

The Southern Pine Dental Case Study

From “Fixer-Upper” to Thriving Practice



Carl Haynie
Southern Pine Dental
alabama



Smart start: Buying a “fixer-upper”

When Carl Haynie of Southern Pine Dental teamed up with his brother-in-law to build a small group practice, they knew that purchasing an existing practice was the best move. Their two main requirements: low-risk, good price.

“We knew that there were challenges that we would be facing going into it. But we also knew that because of that, there was a lot of equity we could build into the practice.”

– Carl Haynie, co-owner of Southern Pine Dental



They found the answer in a retiring dentist’s practice that Carl calls “a fixer-upper.” The office decor needed a lift, and so did the collections, which were only at 60%.

As an international business consultant on customer experience, Carl was well-equipped for the challenge. He was more than ready to put in the sweat equity to make the ailing practice more pleasing — and more profitable.

But after he got in the door, he discovered much more than he’d bargained for.

“There would be problems going in, we knew that — but we did not have any idea just how challenging it would be.”



From bad to worse: A plethora of problems

“It wasn’t just one problem. It was clear that there was going to be problem after problem after problem because that whole patient lifecycle – the patient experience – had not been run the way it should have been run.”

Thanks to HGTV, we’ve all experienced the horrors of a fixer-upper house: It looks bad from the outside, it’s actually worse from the inside, and as one problem is repaired, three more are discovered.

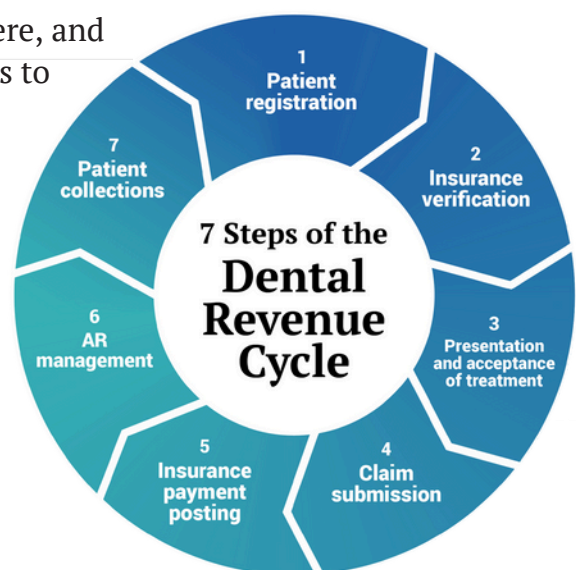
Southern Pine was no exception. Like a fine house with bad wiring, the dental practice had a good location, a good space, and good staff, but a poorly crafted revenue cycle workflow.

They needed updates and improvements all the way around the revenue cycle, including credentialing new associates, insurance billing, and patient collections.

This is when pairing a dentist with a customer experience expert proved a perfect combination – they could view the situation from different angles. They quickly recognized what the issues were, and they also realized that they didn’t have all the skills to fix them, and neither did their in-house team.

How were they going to get their collections from a dismal 60% to their ambitious goal of 98%?

“We didn’t have the skill set to run the revenue cycle management process the way it should be run.”



In search of: Expertise, solutions, and support

“I interviewed multiple companies to find the right vendor to help us decentralize. I was really impressed with DCS’s knowledge of how things should be done, and also the way they set up their pricing.”

Getting support from a third party was their best and only option. The in-house team they’d inherited wasn’t solution-focused and didn’t want to be involved.

The owners needed both consultation and hands-on help to rewire their revenue cycle, and they chose DCS because we had the right skills, and our price was right, too.

Carl told us, *“It worked really well for us starting out with not a lot of growth, and not a lot of revenue. You would help us out really small for less, and then as we grew, the price would increase.”*

They started out with Insurance Billing services and later added ZeroBalance for patient collections, and Credentialing.

When he brought on DCS, Carl got the expertise and hands-on support he wanted, and he also got the high-touch customer care he needed.



The downside of fixing up a business

DCS offered excellent support from outside of Carl's office, but he faced obstacles getting support from within. As often happens when taking over as a new owner and introducing new processes, his inherited team preferred sticking to their old ways.

They were resistant to changing their revenue cycle workflow and their daily processes, and they weren't interested in skill-building, either. Carl's team was unhappy with having to change, and he was unhappy that they refused to. Staff morale dropped to a painful low.

