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SEPTEMBER 2025

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SEPTEMBER 2025

## DENTISTRY

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Lancashire Smiles

LANCASHIRE SMILES

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# Risky business

Siobhan Hiscott  
Group managing editor

If the last few years have taught us anything, it's that adaptability isn't something that's 'nice to have': it's a core survival skill.

After all, dentistry has faced its fair share of upheaval of late: changing patient expectations, economic turbulence and industry disruption. All these things have forced business owners to rethink how they operate, and the practices that thrive aren't necessarily the ones with the biggest budgets – they're the ones that can pivot quickly, embrace change and see opportunity where others see obstacles.

Adaptability is more than being reactive. It's a proactive mindset; a willingness to keep an open mind and change course when the situation demands it. This might mean adopting new patient communication channels, expanding service offerings, or rethinking your marketing to align with evolving consumer behaviour. By staying flexible, you can turn potential setbacks into springboards.

Challenges can often be the catalysts for your most valuable breakthroughs. When forced to examine your systems, identify inefficiencies, and find creative solutions, you often discover more streamlined workflows, stronger branding, or entirely new revenue streams.

Equally, adaptability alone isn't enough. To lead in today's competitive environment, practices must also be willing to take calculated risks. Playing it safe may protect you in the short term, but it rarely delivers the kind of

growth that comes from bold, strategic moves.

Risk-taking isn't about reckless decisions, it's about weighing the potential upsides against the possible downsides, preparing for both – and moving forward with confidence. You'll rarely have 100% certainty, but you can arm yourself with enough insight and planning to make informed, high-reward decisions.

Great leaders also recognise that adaptability and risk-taking are contagious. Build a team culture that encourages flexibility, creativity and innovation, and you'll find your people are more willing to experiment, solve problems and embrace new approaches. This creates an environment where challenges are met with curiosity instead of fear.

For dental business owners, the rewards of this approach can be profound. Not only does it position you to weather difficult times, but it also sets you apart in a crowded marketplace.

Patients notice when a clinic evolves to meet their needs, when it invests in delivering better care, and when it communicates with clarity and authenticity.

They are far more likely to choose (and stay loyal to) a practice that demonstrably balances stability and progress.

The reality is simple: change is constant, and the pace is accelerating.

As Derek Uittenbroek points out on page 76, the days of 'build it and they

will come' are over – and anyone clinging to this philosophy will struggle.

Those who adapt with purpose, pivot with confidence and take calculated risks will not only survive, they'll define what success looks like in the next chapter of dentistry.



# Contents

## 11

### *Headlines*

The latest news and developments affecting the dental profession

## 16

### *Opinion*

Chris Barrow provides the formula to accurately work out your marketing budget

## 18

### *How I Did It*

Arnold Gangaidzo guides us through opening Lancashire Smiles, his family friendly practice near the Fylde coast

## 32

### *Marketing for conversion*

Lisa Grogan reveals the marketing efforts that will bring real results



## 24

### *Get the look*

This month's interior design vision board showcases ways to introduce metallic features in the practice

## 35

### *The financial greenhouse*

Nigel Jones, Mike Blenkarn, Magdalena Harding and Barry Oulton discuss how to sustainably grow your practice finances

## 29

### *Open days: maximise your event*

David Nelkin explores orthodontic open days and shares how to improve conversion rates

## 39

### *New start funding*

Looking to open a dental practice? Stuart Burn considers funding

### **Regulars**

- 3 Lead editorial
- 87 Industry innovations
- 88 In the hot seat with Alif Moosajee

### **Spotlight**



#### **DEREK UITTENBROEK**

Dentists must adapt – and fast. On page 76, Derek Uittenbroek reveals how embracing change, not comfort, can drive lasting growth in dentistry.



# 40

## ***The impact of external factors***

Oliver Acton discusses ways to handle factors beyond your control

# 48

## ***Tools for growth and development***

Mervyn Druian and Bernita Shelley discuss the value of having a mentor and a coach in your life

# 57

## ***The secret to successful recruitment***

Del Kahya reveals how to remove the headache of recruiting in dentistry

# 62

## ***Breaking free from burnout***

Mark Topley offers a guide to sustainable leadership for practice principals

# 72

## ***Harrods meets dentistry***

Zayba Sheikh shares what it took to launch Ruh Dental inside the world-renowned department store

# 42

## ***How happiness leads: from pressure to play***

Rana Al-Falaki explains how fun and fulfilment can transform performance in any dental practice

# 51

## ***Elevate your management***

Amanda Reast explains why dental practices need professional leadership more than ever

# 58

## ***Mastering patient clarity***

Barry Oulton discusses the impact mind-reading is having on your communication with patients

# 65

## ***Voices from the edge***

Carol Somerville Roberts opens up to Andrea Ubhi about finding her people, overcoming a GDC investigation and leading with purpose

# 76

## ***'Evolve – or die'***

Marketing expert Derek Uittenbroek reveals how setbacks can shape a journey and drive a business forward

# 46

## ***The power of unified communication***

Faye Mear shares how to get everyone on board with practice messaging

# 54

## ***The feminine edge in dentistry***

Sarika Shah on how, by embracing their unique strengths, women can reshape dentistry from the inside out

# 60

## ***Built for pressure***

Jen Upton explains how strategic staffing can support compliance with the Care Quality Commission

# 68

## ***'A pizza party is just papering over the cracks'***

Rachel Jackson discusses going beyond superficial fixes to address workplace stress

# 81

## ***Crafting a winning entry***

The Private Dentistry Awards entry deadline is fast approaching! Here's how to compile a great submission

# PRIVATE

## DENTISTRY

### MISSION STATEMENT

*Private Dentistry* is an essential reference for dental practice development in the 21st century, focused on helping practices evolve sustainably, operate innovatively, and thrive.

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BDS, runs a multidisciplinary practice at Neel Dentistry. He founded PDI-Professional Dental Indemnity Ltd. He is a judge on the Private Dentistry Awards. He founded the British Academy of Microscope Dentistry and is a founder of the BAPD.



#### SAM JETHWA

BDS, is the founder of Bespoke Smile Clinic & Academy, which trains dentists on occlusion, porcelain veneers, and rehabilitations. Sam is on the board of directors at the BACD, and has been a judge for the Private Dentistry Awards.



