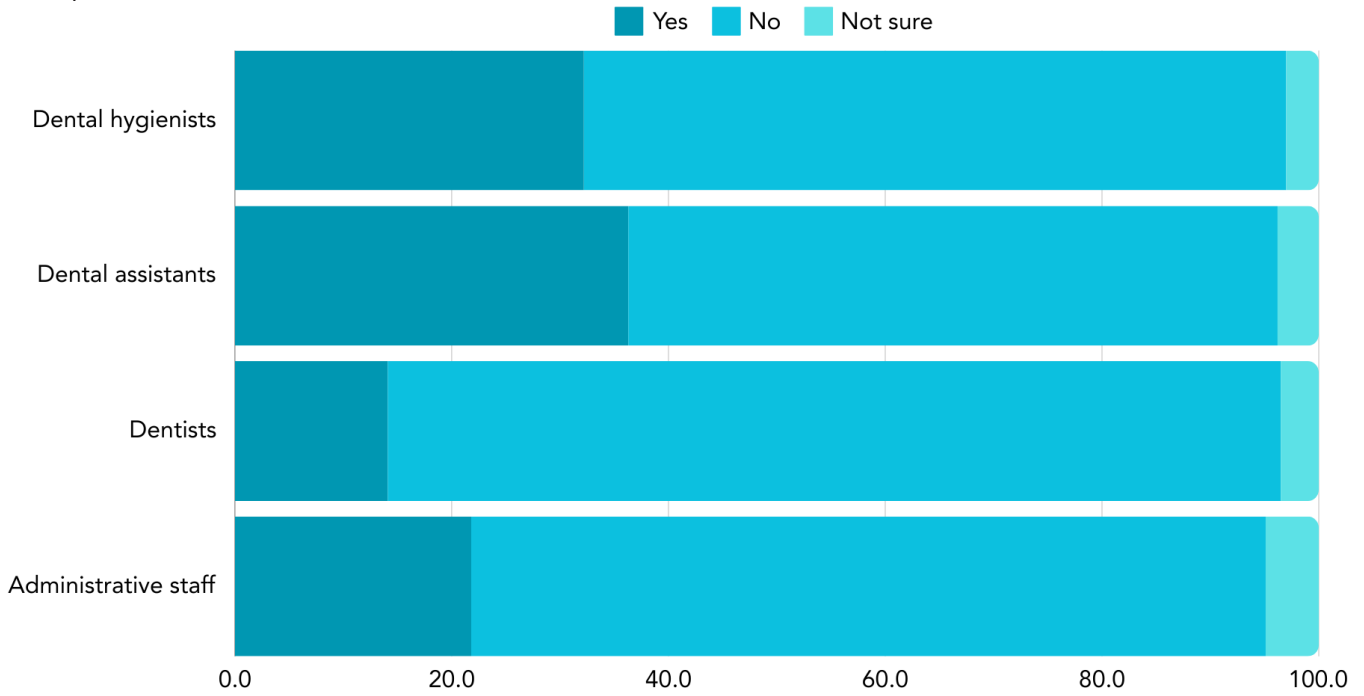
In December 2023, the [American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry](#) report predicated on data from 971 dentist survey responses.

When asked what factors prevented the dental practice's appointment schedule from reaching 100% in the last week, 27% of respondents indicated "trouble filling vacant staff positions." When asked to look ahead six months and gauge confidence in the economic recovery of their practices, 19% indicated skepticism; in the economic recovery of the dental industry, 20% indicated skepticism; and, in the economic recovery of the U.S., 43% indicated skepticism. Plain and simple, it's hard to have faith in one's small business success without faith in a strong economy at large.

In the same study, participants indicated they were hiring for the following positions at the corresponding rates of challenge to recruit for each. If your practice also has issues recruiting and retaining good talent, know you are not alone. Read on for a 7-step process to help you overcome these challenges.

