



# State of Dental 2024

How Top Practices  
Retain Happy Teams



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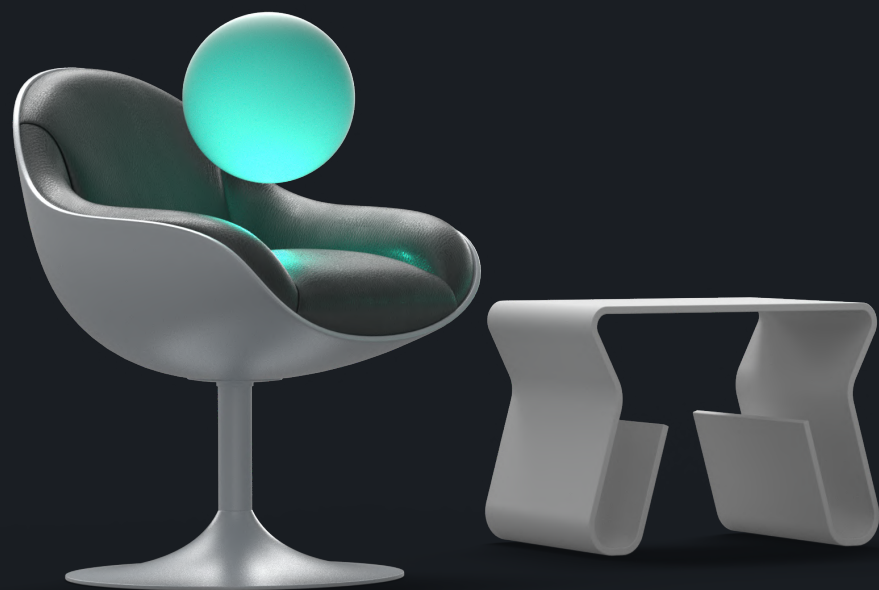
# High growth expectations shine a spotlight on your staff

The dental industry is putting the uncertainties of the pandemic and recession in the rearview mirror and embracing a more optimistic outlook for growth in 2024. However, this shift to growth has exacerbated an ongoing challenge: effectively finding and retaining the right people.

The key to growing your practice is growing your employees. Renowned business leader Doug Conant said,

“

*To win the [marketplace](#), you must first win the [workplace](#).*



This holds true for operating and growing a successful dental practice. Attracting more patients to the practice, giving them a great experience, and operating at maximum capacity is all about hiring, developing, and keeping great people.

This year's State of Dental report explores the current challenges and emerging trends influencing the dental landscape in 2024. You'll also find expert advice on creating a winning workplace that attracts top talent and addresses the frustrations that are most likely to drive them to leave.

“

*Hiring great people is the beginning, retaining great people is progress, and supporting each other is ultimately the success.*



**ROB SPEARS,**  
VP OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,  
SMILE PARTNERS

# Industry outlook

## Increase in practice annual revenue growth

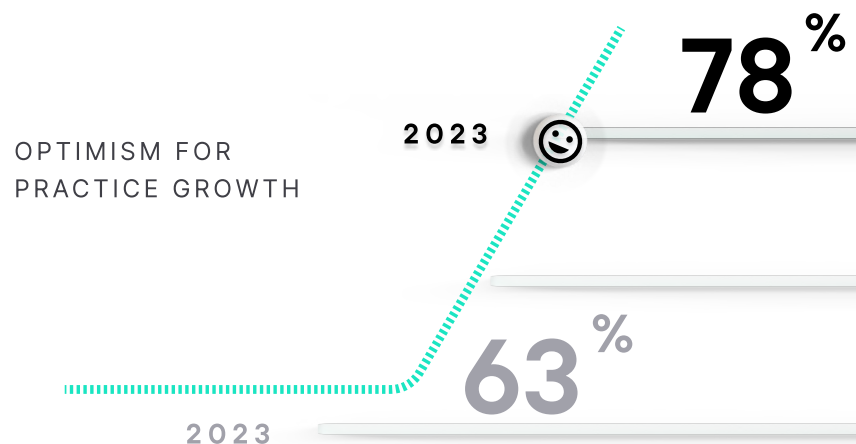
In 2023, 62% of surveyed practices reported an increase in annual revenue. In 2022, just half of practices surveyed reported revenue growth.



PERCENTAGE OF PRACTICES EXPERIENCING ANNUAL REVENUE GROWTH

## Optimism is on the rise

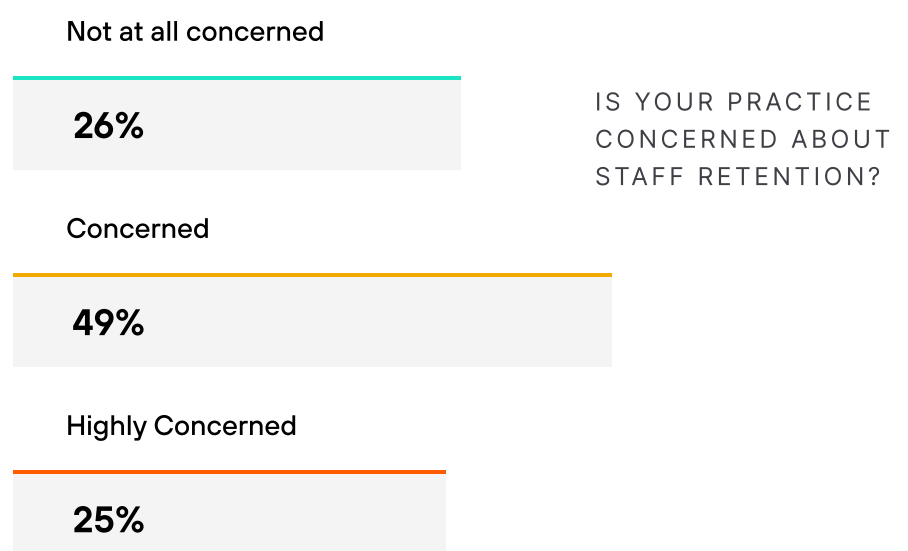
Along with revenue, optimism for practice growth in 2024 is also on the rise, with practices' expectations for 2024 growth increasing from 63% in last year's report to 78% this year.