#### ANGELA LY

BDS, is an award-winning dentist who has featured on *BBC Breakfast*, ITV's *Save Money Good Health* and Channel 5's *Gadget Show*.



#### HANNA MIRAF TAB

BDS, is owner of Kiln Lane Dental practice and an actress in *Real Housewives of Cheshire*. She has completed a master's degree in prosthodontics and has qualifications in non-surgical treatments such as anti-ageing injectables.



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BDS, is a cosmetic dentist offering smile design, comprehensive dental care, laser dentistry and implants. He is a national and international lecturer.



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# Government to crack down on Botox and filler practitioners

A new local authority licensing system will be introduced for delivering Botox and fillers as part of a package of measures to combat a 'wild west of dodgy practitioners'.

Practitioners delivering low-risk cosmetic treatments including Botox, lip fillers and facial dermal filler will now be subject to rigorous safety, training and insurance standards. This will be enforced with a new licensing system managed by local authorities.

Harsher measures will also be introduced for higher risk procedures such as non-surgical Brazilian butt lifts. These must now be performed by qualified healthcare professionals only through a CQC-registered provider.

## 'COSMETIC COWBOYS'

The government said these changes were prompted by a series of incidents involving high-risk treatments being delivered by people with little or no medical training. Patients were left with serious complications, permanent scarring and even death.

Concern was also expressed over the 'unsafe' locations in which treatment was provided – including homes, hotels, and pop-up clinics.

Minister of state for health Karin Smyth said: 'The cosmetics industry has been plagued by a wild west of dodgy practitioners and procedures. There are countless horror stories of cosmetic cowboys causing serious, catastrophic damage.'

'This government is taking action to protect those seeking treatments, support honest and competent practitioners, and root out the cowboys as part of our Plan for Change.'

'This isn't about stopping anyone from getting treatments – it's about preventing rogue operators from exploiting people at the expense of their safety and keeping people safe. We're giving them peace of mind and reducing the cost to the NHS of fixing botched procedures.'

## BOTOX 'HORROR STORIES'

A public consultation will begin in early 2026 to determine which procedures will be covered by new restrictions. In the meantime, higher risk procedures will be prioritised for implementation.

Millie Kendall, chief executive officer of the British Beauty Council, said: 'The council has worked tirelessly in pushing for increased regulation of the aesthetics sector since its inception. I therefore fully welcome the government's announcement that it is pushing forward with legislation.'

'Any measures that increase protection for the general public and professionalise the industry will help instil confidence as well as helping to prevent the normalisation of horror stories that have become synonymous with our sector.'

'We will work closely with relevant government stakeholders to ensure these measures are implemented in a way that ensures the sustained, and safe, growth of our sector. This is the first step forward in raising the reputation of our £30.4 billion industry.'

# PRIVATE

DENTISTRY AWARDS 2025

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The deadline for entering this year's Private Dentistry Awards is Friday 12 September, so to be in with a chance of winning at this year's ceremony, now is the time to get your entry ready for submission!

Further information can be found at [dentistry.co.uk/awards](http://dentistry.co.uk/awards).

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# Award-winning private dentist publishes new book

Dr Andrea Ubhi has published her first leadership book, *Lead from the Edge*.

Offering an honest and reflective look at what it means to lead under pressure, Andrea describes *Lead from the Edge* as the book she wishes she'd read 30 years ago.

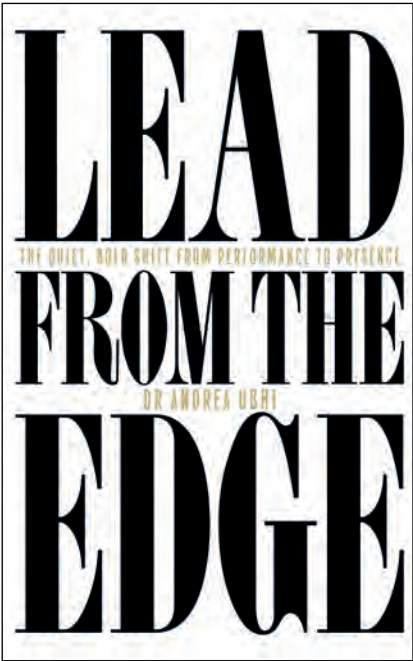
The book was born from three decades of experience building a private dental practice, leading teams, navigating personal reinvention – and surviving cancer.

### A LOOK INSIDE

Throughout its pages, Andrea shares candid insights from her journey, weaving together the highs and lows of private practice ownership, charitable leadership and personal transformation.

Each chapter explores a theme drawn from real-life experience – resilience, identity, burnout, redefining success.

As Andrea explains: 'Leadership isn't something we do with our heads alone. It's a whole-body experience.'



**EACH CHAPTER  
EXPLORES A THEME  
DRAWN FROM REAL-  
LIFE EXPERIENCE**

Though the book is not dentistry-specific, it speaks directly to those working within the profession, particularly practice owners and dental leaders.

The book reflects Andrea's personal values – integrity, calm and adventure – and her wider mission to support others navigating pivotal moments in life or career. In addition to her work in dentistry, she is the chair of Asha Nepal, a charity supporting survivors of trafficking and abuse, to which she donates more than 10% of her business profits. The proceeds from the book also support this cause.

### REASSURANCE, INSIGHT AND GENTLE CHALLENGE

For those in the profession who are feeling the weight of leadership, Andrea's book offers reassurance, insight and gentle challenge. It's a timely reminder that sometimes the best leadership begins at the edge.

*Lead from the Edge* is available in paperback, hardback, and Kindle formats on Amazon.