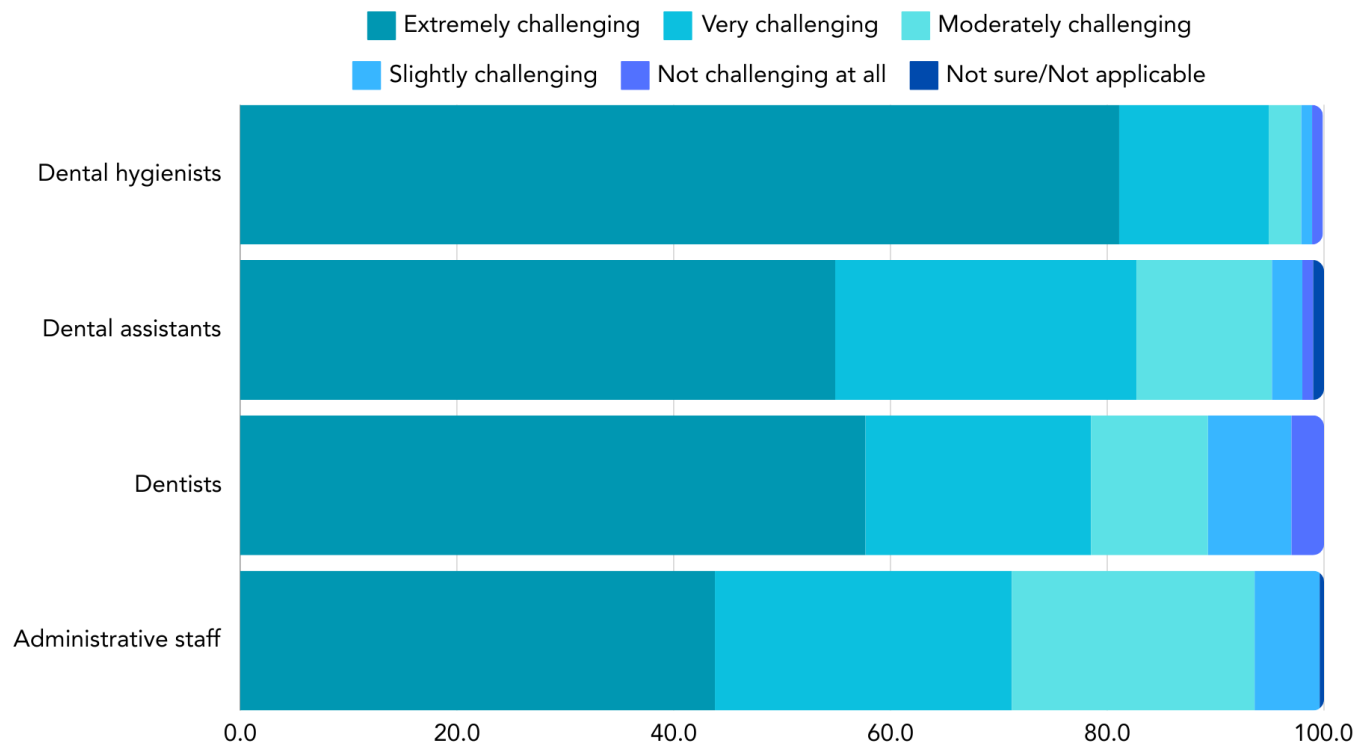
## Have you recently or are you currently recruiting any of the following positions in your dental practice?

923 Responses



## How challenging has it been to recruit the position(s) below?

532 Responses





# PARADOXES IN RECRUITMENT MARKETING

## Paradox #1: Use of Right Tools to Produce New Hires

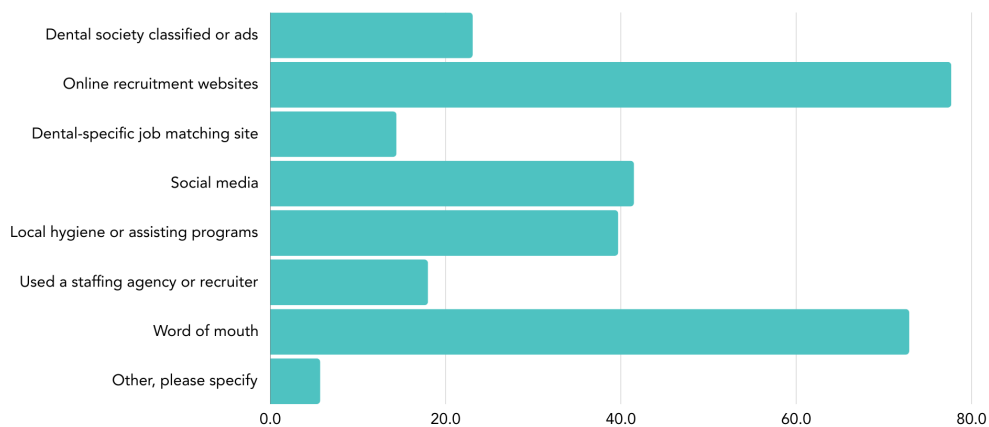
According to the ADA data, online recruitment websites are the clear frontrunner in tools used for producing new hires. Word-of-mouth marketing comes in second place for use and yielding new hires. While the first data set indicates healthy investment in social media marketing, use of hygiene or assisting programs, and big-budget use of recruiters, the next data set shows a lower incidence of those three efforts converting to new hires.