OPTIMISM FOR PRACTICE GROWTH

## Staff retention remains the #1 concern

Growing in 2024 requires a focus on staff to ensure the smooth operation of your office. Practices still see staff retention as their primary concern in 2024, with 74% reporting concerns about keeping talent.

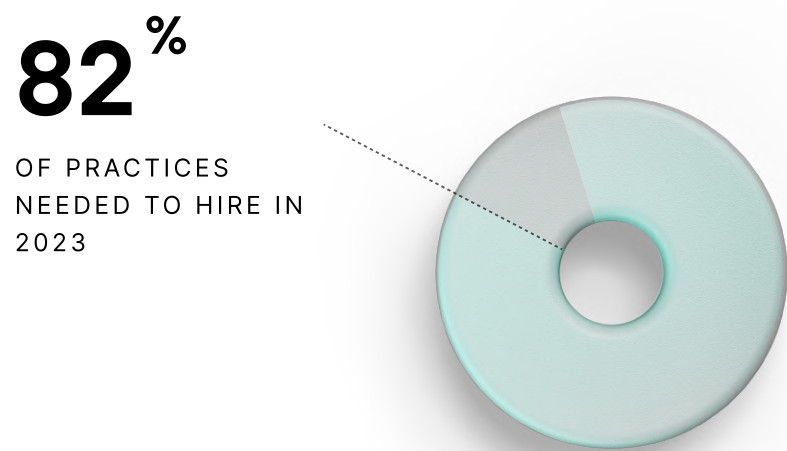


IS YOUR PRACTICE CONCERNED ABOUT STAFF RETENTION?



## Most practices had to hire in 2023

With 82% of practices having to hire in 2023, the dental industry grapples with a high demand for talent. Dental Assistants, Hygienists, and Office Managers were the most demanding roles to recruit.



## Biggest stressors in the office

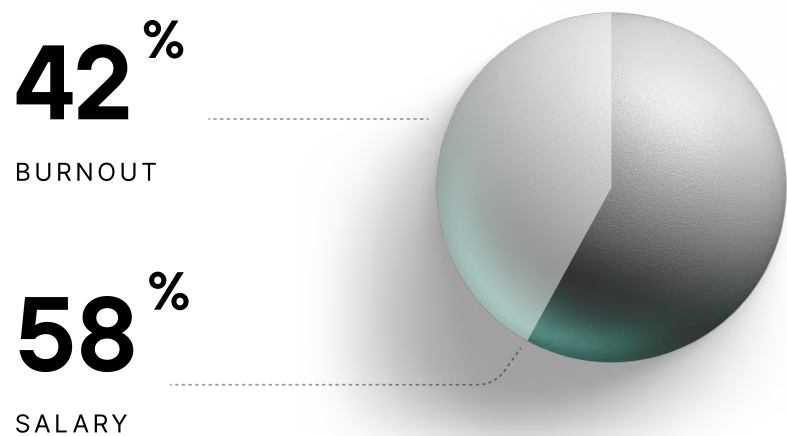
Cancellations and no-shows (58%), followed by excessive paperwork (17%), are the top stressors for office staff. Both involve tedious administrative work that drains staff time and leaves practices struggling to make up lost revenue.



## Reasons for staff turnover

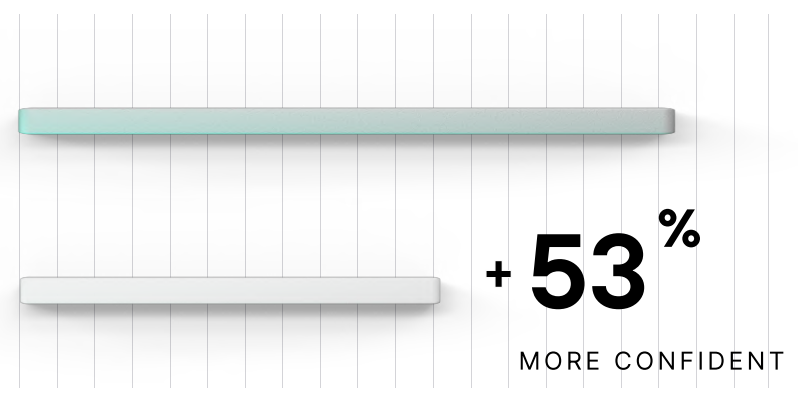
Keeping a happy and productive team is vital to the practice and your patient experience. However, 10% of staff members are leaving their current practice in 2024.

The main reasons for quitting are salary (58%), followed by burnout (42%).



## High-retention practices are more confident about growth

Practices that expect to retain their current staff through 2024 express a higher confidence level in their practice's growth (87% confidence) compared to those offices that are struggling with staff turnover (57% confidence).





# Demographics





# How we conducted the survey

We surveyed over 500 dental professionals throughout November and December 2023.

The survey was completed by dentists and practice owners (35%), office managers (46%), and other roles, including hygienists, assistants, patient coordinators, and more.

Respondents were located across the 50 states and Canada.





# State of Dental Today





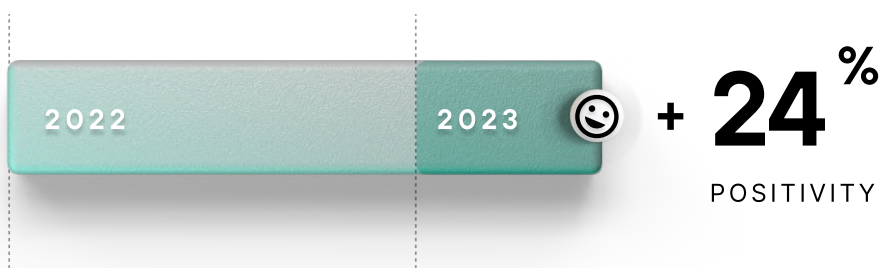


STATE OF DENTAL TODAY

# Growing optimism

This year, our State of Dental survey shows a significant rebound in confidence among dental practices: **78%** now express a positive outlook, a solid increase from the 63% who felt optimistic going into 2023. This shift seems to indicate renewed positivity as the pandemic and economic uncertainties subside.