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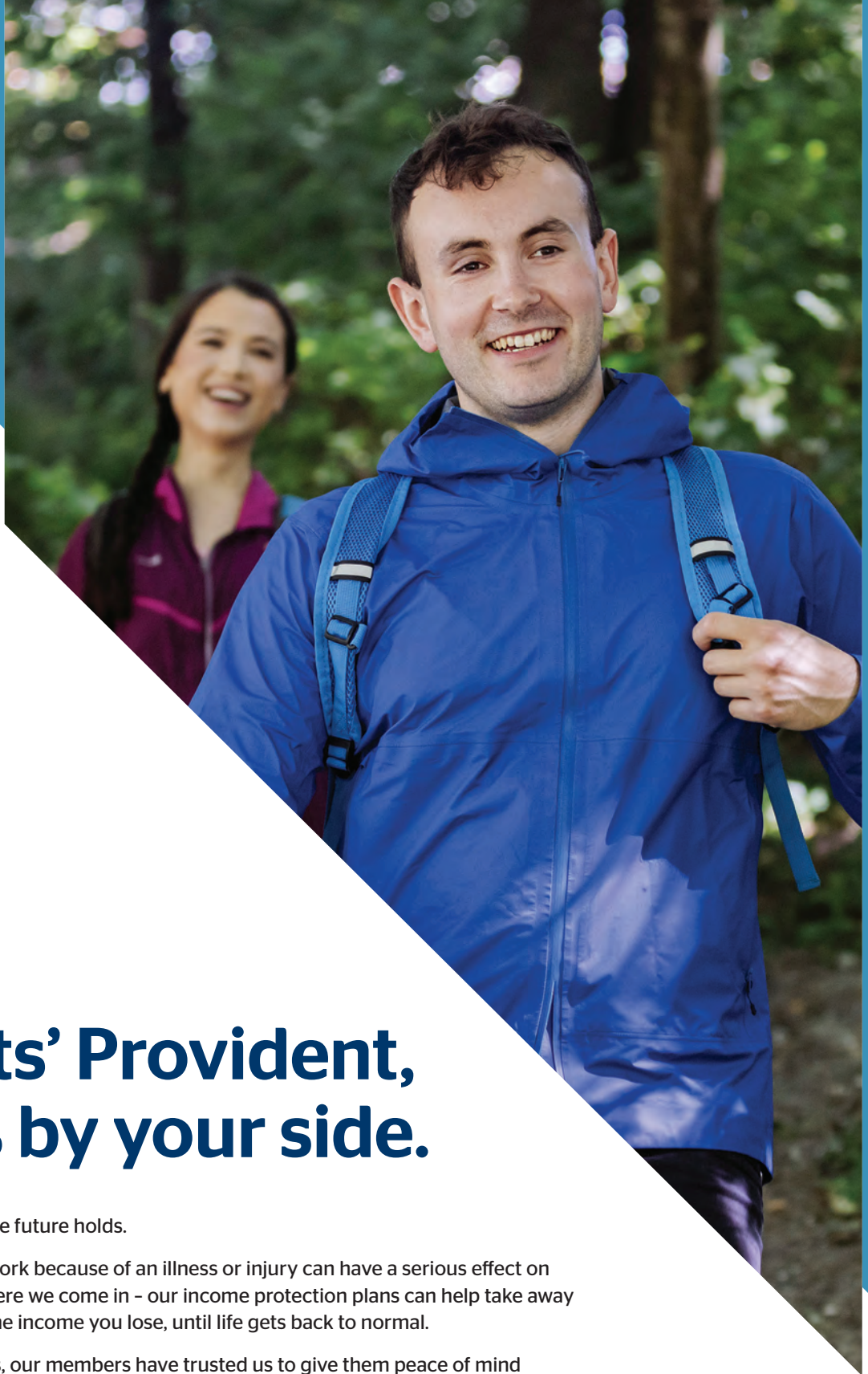
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## Smoking during pregnancy may affect babies' dental development

Enamel defects and hypodontia were linked with maternal smoking during pregnancy in a new literature review.

The review explored the association of various dental development disorders with smoking during pregnancy. Many of the studies included found that hypodontia, or teeth failing to develop, was more common in babies whose mother had smoked while pregnant. The researchers suggest that as smoking reduces oxygen flow to the placenta, it can negatively impact the cells responsible for forming deciduous teeth. This could prevent them from maturing, leading to hypodontia.

The presence of nicotine can also disrupt the development of enamel and dentine, resulting in hypomineralisation and enamel defects. Several of the studies supported an association between antenatal smoking and molar incisor hypomineralisation.

Similarly, the review found that smoking during pregnancy was highly associated with enamel hypoplasia (insufficient or missing enamel). This was particularly strong in cases of smoking during the second and third trimesters.

### UNAFFECTED ASPECTS OF TOOTH DEVELOPMENT

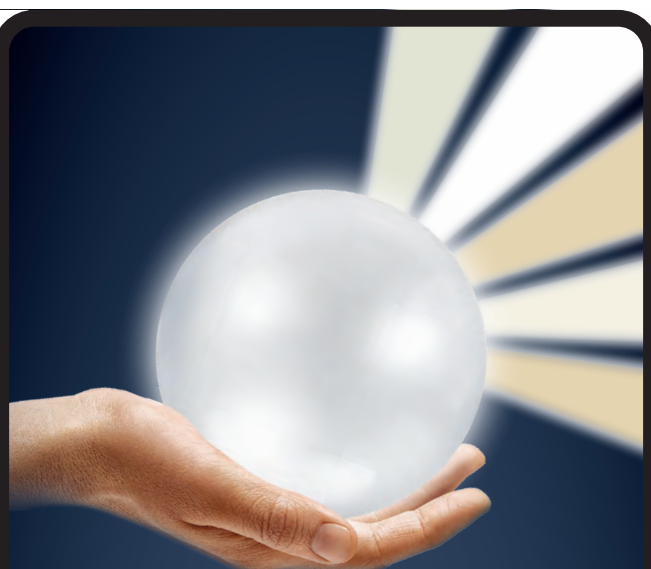
However, most of the studies did not find a strong link between smoking during pregnancy and tooth eruption patterns. While it has been hypothesised that smoking during the first trimester may accelerate tooth eruption, the evidence surveyed in the review did not support this theory.

There was also some evidence of smoking during pregnancy being associated with short root anomalies. However, the researchers acknowledged that the evidence was very limited in this area.

Published in *Evidence-Based Dentistry*, the review concludes that smoking during pregnancy poses 'significant risks in the development of hypodontia and enamel defects in offspring'.



However, the strength of the evidence remains limited due to inconsistencies in the methods used in different studies.