### Solution

If word-of-mouth marketing is producing more new hires than social media, hygiene or assisting programs or professional recruiters, invest more budget and energy there. Read on for a system for word-of-mouth marketing to glean more predictable results from these efforts.

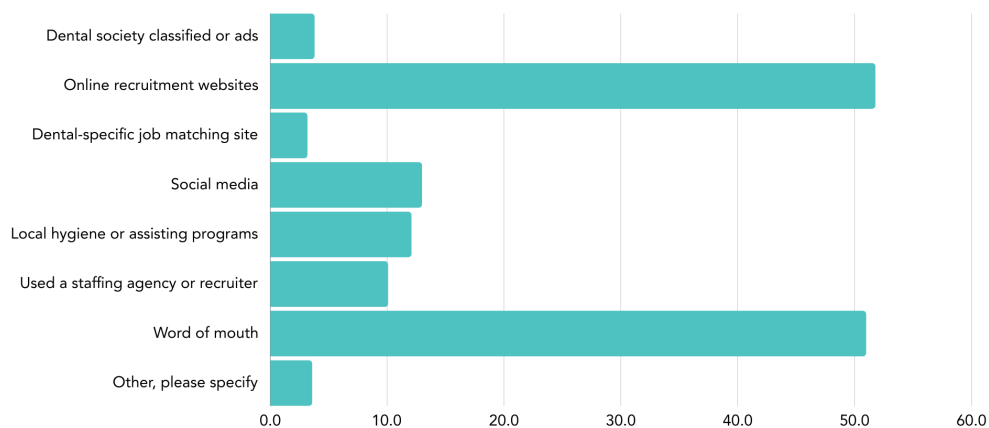
### [If hired DH or DA] What tools have you used to find applicants for your dental hygienist and/or dental assistant positions?

506 Responses



### [If hired DH or DA] Which of the tools selected above led to the new hire(s)? (Select all that apply.)

506 Responses



Source: [American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry](#)

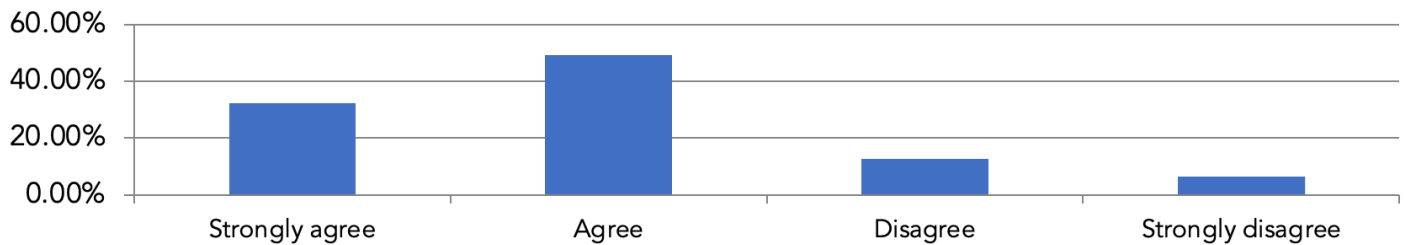
## Paradox #3: Defined Process Giving Way to Right Volume of Applicants

81% of your peers indicated their practice has a defined process for recruitment marketing, and 84% indicated that process gives way to the right volume of qualified applicants. Process is key to success in all marketing, particularly recruitment marketing. If your practice is among the 19% that don't yet have a process in place, read on for tips on how to start.