A key driver of confidence emerges in our latest data: talent retention. 87% of practices that expect to retain their staff through 2024 reported feeling confident in their practice's outlook. However, in offices struggling with turnover, only 57% of dentists feel assured of continued success. The survey makes clear that investing to keep teams intact yields stability and optimistic outlooks.



Our survey data suggests dentistry is poised for a recovery as we move beyond the trials of recent years. Practices that focus on supporting their personnel and reducing turnover are in the best position to capitalize on the improving conditions. By doubling down on staff loyalty and skill building, dental offices can make 2024 a year of continual growth.

# Practice revenue growth outperforms last year

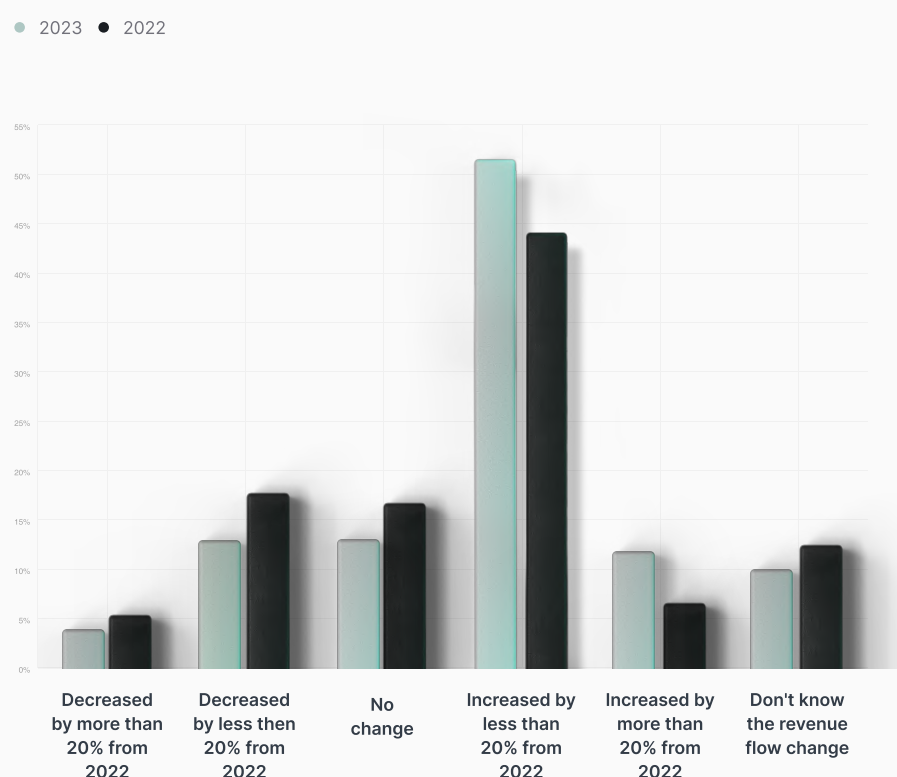
62% of respondents reported overall revenue growth in 2023, with 11% of the total practices surveyed reporting more than 20% revenue growth.

That's a **24%** increase in the number of practices reporting revenue growth from 2022 to 2023.

**62%** of respondents reported overall revenue growth in 2023



Dental practice revenue growth: 2023 vs. 2022

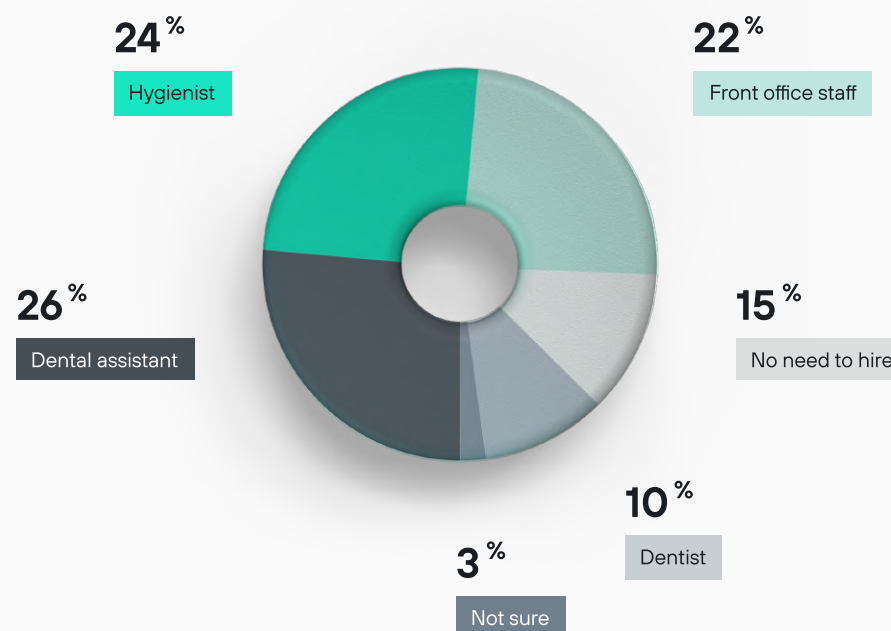


## High demand for talent

While the dental industry experiences a positive shift with increased revenue and a rise in optimism, practices still face the challenge of addressing staffing concerns to ensure continued growth and maintain high-quality patient care.

In 2023, a substantial 82% of dental practices needed to hire, revealing a significant demand for talent. Notably, Dental Assistants, Hygienists, and Office Managers were the most in demand.

What roles practices filled in 2023





# Staff are 3x more stressed about no-shows and cancellations

Taking a closer look into the office staff's day, no-shows and cancellations cause **3x** the stress of any other stressor in their daily work. Confirming appointments over the phone takes a lot of the staff's time.

To alleviate staff stress and enhance retention in 2024, practices need to explore technological tools that can either prevent cancellations or efficiently fill waitlisted slots.