The researchers called for 'further high-quality and well-controlled research' to validate the evidence of risks to dental development in babies.



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# The currency of marketing

**Chris Barrow** reveals how to accurately work out your marketing budget



CHRIS  
BARROW

**O**ne of my own frequently asked questions from dentists is: 'How much should I set aside for my marketing budget?'

The textbooks on professional services firms (including healthcare) would indicate around 2.50% of annual sales for an established business.

As for startups, potentially the sky is the limit – and I've seen private squat practices invest up to £100,000 per annum in the first few years (even outside of London and other big cities), in an attempt to get digital visibility in their postcode.

I do, however, think that the default answer, denominated in pound sterling, fails to address a very important issue: who is going to do the work here?

## CRITICAL QUESTIONS

I've been critical over the years around some of the promises made by digital advertising agencies, both in terms of quantity and quality of leads.

Those same agencies often respond by pointing out that their job is to generate qualified leads, and that it's then the job of the client to convert those leads.

Agreed – it's a collaboration between the agency and you, the client.

When I see the stats – with often only 15 to 30% of leads converted into patients buying treatment – there are three questions that must be asked:

1. How good were the leads?
2. How good were the team members first responding to those leads?
3. How good was the TCO/clinical team at presenting solutions and gaining agreement to proceed?

This brings me back to the original question with which I began this article: 'How much should I set aside for my marketing budget?'

My response to this question is: 'Are you asking me to give you a sum of money as the answer or a measure of time?'

## MORE THAN MONEY

There is little point in setting aside even 2.50% of sales as a marketing budget if you aren't also prepared to set aside the time for someone to focus on building and implementing:

- Your internal marketing systems – reviews, photographs, video testimonials and recommendations
- Your Inbound marketing systems – social media posts, a blog, a newsletter, a podcast, a branded Youtube channel, a website that works and regular contact with B2B and B2C organisations and communities in your area.

The currency measured in money alone is never enough.

The currency to be measured in time is, I believe, a full-time dedicated content development manager (CDM), with no distractions and able to get things done. In other words, a 35-hour week.

The salary for that CDM comes out of your payroll budget, not your

marketing budget.

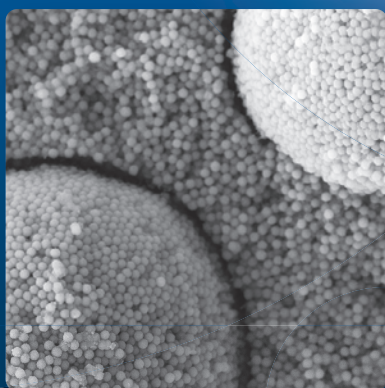
So, to answer the question: 'How much should I set aside for my marketing budget?'

My answer is: 'You should be thinking of setting aside 2.50% of sales as your marketing budget and 35 hours a week of work for a full-time qualified content development manager. Would you like me to help you identify and train that individual?'

## THE CURRENCY MEASURED IN MONEY ALONE IS NEVER ENOUGH






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# Lancashire Smiles

**Arnold Gangaidzo** guides us through the opening of his family friendly practice near the Fylde coast in Lancashire

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**W**hen I set out to launch my squat practice, I presented the bank with an optimistic business plan while holding onto a more cautious, pessimistic one. In hindsight, even that wasn't pessimistic enough.

At my previous practice, the principal had expanded to open a second site, effectively making me lead of a squat practice. This experience gave me the confidence to take that leap of faith. So, I started saving. My goal was to reach £100k, but despite falling short, I still walked into the bank with that business plan to support my case.

I wanted to establish a squat rather than purchase an existing clinic because it would allow me to design everything from the ground up. I've seen how easy it is to become entrenched in a particular culture – both positive and negative – and how teams and patients often resist change. I didn't want my practice to become a battleground, so I sought a blank canvas.

## THE PERFECT PLACE

I needed to exclude locations within a five-mile radius of my previous employer. I also required a location close enough to home to avoid a long commute, which I couldn't face.

These factors narrowed my options, and it took me about three months

**THE BEACH AND ROCKS INSPIRED THE WALLS, WHICH ARE MADE FROM MICRO-CEMENT IMPORTED FROM SPAIN AND ARE A DELICATE SOFT PINK**

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## *Step inside...*

**THE PRACTICE**  
Lancashire Smiles  
55-63 Freckleton Street  
Kirkham Street  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR4 2SN

**TELEPHONE**  
01772 342929

**EMAIL**  
[smiles@lancashiresmiles.co.uk](mailto:smiles@lancashiresmiles.co.uk)

**WEBSITE**  
[www.lancashiresmiles.co.uk](http://www.lancashiresmiles.co.uk)

to find the right place. In August 2023, I came across a former carpet showroom available for lease on a mainly residential street. It's located in Kirkham, a small town about 15 minutes from my home in Preston.

The showroom had been there for many years, with the owners living upstairs, and they had sold the building to my current landlord, who uses the first and second floors as apartments. The ground-floor space had been refurbished and was perfect, so I began negotiating the lease.

One of the main sticking points was that I wanted to buy the building, and I insisted on including a first-refusal clause in the contract. I also negotiated a six-month rent-free period. These negotiations continued until February; in hindsight, this delay was a blessing.

The build started in March with an expected completion date in May, but that didn't happen. The builder had clearly underestimated the scope of what could be achieved. This experience has taught me some valuable lessons: always build in margins – then build in some more. Do your due diligence, and for future projects, I'll be relying on a friend who's a builder.

Ultimately, however, you are 'married' to a build team and need to make it work. Thanks to that six-month rent-free period, we could fit out without any rent until August 2024.





LANCASHIRE SMILES

### *The ethos*

Lancashire Smiles showcases Arnold's dedication, vision and commitment to the community. He emphasises creating a 'family' practice and integrates that principle within the team. The practice prioritises comfort, open communication and outstanding patient care. The contemporary design is inspired by the coastal beauty of the Fylde area, with sleek micro-cement walls and glass-panelled doors, resulting in a bright and welcoming environment.



### COASTAL VIBE

I don't have a design bone in my body, but I knew how I wanted patients to feel. The practice is near the Fylde coast, and I wanted the aesthetic to reflect this. This was a key aspect of the overall design thinking.