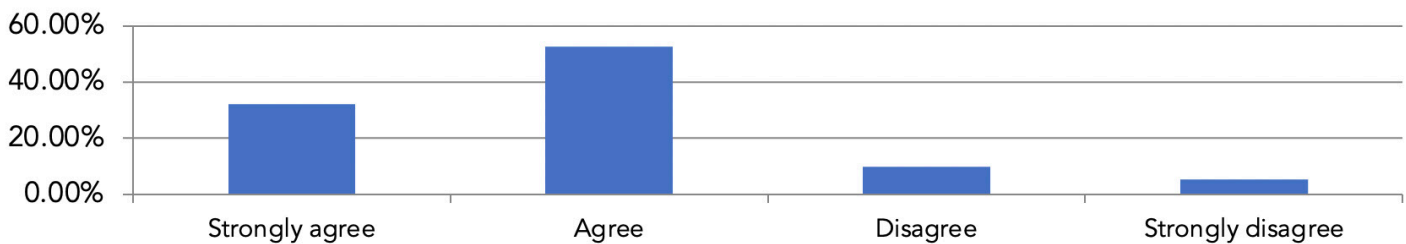
### Solution

Gather your marketing team, human resources team and any outside recruiters you may use for a strategy session to process map, A to Z, the entire process for recruitment, from ideal candidate description to job offer. Identify breakdowns in the process, brainstorm ways to strengthen weak spots and decide who is responsible for the execution of the fixes. Read on for a more robust 7-step process for consistently adding strong talent to your team.

**What your peers had to say:** Our organization has a defined process for recruitment marketing that is followed by all.



**What your peers had to say:** Our recruitment marketing efforts attract the right volume of qualified applicants to our organization.





# INDUSTRY BENCHMARKING FOR RECRUITMENT MARKETING

## Top 3 Root Causes of Challenges in Recruiting

Why is it important to get to root causes of recruitment challenges in the dental industry? Once we identify and solve root causes, we are better apt to develop lasting solutions rather than quick fixes. Here's what our study revealed as the top three root causes of challenges in recruiting and possible solutions for each:

### Root Cause #1: Small Talent Pool

**Challenge:** This trend highlights a significant root cause – the lack of interest or inclination toward pursuing careers in dentistry. This could be due to several factors, including the perceived high barriers to entry (such as the cost of dental education and the length of training required), a lack of awareness about the opportunities within the field and possibly a general decline in interest in healthcare professions.

**Solution:** Marketing enhances the appeal of dentistry as a career and the appeal of coming to work for your practice. Address challenges head-on with their opposites, simplifying the training required to start, showing how careers in dentistry directly benefit current team members and demonstrating why they continue to be interested in their caring profession. Brené Brown refers to this as “walking into the dark cave.” Rather than glossing over known challenges, shed light on them to clear the air.

### Root Cause #2: Difficulty Finding Qualified or Skilled Employees

**Challenge:** This trend encompasses responses related to the challenges of finding experienced, competent and qualified dental professionals. It points to root causes, such as the mismatch between the skills and qualifications that dental practices require and the skills that candidates possess. This mismatch can be attributed to gaps in dental education and training, rapid advancements in dental technologies that outpace curriculum updates and the evolving nature of dental practices that now require a broader set of skills, including digital literacy.

**Solution:** Create an ideal candidate description before writing the job description or ad to focus the meaning of “qualified” for each candidate. In the job ad, lead with a strong brand and solid cultural messaging (mission, vision, values) to attract like-minded people to the organization. Read on for more about the distinctions between the two.



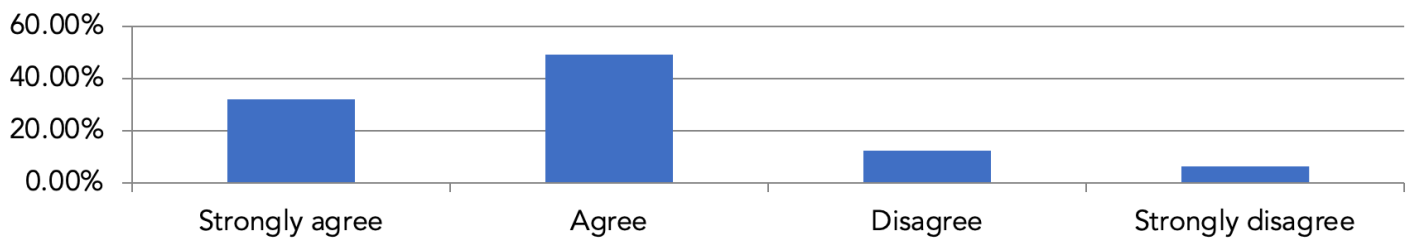
## Root Cause #3: Economic and Financial Barriers

**Challenge:** Several responses point toward financial issues, such as the high costs associated with hiring (salary expectations, benefits, etc.), the long-lingering economic implications of the pandemic on dental practices and the financial burdens of opening a new practice or expanding existing ones. These financial challenges are significant root causes of recruitment difficulties, as they affect the ability of dental practices to attract and retain talent. High costs of dental education also deter potential candidates from entering the field, exacerbating the issue of supply.