“

*No-shows and cancellations affect not just the front office, but the dentist and executive team as well.*

*Having a digital tool like NexHealth's Waitlist helps fill those gaps without overwhelming the patients and staff.*

#### DID YOU KNOW?

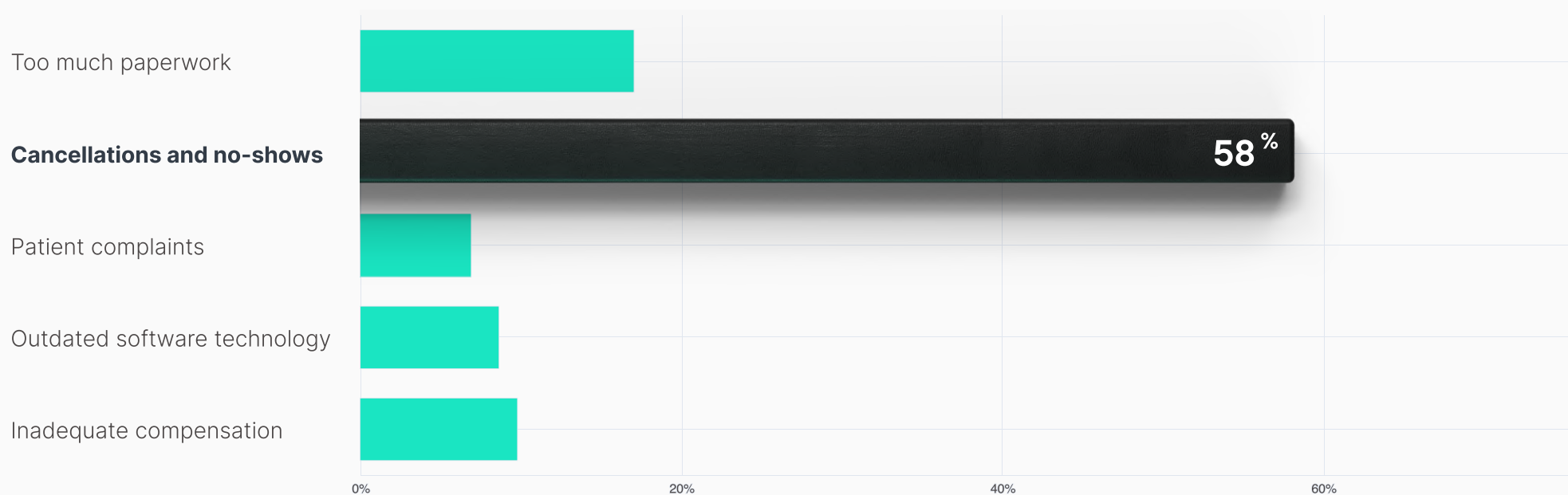


With NexHealth's automated Waitlist, 75% of accepted Waitlist appointments are filled in 20 minutes or less.



**HILLARY SMEDLEY,**  
VP OF OPERATIONS,  
GENESIS DENTAL UTAH

### As an office staff, what is the biggest stressor in your day-to-day?



# Reasons for staff turnover

With hiring and retaining talent emerging as the primary challenge for practices in 2024, 74% express varying levels of concern about retention. Let's take a look at why **10%** of staff say they are considering quitting this year.

In response to why staff might consider leaving the practice, a desire for a higher salary and burnout are the top reasons. Staff want to feel their contributions are valued and don't want to be bogged down with repetitive, manual work that often leads to burnout.

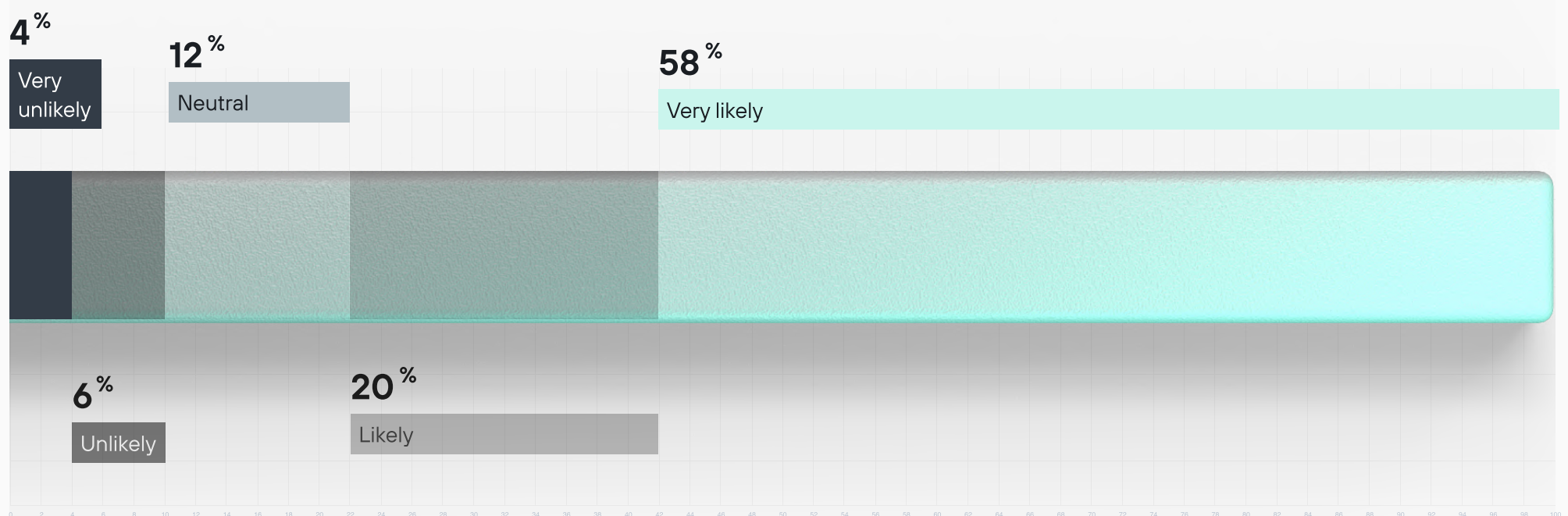
Without proactive measures to prevent turnover, practices risk seeing disappointing growth due to missed appointments, frustrated patients, and increased burnout among existing staff.

“  
*Any medical field burns you out. It's so important to make your staff feel valued for their hard work.*”



**MICHELLE JACKSON,**  
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR,  
RAVENS FAMILY DENTAL

## How likely are you to be working at your current practice in 2024?



# What high-retention practices do differently

We analyzed practices with high retention rates, where staff intends to stay in 2024, to shed light on retention strategies that set these practices apart.