The beach and rocks inspired the walls, which are made from micro-cement imported from Spain and are a delicate soft pink. The design flows well – we have created a complete circular journey from the surgery to the restroom and other areas.

The flooring is grey micro-cement. We also wanted the design to allow plenty of light and feel spacious, so we installed glass doors etched with our logo in the surgeries and glass panels leading directly into the waiting area.

We partnered with Vita Architecture, fully understanding that this vision would come at a cost. I could have gone with dental-specific designers, but I was determined to create a space that didn't feel like just another dental practice.

I decided to keep Ben Lee from Vita Architecture on board. I quickly realised that if you don't have a background in construction or design, it's essential to have someone who does and who you trust to guide you through the process – whether that involves selecting furniture, managing the build, or ensuring that every detail of the planning is executed correctly. It's not always about seeing your vision come to life exactly as you imagined; it's about trusting the process.

For me, this was a significant investment, both financially and emotionally. After all the hard work and saving to get to this point, I didn't want to risk my inexperience or naivety derailing the project. So, having someone who truly understands and shares your vision is crucial.

### STANDOUT FEATURES

Lancashire Smiles was initially designed with three treatment rooms, with one fully equipped from the start. The second room is now complete, and by the end of next year, the third will be finished.

We have installed two Belmont Eurus S8 treatment centres. I've used Belmont chairs for most of my career and explored other options to see what else was available, but the Eurus S8 – one of Belmont's top models – stood out for its thoughtful features.







## *The team*

**DENTIST & OWNER**  
Arnold Gangaidzo

**PRACTICE MANAGER**  
Clare Weston

**HEAD DENTAL NURSE**  
Emma Lancaster

**FRONT OF HOUSE**  
Jessica Andrew

**TRAINEE DENTAL NURSES**  
Megan Lees and Grace Brindle

**DENTAL HYGIENIST AND THERAPISTS**  
Yvonne Wainwright-Stringer and Jessica Adamson

I particularly appreciate the wireless pedal and the computer that allows me to set up a personalised profile. Other clinicians can also create profiles so the chair automatically adjusts to their preferred settings. Our dental nurse has her own controls, which means both of us have had great experiences providing treatments and working with patients who enjoy the chair's comfort. Plus, the S8's ambidextrous design is a huge bonus.

The practice also has a storeroom, a kitchen, two restrooms for staff and patients, a decontamination room and an office for the practice manager.

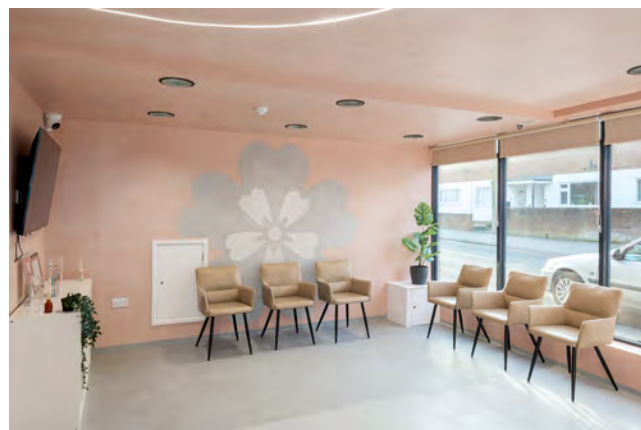
We are looking to hire a treatment coordinator to ensure everything runs smoothly and efficiently. This is especially important for more complex treatment plans.

It is essential that patients can enjoy a seamless experience, knowing exactly what to expect at each stage and how the financing will work.

### **COMING TOGETHER**

Our Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection took place the first week of September – a week before we planned to open. I had already scheduled some appointments, so it was risky. Thankfully, we got the green light to open.

We launched with two apprentice dental nurses, a front-of-house receptionist, a practice manager and myself. In that



first week, when we had patients enjoying the space, receiving treatment, seeing the team working together, and enjoying being with each other, it finally felt like a reality. Only then could I enjoy the journey.

By October, our dental therapist had joined the team, and things started to come together organically. Everyone embraced the vision and felt a sense of ownership. It was also great when patients began receiving care without me being there, knowing I could trust the team to deliver high-quality care.

### **A FAMILY FEEL**

Building loyalty and satisfaction goes beyond just financial incentives – it's about fostering genuine connections. Having talented staff members doesn't guarantee loyalty or a sense of belonging. That's why our ethos and culture, which centre around the concept of family, play a vital role.

We nurture this with meaningful events – from gathering to share cake, celebrating birthdays and organising team days out to actively seeking input from the team on how we can improve – these small actions matter.

We ensure their voices are heard by constantly finding ways to engage them and holding regular staff meetings. We let staff members take ownership of initiatives, like auditing patient feedback to identify areas for improvement, which allows them to invest in making positive changes.

Throughout this journey, my family has been my unwavering support, and my wife, Rumbi, has been especially instrumental in helping me pursue this dream. We even hosted an open day to invite our loved ones into the practice to appreciate what we had all achieved – and that was a truly special family moment.



### ADVICE FOR OTHERS

When it comes to sharing advice for opening a squat practice, these would be my tips:

1. Consider how you will manage your living expenses during your first year of practice. Although you may be earning more, that does not equate to your actual income. That additional revenue is typically reinvested in expenses and staff, which means you will take home very little during that first year. Ensure that both business and personal bills are covered. I anticipate that operating costs will be significantly higher. Account for those margins – not just to share with the bank but because you'll need it
2. Prepare your patient list a few months ahead of opening. From my experience managing a squat, I realised how gradually things can unfold with many empty slots in the diary. To ensure patients were ready at launch, I proactively scheduled appointments and marketed our dental payment plan early on – we even achieved our first-year plan-patient target within weeks of opening the doors. Taking that leap of faith is essential
3. Plan your ideal patient journey. How do you want patients to experience the appointment booking process at your practice? How would you like them to be welcomed in the waiting area during their visit? What do you envision for their experience in the surgery and X-ray rooms? I mapped out these journeys for patients and staff. As a family practice, we offer baby-changing facilities and a play area filled with toys. Your plans should encompass your brand, ethos, communications and physical space. The practice design should reflect your overall vision
4. Be proactive in training the team and invest in them. The week before we opened, we had an induction week during which the team got to know each other, took personality tests, and addressed key areas such as medical emergencies and the patient journey. Three team members had no dental background, so we needed to ensure everyone felt comfortable seeing patients when we opened. We need to discuss the membership with patients in a way that allows us to communicate the same information confidently. We created a template script that serves as a launch pad for pointers on what we want them to convey

to patients, ensuring a consistently positive experience. Patient Plan Direct had onboarding sessions for the team, and since I use the Itero intraoral scanner, we had training for that, too. A good friend specialising in marketing showed the team how to use our CRM to manage patient details and communications. They needed to know how that system integrated into our patient management software, Dentally. I needed everyone to have an overview of how the practice operates