**Solution:** Process map each role, A to Z, to clarify what the job needs are versus the wants. This tightens the role and can lessen undue demand on the employee and unnecessary extra salary burden on the practice. Research fair compensation for mission-critical roles and pay accordingly. To budget for those mission-critical roles, consider eliminating or consolidating less critical roles.

## 7-Step Recruitment Marketing Process

**What your peers had to say:** Our practice has a defined process for recruitment marketing that is followed by all.



In an adjacent study, when we asked a broader group of your peers in healthcare what steps they used in the recruitment marketing process, these trends emerged:

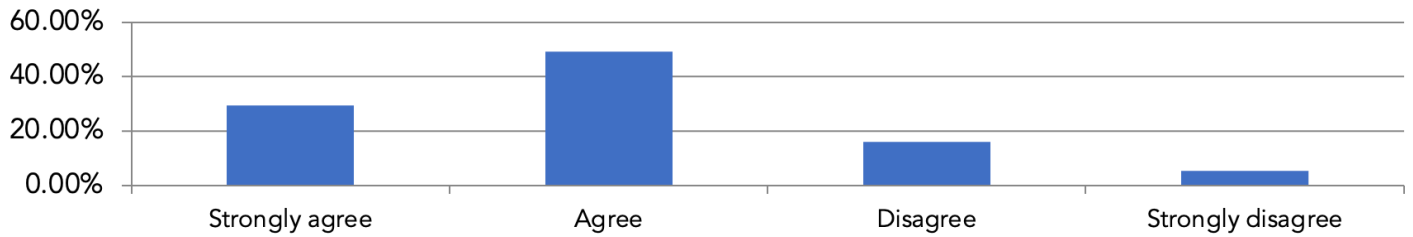
### 1 Step 1: Define the Position and Requirements

Clearly outline the role, responsibilities, qualifications and experience required. Include expectations, work environment and practice culture. We also recommend you develop an ideal candidate description to focus efforts and a job ad to entice people to apply to your openings over competitors' jobs.

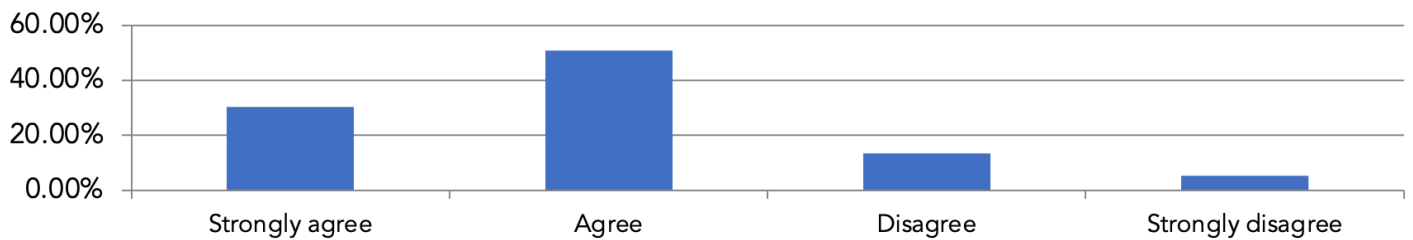
### 2 Step 2: Build a Strong Employer Brand

First, showcase practice culture using social media, the practice website and dental team testimonials to highlight your workplace environment, values and benefits. Then define and communicate your Employer Value Proposition (EVP) to differentiate your organization from competitors.

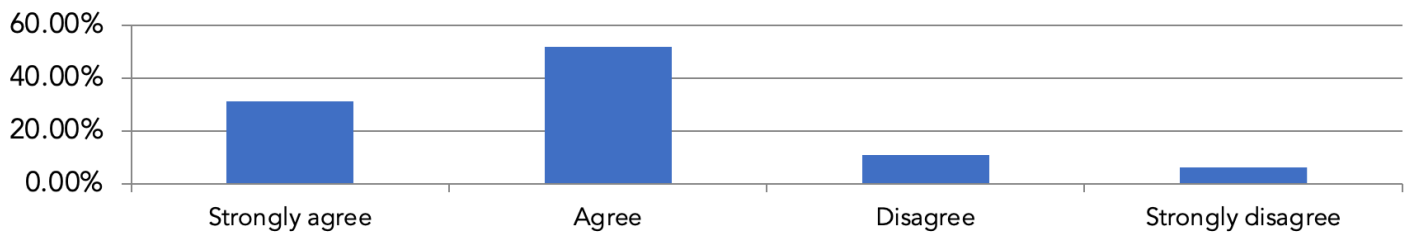
**What your peers had to say:** Our recruitment marketing tactics include a clear picture of our practice brand to invite the right applicants to resonate with our story.