## Training for technology

While technology adoption for high and lower-retention practices are similar (81% technology adoption for high-retention and 79% adoption for low-retention practices), high-retention practices show a greater commitment to training staff in new technology.

**60%** of high-retention practices offer training on the new technology they bring into their practices. Adequate training empowers your staff to maximize the capabilities and results of using tech tools.

“

*Make sure you streamline processes and documentation to help staff onboard and learn tools efficiently. Ongoing training makes your staff feel empowered, and it makes a difference.*



**MICHELLE GRANT,**  
DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES,  
PURE DENTAL

## Staff recognition

Of the practices experiencing higher retention, 71% implement staff recognition programs, while 61% conduct regular performance reviews to help with the staff's career development.

“

*Staff recognition is very important, and the biggest thing is communication. Practices should help staff navigate their career, so they continue to improve and feel accomplished.*



**HILLARY SMEDLEY,**  
VP OF OPERATIONS,  
GENESIS DENTAL UTAH



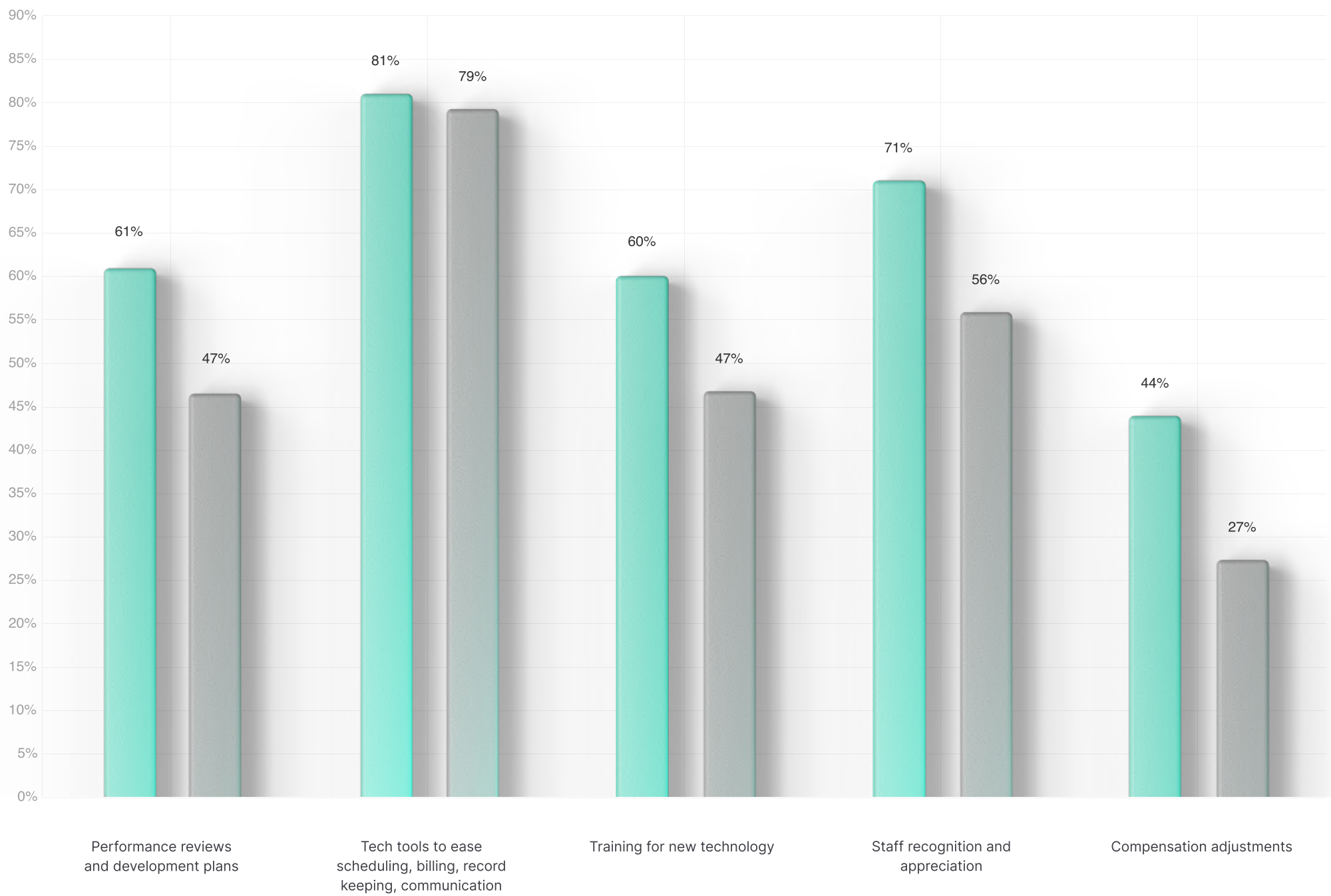
## RETENTION IN FOCUS

### Compensation adjustments

Compensation is the #1 reason why staff quit, with 44% of high-retention practices actively providing compensation adjustments to enhance retention. In contrast, only **27%** of lower retention practices consider making adjustments to compensation.

### Which of these programs does your practice offer today?

● High-retention practices ● Low-retention practices







# 2024 Predictions







2024 PREDICTIONS

# The #1 patient complaint

For two consecutive years, the **#1** patient complaint has been difficulty in scheduling and rescheduling appointments.

Patients expect the same level of scheduling flexibility for dental appointments as they experience in other aspects of their lives. Without offering patients an easy way to schedule and reschedule appointments at their convenience, practices are more likely to experience no-shows and cancellations.

“

*Some patients don't like calling, and some can't call. Having them directly book online is amazing and the office staff no longer needs to call patients one by one.*

## What are the most common complaints from your patients?

1	Hard to schedule or reschedule an appointment
2	Too much paperwork
3	Too expensive
4	Didn't get appointment reminders
5	Wait time for appointments
6	Office is not modern enough



**GABRIELLA BATEMAN,**  
OWNER AND DENTIST,  
HALF MOON BAY FAMILY DENTISTRY



# Technology will improve staff and patient satisfaction

High-retention practices are especially invested in technology to improve the staff and patient experience.