5. CQC played a significant role in the process, and we used a dental compliance company to assist with the CQC application who advised us to submit it early and provided support throughout. I didn't want my lack of experience to hinder our ability to open
6. Seek a mentor or connect with individuals who can guide you in developing your business. Ensure you focus on working on the business, not just in it. It's easy to prioritise clinical work and expect the business to flourish independently. Being intentional about business development is crucial. I dedicate Tuesdays, Monday afternoons and Thursday mornings to business development. You won't grow your business unless you specifically allocate time for that purpose.

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### *Who was involved?*

#### **Designers**

Vita Architecture

#### **Business support**

Ultimate Dental Business

#### **Marketing**

Chupaco

#### **Dental payment plan**

Patient Plan Direct

#### **Practice management software**

Dentally





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This month's *Private Dentistry* vision board is bringing metallic touches to add some opulence to the practice's interior design



1 **Talie Single Sofa**  
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4 **Newton Console**  
Boca Do Lobo, £25,390

2 **Semi-Flush Frosted Bubble Chandelier – Gold**  
Dowsing and Reynolds, £399

5 **Yukutori 4306 wallpaper 10m**  
Farrow & Ball, £175

3 **Large Round Decorative Ring Frame Gold Wall Mirror**  
Click Style, £210

6 **Gold Sausage Dog Bookends – Bertie**  
Click Style, £69.50





**7 Gold Hammered Metal Narrow Neck Bottle Vase**

Click Style, £69.50

**10 Aura Metallic Triangle Porcelain Wall Tiles**

Walls and Floors, £36.95

**8 Francisca Console Table by RV Astley**

Lime Lace, £1,079

**11 Liberty Slim Chandelier**

Luxxu, £POA

**9 Roca Ona Rose Gold Basin Mixer Tap**

Sanctuary Bathrooms, £295

**12 Opulent Tall Curved Metallic Gold Planter**

Ivyline, £24.99

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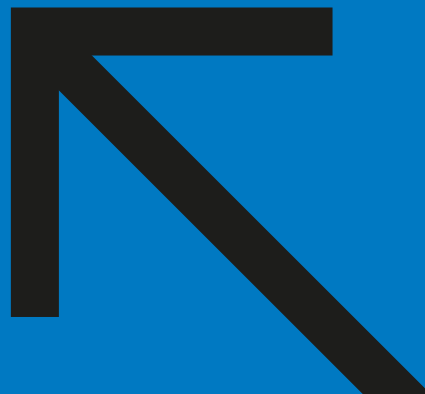
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booked in.

**Kunal Patel**

Principal General & Cosmetic Dentist – Love Teeth Dental

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# Open days: maximise your event

Looking to hold an orthodontic open day? **David Nelkin** shares a systematic approach with eight simple steps to bring a 100% conversion rate



**I**'ve just reviewed the results from an Invisalign open day we ran with a client:

- 18 consultation slots
- £87,000 in treatment commitments
- 100% uptake rate.

Six months earlier, the same practice ran an open day with only four conversions. What changed? A systematic approach was followed.

Here's the framework that transforms open days from expensive experiments into revenue-generating engines.



**David Nelkin**

David is the founder and CEO of Xcelerator Dental, a specialist dental marketing agency focused on sustainable practice growth. For more information, visit [xceleratordental.com](https://xceleratordental.com).

## 1 PLAN LIKE A CONVERSION EVENT, NOT A CLINIC DAY

Start planning at least six to eight weeks ahead. Block your entire diary – no routine appointments, just open day patients.

## WHEN EXECUTED SYSTEMATICALLY, ORTHODONTIC OPEN DAYS BECOME RELIABLE REVENUE GENERATORS RATHER THAN EXPENSIVE EXPERIMENTS

Choose a time when your target demographic can attend without work conflicts. Saturdays or weekday evenings tend to work well.

Build scarcity from day one: limited slots, countdown timers, and day-only offers aren't just marketing tactics – they're decision-making tools that move patients from consideration to commitment.

## 2 DESIGN A PATIENT JOURNEY THAT FLOWS TO 'YES'

Welcome patients warmly. Their journey begins with your treatment coordinator (TCO) in a comfortable, non-clinical setting to build rapport. In this initial stage, the TCO will also take photos and scans. This seamless process allows for a more

personalised and efficient clinical assessment later on.

Next, the patient will meet the clinician for a detailed treatment discussion. Show before and after examples to demonstrate potential results. The patient then returns to the TCO to discuss financial options and make a commitment.

Every patient leaves with confirmed next steps – either a treatment start date or a specific follow-up appointment booked.

### 3 PREPARE YOUR TEAM FOR CONVERSION SUCCESS

Hold a planning meeting six weeks beforehand covering patient journey, responsibilities, and objectives. Run weekly huddles, tracking enquiries and campaign performance.

The week of the event, rehearse the patient experience and role-play difficult scenarios. Consider staff incentives – when your team has personal investment in success, conversion rates can improve significantly.

Call every patient the day before and send a Whatsapp the morning of the event expressing excitement.

### 4 MARKET TO EXISTING PATIENTS FIRST

Your patient base often delivers the highest conversion rates. Use email,

Whatsapp and SMS campaigns, plus referral incentives for previous Invisalign patients to fill slots before starting paid advertising.

For new patients, run targeted Meta and Google campaigns; they work best together. Use this opportunity to re-engage cold leads; open days are perfect for bringing dormant prospects back into your conversion process.