Carl understood what they were going through: *"It was hard to feel good about the work we were doing because we weren't doing the work we were supposed to be doing."*

He wisely invested in new personnel with the skills — and the mindset — he needed to cultivate positive energy and a winning outlook. Additional front-office staff to help distribute the workload, and a savvy office manager with a positive, can-do attitude were both big morale boosters.



In the meantime, Carl also spruced up the office decor for everyone's benefit. The result?

Staff and patients both *"love coming here because it's a bright and cheerful place,"* Carl says with pride and some relief.

"Everybody loves coming to work now, and that's a joy to see. We were able to go from as small as we were and with as many problems as we had, to twice the staff and collecting twice as much."

Above and beyond: Much more than filing claims

“The success metric was to get paid on 100% of the claims that we were filing, and DCS has done that, and it would have been enough. But it was the extra things that DCS would do.”

You may be familiar with the challenge of growing a skilled and competent team during a staffing shortage. Among other things, it requires a significant increase in consistent revenue. Fortunately, DCS provided both for Southern Pine Dental.

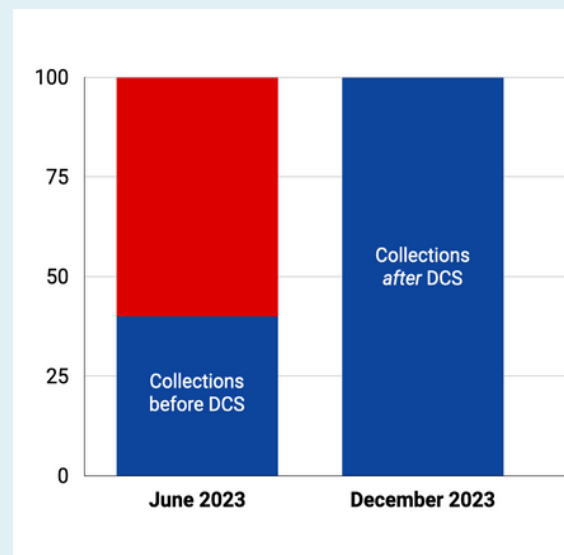
Carl’s investment of sweat equity paid off in a big way as he leveraged a larger staff with his customer experience expertise, and also tuned into his Account Specialist’s daily phone calls.



Dr. Brooke Bell
Southern Pine Dental

A 6-month transformation

- ✓ In the 6 months between June and December of 2023, DCS increased Southern Pine’s collections from 60% to 100%
- ✓ This surpassed Carl’s goal of 98% to reach his stretch goal of 100%



You need a partner, not just a payout

During his evening commute, his Account Specialist recapped the day's numbers, and also flagged breakdowns in his staff's workflow. Although she worked remotely, she could tell when Carl's in-house team wasn't following the new procedures by looking at insurance claims that came her way.

“DCS was doing the claims, and it wasn't just to get the job done. They were looking for other problems, and then calling and making me aware of them. I knew after those phone calls, 'I don't have to worry about that anymore,' because I knew DCS was caring for it.”

That oversight was invaluable for Carl as he learned best practices for dental revenue cycle management (RCM) alongside his team. He was able to make informed business decisions despite dentistry being outside his wheelhouse.

More than simply completing the necessary tasks, his Account Specialist understood the impact of skipped steps and shortcuts, and she could make him aware of the long-term consequences as well as the immediate issues.

This new sense of shared ownership meant the world to Carl as his vision for this fixer-upper business became a reality.

They say “No man is an island,” but Carl had certainly felt like one. No one else was there when he worked nights and weekends to figure things out and clean things up — and it wasn't just his business systems getting a makeover. The office was also being renovated at this time.

But with the right people working inside and outside of Southern Pine, issues were getting resolved instead of every problem spawning more problems. Once the office renovations were complete, Carl realized his box of business worries was empty.

He could safely detach from the day-to-day worries — his team had things under control. Finally, he could focus on the greater goal of building a small group practice.

Battling insurance: Are you ready to rumble?

From one dental business owner to another, Carl offers you his bottom-line perspective about hitting your collections benchmarks:

“Look at your reports, and you’ll find a few percentage points is typically worth thousands of dollars. Our collection benchmark is 98% and above, and DCS got us there — and keeps us there.”

Carl uses and recommends revenue cycle management services because he knows they’ll pay off.

“Extremely clear from even before Day One, was the return on the investment. It was easily worth it because of the money that you’re going to make as a result of working with an expert like DCS. It’s worth the cost.”