Among high-retention practices that have invested in technology, **90%** utilize patient texting or emailing tools to effectively free up valuable staff time that would otherwise be spent on the phone.

Additionally, 77% have embraced digital patient intake solutions to reduce the burden of paperwork and manual data entry.

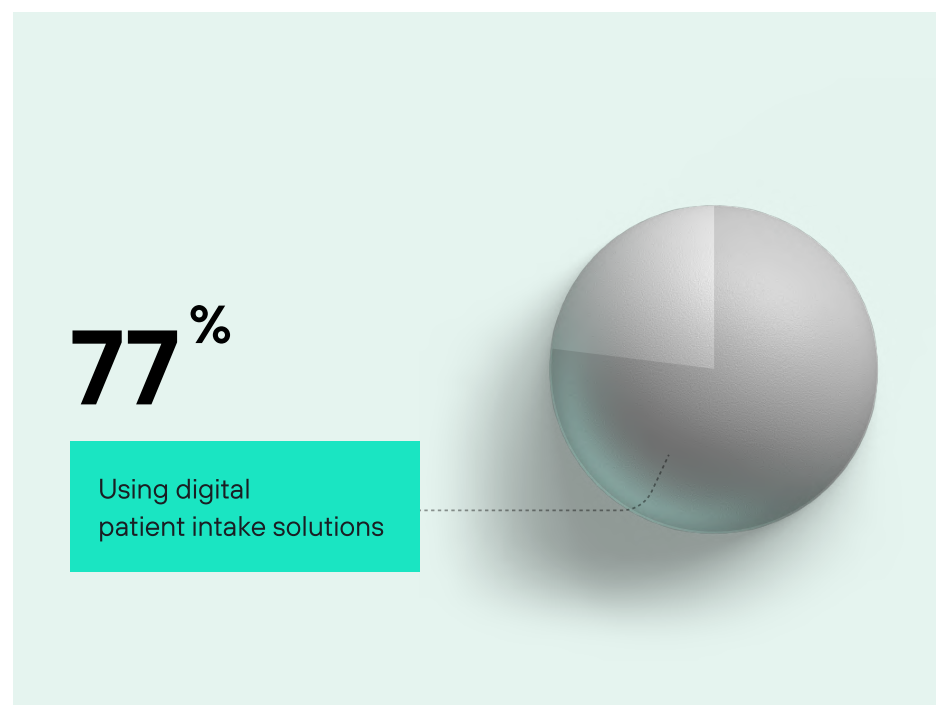
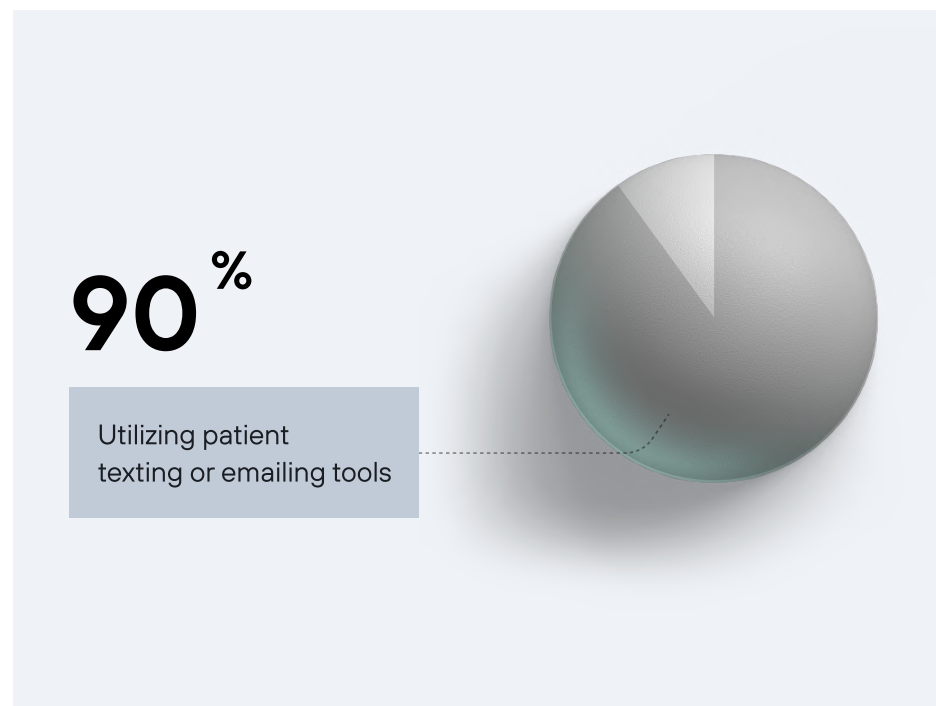
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*Technology is crucial for our office staff. Switching from paper to digital forms saves me 15 minutes per patient, and data accuracy is up.*



**JESSICA FOSS,**  
OFFICE MANAGER,  
PAPAGEORGIOU DENTAL ASSOCIATES

Technology improves staff and patient experiences. High-retention practices that employ digital paperwork solutions have an 87% staff satisfaction rate and only 9% reported issues with patient scheduling.



Patients completed 5M+ digital forms via NexHealth in 2023, saving practices over 600K hours.