Don't forget to include video testimonials – social proof from patients with similar concerns builds trust more effectively than generic marketing.

### 5 QUALIFY EVERY SINGLE ENQUIRY

Your qualifying calls with each prospect should last 15 to 20 minutes. Understand motivation, check treatment suitability, discuss estimated costs and finance options and confirm genuine attendance commitment.

Ten qualified prospects will always outperform 20 casual browsers.

### 6 NURTURE BEFORE AND AFTER Pre-event

Send Whatsapp sequences, personalised video messages, and clear guidance about what to expect, what to bring, and how to find your practice.

### Post-event

Call non-committed patients within 48 hours while the experience is fresh. Begin nurturing sequences with testimonials, finance reminders, and friendly check-ins.

Significant dental investments typically take weeks or months to decide. Patients who don't commit immediately aren't lost opportunities, but if you prepare in the right way, they'll come to your open day with a different mindset, ready to start their journey.

### 7 TRACK EVERYTHING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Monitor enquiry sources, show-up rates, same-day conversions, and seven-day follow-up conversions. Understanding which marketing channels delivered the highest-quality leads optimises future events.

Hold team debriefs within a week. Celebrate successes, identify improvements and document changes for next time.

Consistent improvement comes from treating each event as a learning opportunity.

### 8 AVOID THE CONVERSION KILLERS

The most common failures:

- Not qualifying enquiries (poor attendance, unsuitable prospects)
- Failing to take deposits (weak commitment, cancellations)
- Insufficient existing patient marketing (wasted high-conversion opportunities)
- No systematic follow-up with non-committed patients.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

At Xcelerator Dental, we've seen practices achieve these results consistently by treating open days as conversion systems, not extended consultation sessions.

When executed systematically, orthodontic (Invisalign or not) open days become reliable revenue generators rather than expensive experiments.

The transformation lies in recognising that success comes from conversion optimisation alongside clinical excellence.

You need both working together to maximise your results.





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# Marketing for conversion

**Lisa Grogan** reveals the marketing efforts that will bring real results

One of my biggest frustrations is seeing dentists pour time, money and energy into marketing – often at the expense of clinical and family time – without seeing a meaningful return.

This article will offer practical insights that will help you shift from simply ‘being online’ to generating genuine interest and, more importantly, treatment uptake. Because let’s be clear: digital marketing isn’t optional anymore. It’s the most cost-effective and scalable way to build trust with prospective patients before they even pick up the phone.

## WHY MARKETING MATTERS FOR CONVERSION

When marketing is done well, your content builds rapport with your audience in the same way that personal referrals do. According to Nielsen, 92% of consumers trust referrals from people they know, and well-structured digital marketing can mimic that trust-building process.

Patients who find you online and feel understood are far more likely to arrive confident, relaxed, and ready to proceed with treatment just like referral patients.

Strategic, emotional messaging in your marketing leads to:

- More of the kind of cases you want to do
- More fulfilling clinical days
- Less resistance during the consultation process
- Increased treatment plan acceptance
- Increase in revenue to the clinic.

But that’s only when the marketing is designed to convert.



**Lisa Grogan**

Lisa is a dental coach and psychologist. Follow Lisa on Instagram @lisagrogan\_dentalcoach.

## CONVERSION CHALLENGES

When it comes to marketing, one of the challenges dentists face is that they are posting but not seeing any conversion. Let’s explore a few reasons why your marketing might not be converting.

### 1. Lack of visual impact

High-quality visuals, particularly before and after images, are essential for trust-building. Research by MDG Advertising shows that content with visuals gets 94% more views than text-only posts. Make sure your images show real transformations and emotional outcomes not just technical results.

### 2. Generic content doesn’t convert

Stock images, generic phrases or seasonal gimmicks like teeth in Santa hats won’t drive enquiries. To convert, your content must tap into the emotional triggers that motivate people to take action.

Specificity creates connection. When people feel seen and understood, they’re far more likely to reach out.

## Five key content pillars for conversion

A strategic marketing plan includes the following five key content types, which create a balanced, engaging feed that converts:

1. Inspiring. Show real patient journeys and life-changing results
2. Educational. Explain treatment options simply to remove fear and misconceptions
3. Engaging. Use testimonials, polls, quizzes, and interactive tools to boost responses
4. Entertaining. Light, relatable content such as team stories or behind-the-scenes videos
5. Promotional. Clear calls to action, such as ‘Book a consultation’ or ‘Send us a DM’.

### 3. Overly clinical or technical language

Remember you’re speaking to patients, not peers. Ditch the jargon. Your audience will disengage if confused. Clarity always beats cleverness.

### 4. Weak messaging that doesn’t connect

Think beyond demographics, age, gender, location and consider your audience’s beliefs, fears, desires and daily struggles.

Marketing psychology confirms that emotional resonance is a far stronger driver of action than logic. What’s keeping them from smiling? What story are they telling themselves? When you understand this, your marketing (and your front desk scripts) will change overnight.

## TAKE ACTION WITH AN AUDIT

Review your current marketing channels and ask yourself:

- Are we showcasing outcomes or just procedures?
- Are we speaking to our patients or at them?
- What posts are performing well, and why?
- Are we using data and insights to guide decisions?

Use tools like Instagram Insights, Google Analytics and Meta Ads Manager to track what’s resonating. Remember, you don’t have to do it all manually. AI tools like Chat GPT and Canva Magic Write can save time and generate dozens of content ideas.

If you’re in need of guidance for AI prompts and content planning, contact me and I’ll send my free guides.

*Need help with your marketing or business growth? Email Lisa at [hello@lisagrogancoaching.com](mailto:hello@lisagrogancoaching.com).*



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# The financial greenhouse

**Nigel Jones, Mike Blenkarn, Magdalena Harding and Barry Oulton** discuss how to sustainably grow your practice finances

**A**t a recent panel discussion chaired by Nigel Jones, experts Mike Blenkarn, Magdalena Harding and Barry Oulton shared their insights on how to build sustainable, profitable and fulfilling practices. Here's what was discussed during the session.

## REDEFINING SUCCESS: FROM PROFIT TO PURPOSE

Nigel opened the discussion by quizzing Barry Oulton on his particular measure of success that challenges the traditional view of what that might mean. 'I used to think success was financial,' he admitted. 'But I realised I was living to work, not working to live.'