Coming from well outside dentistry, Carl learned about insurance on the battlefield of fixing a flailing business. He has a practical perspective about payers:

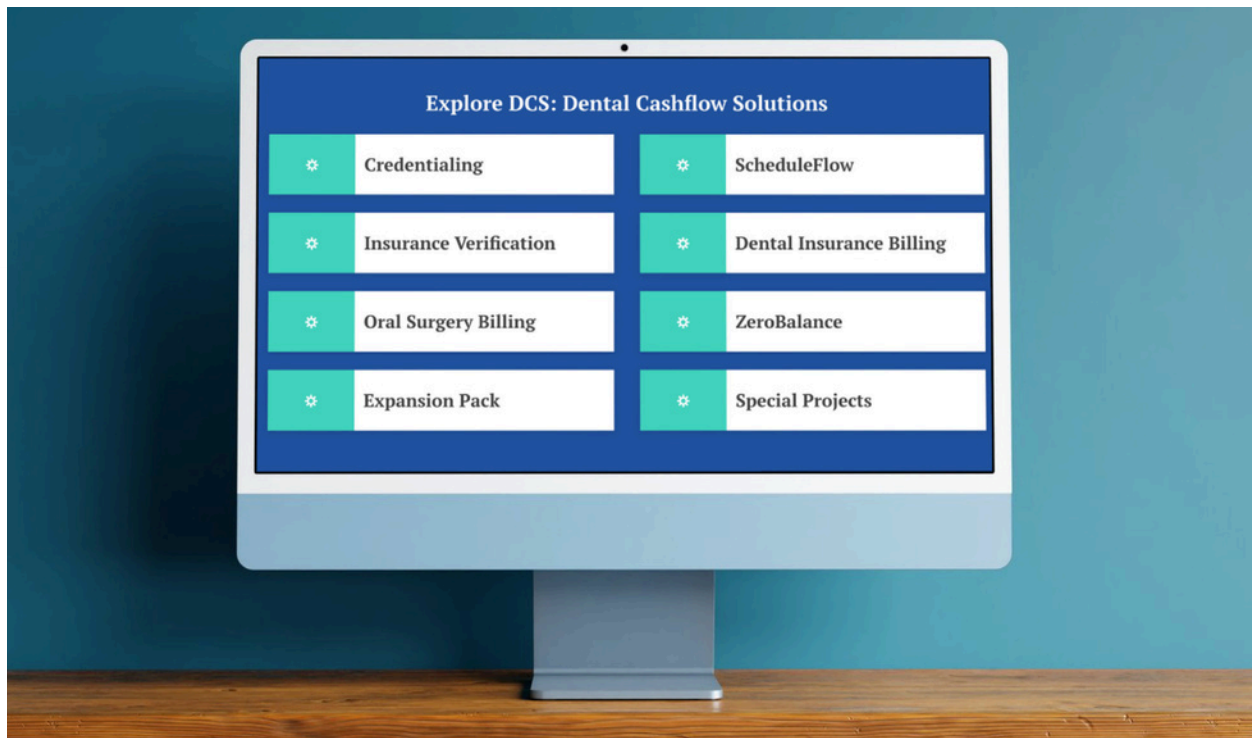
“There’s so much complexity to insurance billing. Having somebody like DCS, who eats, sleeps, and breathes insurance all the time, makes a huge difference. You’ll earn more as a result of working with someone who has expertise in insurance, because the insurance companies absolutely have experts on their side who are going to pay you as little as they can.”

What's next for Southern Pine Dental?

With their fixer-upper now looking good and going strong, Carl will use the many lessons learned to add a third and fourth dental office to their growing group.

And he feels ready for it because he's experienced first-hand what can go wrong, how to make it right, and what it's like to have support from the DCS Knowledge Network that is behind every Account Specialist's work.

“[Growth] will bring with it new problems to solve. And it's nice to know that we have a partner like DCS waiting in the wings to help with whatever those problems are.”



That's Southern Pine Dental's story. What's yours?

YOUR NEXT STEP

We've been proud to support the growth of emerging groups like Southern Pine Dental. Now let's talk about *your* goals, *your* challenges, and *our* solutions.

Book an appointment with one of our results-driven revenue cycle management experts. We'll share how we can work together to maximize revenue and streamline your profits.



Schedule a call today to discover how our team at DCS can help you free up time to focus on what matters to you.



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