**What your peers had to say:** Our recruitment marketing tactics include a clear picture of our practice culture to invite the right applicants to feel they belong on our team.



**What your peers had to say:** Our recruitment marketing tactics include a strong value proposition to show applicants what's in it for them to come work at our organization.



### 3 Step 3: Leverage Multiple Channels for Job Postings

Go where your future employees go. Consider conducting a survey to better understand which online job boards and social media platforms your ideal candidates frequent. Do they spend more time on Indeed, LinkedIn or other industry-specific platforms that can further target your reach like [Dentaltown](#)? Uncovering this data first can save time and money. Our study participants also recommended posting on the practice's social media profiles and leveraging both organic and paid strategies to increase visibility. Be sure to feature job ads prominently on your career page.

4

### Step 4: Engage in Active Recruitment

Gone are the days of idly posting an opening and landing a star dental team member. Our survey respondents suggested direct outreach, such as using LinkedIn and other platforms to directly contact candidates who match the qualifications but have yet to apply. They also recommended participating in job fairs and professional networking events to meet potential candidates. Consider establishing relationships with colleges and training programs to recruit upcoming graduates.

5

### Step 5: Screen and Interview Candidates

Review applications against your ideal candidate description and create a shortlist of candidates to move to the interview phase. Conduct initial phone screens followed by in-person or video interviews. Consider involving team members with whom the candidate will closely work. For certain roles, practical assessments can help evaluate skills and fit.

6

### Step 6: Offer and Onboarding

Extend offers to select candidates, clearly outlining compensation, benefits and any conditional requirements like background checks. Ensure a smooth onboarding process, including orientation sessions, training and integration into the team.

7

### Step 7: Analyze and Optimize

Collect feedback from candidates and new hires about their experience with the recruitment process. Regularly review the effectiveness of different recruitment channels and strategies, adjusting tactics based on performance data.

## Top 3 Ways to Systemize Word-of-Mouth Marketing

All too often word-of-mouth marketing is left to chance in the dental industry. Regain control of efforts and outcomes by systemizing word-of-mouth marketing in three ways as identified by your peers in our study:



### 1. Referral Bonuses

Offer incentives to current team members for referring qualified candidates. Employees may be more motivated to spread the word about job openings if they know they can receive a bonus if their referral is hired.



## 2. Current Employees as Ambassadors

Encourage current employees to share job opportunities within their personal networks and social channels. This method relies on the premise that team members who are satisfied with their workplace will speak positively about it to friends and family, thereby attracting potential candidates.



## 3. Encourage Employees to Share Job Openings

Actively inform staff about open positions and encourage them to pass this information along to any qualified candidates they know. This could be through everyday conversation, social meetups, or networking events.

## Average Annual Budget for Recruitment Marketing

When we asked your peers for their organizations' annual budgets for recruitment marketing, the mean was \$88,600, excluding two high-end outliers at \$20 and \$150 million. 12% of respondents had zero budget for recruitment marketing. The general rule is to invest 6% of top-line revenue into total marketing efforts, including recruitment marketing. To determine what percentage of the total marketing budget should be allocated to recruitment marketing, align with your team on a [One-Page Marketing Plan](#) and divvy up the budget by priority in reaching the organization's [Big Important Goal](#).



of top-line revenue into total marketing efforts, including recruitment marketing.