[Learn more](#) →



### Doctors are more confident about A.I.

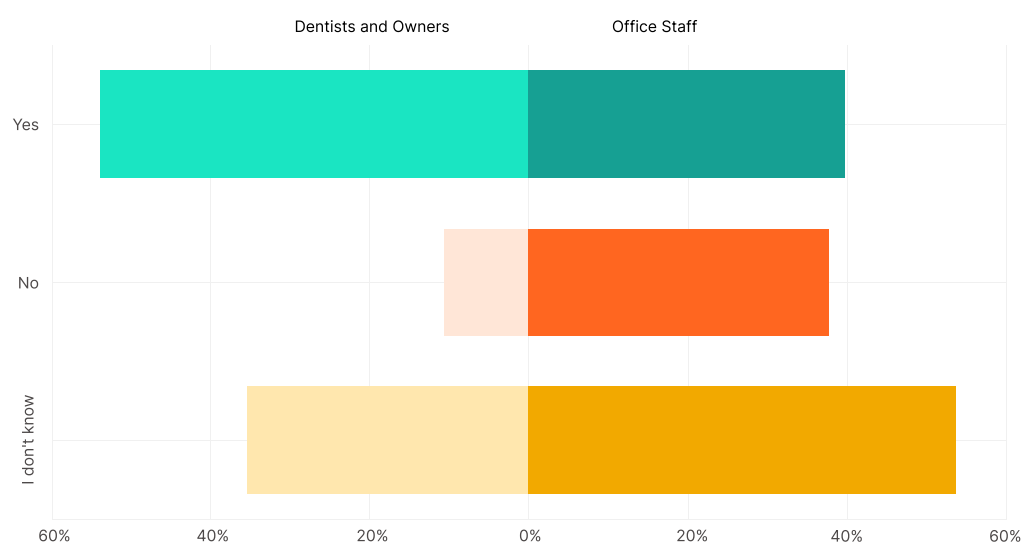
Many industries have experienced the impact of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) in the past year, but what does it mean for the dental industry?

39% of practices surveyed foresee increased office productivity from A.I., and doctors and owners express greater confidence in A.I. (54%) than office staff (28%).

An additional 36% of respondents indicated uncertainty about the impact of A.I. This suggests potential openness amongst those respondents to additional training and education on best practices for implementing A.I.

One very important opportunity is in further automating the scheduling and rescheduling activities that are so vexing to patients and staff alike.

### Do you think A.I. will help make your office more productive?



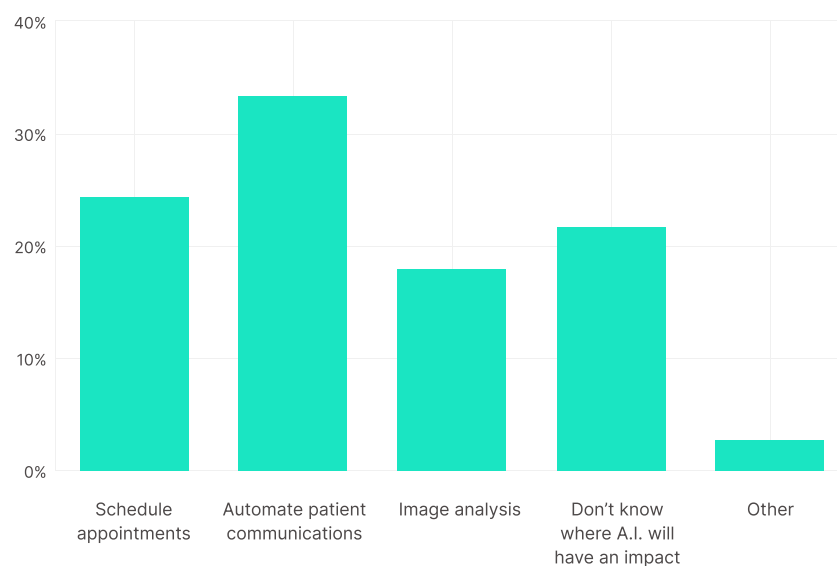
### Practices want to leverage A.I. for patient communication

32% of practices expect A.I. applications to extend beyond clinical use to also include automating patient communications, such as A.I. chatbots and for generating insurance claim narratives.

Some practices have already integrated A.I. to create marketing campaigns or detailed procedures within their HR manuals for staff.

We can anticipate more practices will experiment with A.I. to improve patient engagement, payment processing, and appointment scheduling.

### Where do you think A.I. will have the biggest impact on your practice?



A close-up, low-angle shot of the bottom edge of a dark-colored laptop. The image is dimly lit, with a teal or greenish light source from the left casting a soft glow on the laptop's surface. Visible are three rectangular ports, a circular power button with a glowing teal power symbol, and the bottom edge of the laptop screen. The background is dark and out of focus.

# High-Retention Practice Strategies





# How top practices hire and retain happy teams

## Hire based on personality

Prioritizing personality over skills can be an advantage in specific situations, particularly for front desk roles that involve extensive personal interactions.

At Smile Partners, Rob Spears has found that this approach broadens the hiring pool, allowing the organization to attract talented individuals while efficiently addressing underperforming ones.

Adding individuals from diverse industries to your team brings a valuable fresh perspective. Their approach to customer care and the key performance indicators (KPIs) they use to assess service levels may differ from the dental perspective. Introducing this diversity can enhance the practice's overall process.



“

*We can hire someone with a great personality and customer service background, and we can teach them dental.*



**ROB SPEARS,**  
VP OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,  
SMILE PARTNERS

# Building a collaborative culture

Dr. Turnwald creates a fun, caring environment where employees feel valued and can grow their careers.

To get a better understanding of the culture, Dr. Turnwald recommends surveying your team asking:

1

Is this practice fun to work for?

2

Do you enjoy your job?

3

Do you feel supported?

4

Is there a system in place for you to grow?

As a result of fostering a collaborative culture, most of his employees have been working with him for 5 to 20 years.

“

*As an industry, we just cannot seem to attract and retain talent.*



**DR. BENJAMIN TURNWALD,**  
OWNER AND DENTIST,  
BENJAMIN TURNWALD DENTISTRY



# A remote front office offers flexibility

**30%** of practices are considering transitioning the front office to a hybrid or remote model.

By leveraging patient experience software, front office staff could seamlessly manage appointments without the constraints of in-person paperwork or phone calls.



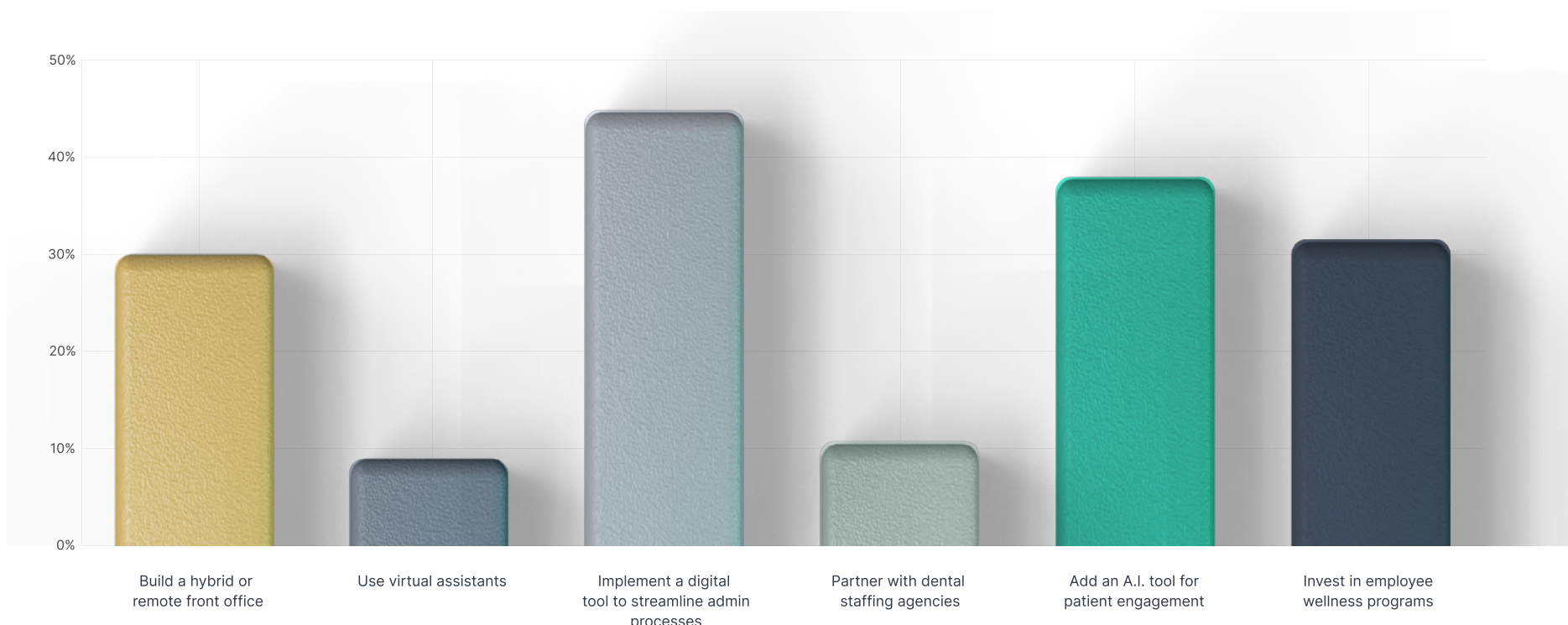
**DR. JOANNA PUFNOCK,**  
OWNER AND DENTIST,  
NYC DENTAL LOUNGE

Dr. JoAnna Pufnock has a unique vision for her practice, NYC Dental Lounge, located in the heart of New York City. To achieve a 100% digital front office and provide more flexibility for her staff, she opted to assemble a fully remote operations team.

Despite Gecile Fojas, the remote receptionist, being based in Queens while the office is in Midtown Manhattan, she sustains a close connection to patients through digital patient experience tools like online booking, communications, and digital forms.

This approach ensures the office is lean but efficient, while patients continue to enjoy a personalized experience.

## How do you intend to alleviate staffing issues in 2024?



# Conclusion

While the dental industry is experiencing a rise in optimism, the challenges of staffing and retention stand out as significant hurdles in the path to sustained success. With 25% of practices "extremely concerned" about retaining staff in 2024, many are implementing the following strategies to retain office staff:

1

**Implement digital tools to streamline tasks - especially the ones that are most likely to lead to staff burnout.**

2

**Take advantage of the newest technologies, including A.I., to improve patient engagement.**

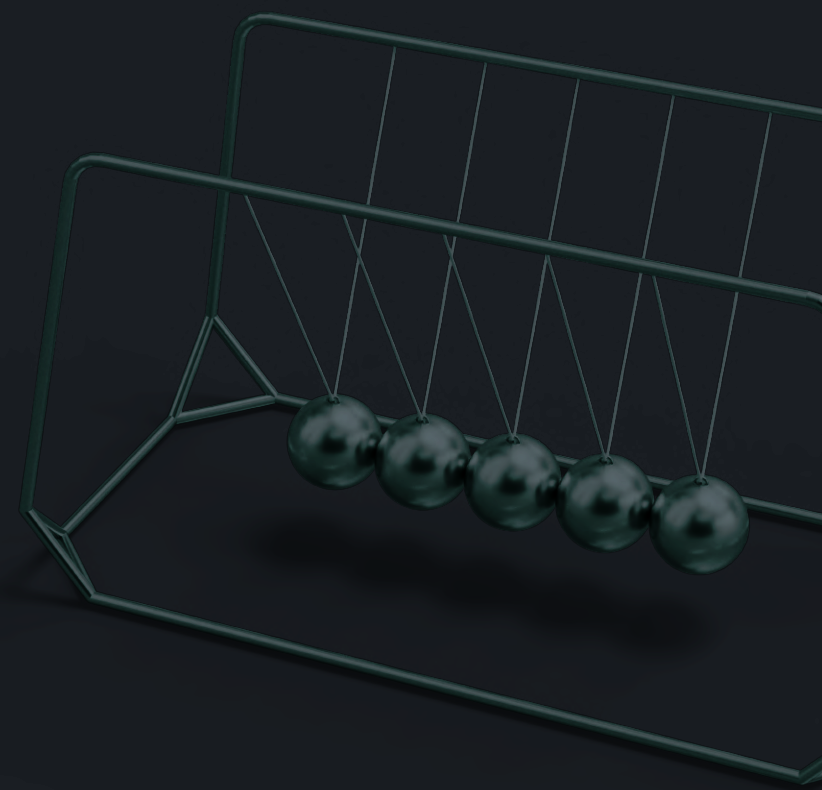
3

**Invest in employee wellness programs.**

4

**Build a hybrid or remote front office to give staff more flexibility.**

As the industry acknowledges the critical importance of hiring and staff retention, technology will play a more pivotal role in ensuring the success of dental practices in the years to come.



For more information on how you can digitize your practice with scheduling, patient communications, forms, and payments, book a quick consultation with NexHealth.

[Book now](#) →