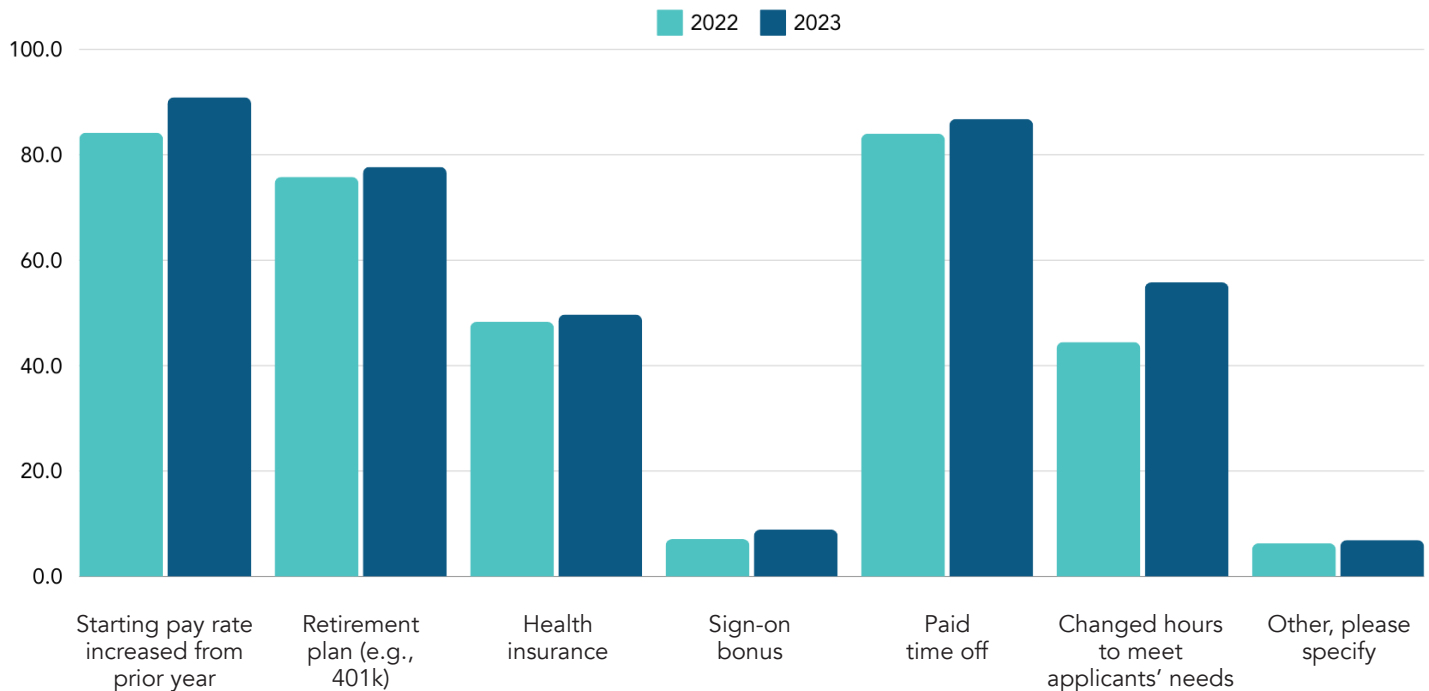
## Most Common Employment Benefits Offered

Here are the results from the ADA study showing the most common employment benefits offered in the dental industries. Under “Other,” responses included paid continuing education, on-the-job training, paid licensing fees, flex spending account, profit sharing, parental leave, short-term disability and gym membership. The Indianapolis practice mentioned earlier in this publication offers staff bonuses when practice goals are met, such as in-office yoga and cold plunge.

To determine how best to allot practice budget to employment benefits, consider surveying current team members to gauge what is important to them, and then align assets accordingly.

### [If hired DH or DA] For each of the last two years, which of the following benefits were offered to dental hygienist and dental assistant applicants?

496 Responses



Source: [American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute Economic Outlook and Emerging Issues in Dentistry](#)



## LESSONS ON HOW TO HIRE BETTER

In her book [Why Can't I Hire Good People?: Lessons on How to Hire Better](#), recruitment expert [Beth Smith](#) makes the following distinction between the job ad and the job description. Notice how the job ad packs the power to attract the right candidates while the job description clarifies duties and responsibilities. In our study, none of the respondents mentioned the job ad. It's a small but mighty tool for hiring better and retaining top talent.

### Job Description

- Sets the parameters around the job.
- Acts as an anchor for employees regarding their deliverables.
- Guides future performance reviews.
- Maps out responsibilities.
- Frames training.

### Job Ad

- Clearly illustrates your mission statement in the first line.
- Makes a few bullet points to tell candidates your hiring goals.
- Offers clear instructions on how to apply.

Smith adds: "Do not use your job description as your job ad. Usually job descriptions are long and tedious to read, so candidates will not spend the time to read them fully and completely. They will scan an ad, and you have three seconds to capture their interest."



## PEER-TO-PEER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING EMPLOYEE RETENTION

While this eBook primarily focuses on recruitment marketing, employee retention emerged as a hot topic among our study participants. According to the survey responses, here's a summary of the top ways to enhance employee retention. At which of these does your practice excel? What is one area in which your practice can improve?

### Competitive Compensation and Benefits:

Offering fair and competitive pay alongside a strong benefits package was a recurrent theme. This includes higher salaries, annual bonuses, tier incentives and ensuring pay matches market rates. Consider extending benefits beyond the basics, such as sign-on bonuses, health insurance and retirement plans.

## **Recognition and Appreciation:**

The study showed acknowledging and valuing employees' efforts and contributions positively impacts retention. This can be achieved through employee recognition programs, rewards for loyalty, offering gifts and free lunches and acknowledging employees' personal milestones and challenges.

## **Work-Life Balance:**

Ensuring employees have a healthy balance between their work and personal lives is crucial, particularly in the demanding dental industry. Suggestions from your peers included flexible scheduling, strong leave programs, support for life changes, such as family illnesses or having children, and ensuring employees have time for self-care.

## **Professional Development and Training:**

Offer opportunities for growth and development through training, continuing professional development and educational support to encourage employees to stay. Your peers mentioned workshops, incrementally increased pay for skill development and creating paths for career advancement.

## **Supportive Work Environment:**

Create a positive and inclusive work culture that supports open communication, teamwork and employee input. Recommendations from your peers include establishing an open-door policy, regular meetings with staff and instilling a culture of trust and respect.

## **Effective Management Practices:**

Listen to employee concerns, offering autonomy, eliminating micro-management and addressing toxic situations promptly – all critical for retaining staff. Managers should be approachable, provide good feedback and engage in regular communication about organizational goals and employees' roles.

## **Innovative Perks and Benefits:**

Think outside the box in terms of employee perks. Consider unique benefits like creative leave programs, offering meals that are more appealing than basic options and creating a team environment where everyone is clear about the culture, mission and challenges.

## **Address Burnout and Staffing Levels:**

Recognize the reality of burnout and address it by ensuring adequate staffing and workload levels to prevent overwork and stress among existing employees.

Implementing these strategies can help organizations build a more satisfied, engaged and committed workforce.

# Ready to Improve Recruitment Marketing?

Yes, I want a complimentary SWOT analysis of my current marketing, including recruiting, so I can get:

- ✓ Clarity on the root causes of current marketing issues we face
- ✓ Research and industry intel that will help eradicate marketing issues for good
- ✓ A clearer vision for reaching the organization's desired future state
- ✓ A free initial nurture marketing plan to invite warm leads to the organization now

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Since 2007, Big Buzz® has helped [Stage II to Stage III organizations](#) systemize marketing to achieve growth goals. Founder and CEO Wendy O'Donovan Phillips is the author of [KABOOM!: The Method Used By Top Dentists for Explosive Marketing Results](#) and [Flourish!: The Method Used by Aging Services Organizations for the Ultimate Marketing Results](#), multiple data-driven eBooks, has been published in McKnight's, in Forbes, and has been quoted in The Washington Post, ABC News and Chicago Tribune. She has lectured for the American Dental Association, Argentum, several chapters of LeadingAge and dozens of other organizations in front of audiences ranging in size from 25 to 3,000. Big Buzz has been honored by the American Marketing Association for excellence and has been named a Gold Key Award Winner by the Business Marketing Association. Get details at [www.bigbuzzinc.com](http://www.bigbuzzinc.com).



## 4 ways you can work with Big Buzz now:

Systemize marketing to achieve growth goals and move from survival to success by...	Achieve consistently higher results in one area of marketing, such as brand amplification, content marketing, social media marketing or recruitment marketing efforts by...	Swiftly identify the one sales or marketing issue killing your organization fastest, get to its root cause and eradicate it for good for stronger overall results by...	Immediately gauge at a low-risk price point how to achieve higher precision marketing results by...
Making Big Buzz, the experts in marketing benchmarking, your full-service agency of record to oversee all marketing efforts.	Entrusting the development and full execution of one of these marketing strategies to the experts at Big Buzz.	Engaging Big Buzz to audit and suggest improvements to one area of your nurture marketing efforts, such as brand amplification, content marketing or social media marketing.	Handing off a single marketing project to Big Buzz.
<a href="#">Contact us</a> for pricing	Cost: Starts at \$15,000 per nurture strategy	Cost: Starts at \$10,000 per audit	Cost: Starts at \$5,000 per project

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