After a significant event in his personal life, Barry began exploring ways of improving his health and wellbeing. As a result of his research, he developed the 'wheel of dental business', based on the coaching tool the wheel of life. It is a scorecard-based

tool that helps practice owners assess and improve all areas of their business – from patient experience to team engagement.

Barry's a strong proponent of aggregating marginal gains, as Sir Dave Brailsford used so successfully during his time as performance director at British Cycling from 2003 to 2014. These are small, consistent improvements that compound over time. 'It's about raising the bar by 1% in each area,' Barry explained.

However, he believes the primary focus of every practice should be patients. 'The epicentre of everything is the patient journey. Patients don't care about the dentistry – they care about how they're treated.'

Barry believes that having a great patient journey will save on marketing costs; if patients have a good experience and feel they have been well cared for, they will remain loyal and recommend the practice to their family and friends.

to compare line-by-line costs and revenues against national averages. His approach helps practices understand where they are so they can assess the effectiveness of any changes they make.

Benchmarking isn't about conformity. 'Being different isn't a problem,' Mike noted. 'The key is understanding why you're different.' He employs a framework known as BABA (benchmark, analyse, budget, assess), which helps practices identify inefficiencies, model future scenarios, and track progress.

He advises monitoring progress against forecast monthly as this allows an opportunity to adapt forecasts to become more realistic if necessary.

## PLANNING WITH THE END IN MIND

Mike is a strong advocate of having an exit strategy as soon as an owner buys their practice, as this can inform how the business is structured. Knowing where you want to end up was a point echoed by Magdalena Harding.

'Begin with the end in mind,' she advised, referencing American author and educator Stephen Covey's famous principle. Whether their aim is to achieve a comfortable retirement or build a legacy, Magdalena helps clients reverse-engineer their financial goals into actionable plans.

She stressed the value of early planning: 'The earlier you start, the easier and more cost-effective it is to make your dreams come true.' This includes budgeting, pension planning, and protecting against unexpected events that could derail income or business continuity.



**Nigel Jones**

Nigel is a director at Practice Plan. He has been working in the dental sector for around 35 years.



**Mike Blenkarn**

Mike is a partner and head of dental at UNW LLP, and has more than 10 years' experience in working with dental professionals.



**Magdalena Harding**

Magdalena is a dental specialist financial adviser at Wesleyan Financial Services, supporting dentists, their families and their practices with financial planning to secure their financial future.



**Barry Oulton**

Barry is a practising dentist, Practice Plan consultant and the founder of The Confident Dentist. He is a qualified coach and experienced trainer, certified in hypnotherapy and a master practitioner in neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

## BENCHMARKING FOR BETTER DECISIONS

Having explored the big picture, holistic aspect of running a successful practice, Nigel was keen to turn to the importance of being on top of the details with Mike Blenkarn.

Mike emphasised the importance of understanding the practice numbers – not just for compliance, but for strategic growth. 'Too many practice owners look at their year-end accounts and still don't know how their business is performing,' he said.

His approach involves intensive benchmarking using NASDAL statistics



## THE EPICENTRE OF EVERYTHING IS THE PATIENT JOURNEY



### HEALTH, HABITS AND HIGH PERFORMANCE

Burnout is a growing concern in dentistry, and Barry shared his personal experience of overcoming long COVID and reclaiming his health through disciplined routines. 'It's not about motivation; it's about discipline,' he said. His morning routine, which starts with a simple thank you upon waking, has now developed and includes grounding and ice baths.

He believes the same principle should apply to business. 'Cherry-pick the low-hanging fruit,' Barry advised. 'Measure your KPIs monthly, not a year and a half later.

'Make small course corrections and reverse-engineer your goals.'

### COMMUNICATION AS A GROWTH LEVER

One of the most powerful tools for increasing profitability is improving patient communication. Barry's 'traffic light' treatment presentation system – red for immediate needs, amber for preventive care, and green for elective options – has helped his practices double their profits and significantly boost treatment uptake.

He advocates asking patients future-facing questions to understand how they want things to be in 20 years' time. 'Then we present options that align with those goals. It's about helping patients choose, not selling to them,' he explained.

Communication also plays a part in building a high-performing team.

Barry introduced the idea of having a 'culture deck'. This is a collaboratively created document that defines the team's shared values, behaviours and expectations. 'It's not the owner's vision – it's the team's,' he said. This tool supports recruitment, training and even performance management.

Mike stressed the importance of involving the team in financial goals. Making them aware of things such as the need to reduce materials costs can be highly effective, especially when tied to incentives. However, he cautioned against oversharing financial data, which can lead to misunderstandings. 'Choose specific KPIs to share, not full profit figures,' he advised.

### THE ROLE OF AI IN THE FUTURE OF DENTISTRY

Looking ahead, AI is set to revolutionise dental practices. Barry is already working on an AI-powered training coach for receptionists and clinicians, capable of simulating patient calls and providing feedback. 'AI will enhance diagnostics and communication,' he said. 'It's a game changer.'

AI can also free up time by automating admin tasks, allowing teams to focus more on patient care and relationship-building – key drivers of loyalty and long-term value.

There is still some trepidation around AI, although it is reducing. It is a tool

to help reduce the time teams spend carrying out predictable, repetitive tasks not replace hands-on clinicians.

### EXIT STRATEGY: START WITH THE END IN MIND

When it comes to selling a practice, timing and structure are everything. Mike recommends starting at least seven years before retirement to optimise profitability, implement tax-efficient structures (like holding companies), and maximise sale value using adjusted EBITDA.

'Your practice is a valuable asset,' he said. 'Plan early to ensure you exit on your terms.'

Magdalena agreed and reinforced the importance of aligning business exit plans with personal financial goals. 'Use your business to fund your future,' she said. 'Maximise pension contributions, use tax allowances, and move money into your personal name.'

The financial greenhouse session made one thing clear: success in dentistry is about more than just numbers. It's about clarity of purpose, disciplined execution, empowered teams and a long-term vision.

Whether you're just starting out or planning your exit, the time to plant the seeds of sustainable growth is now.

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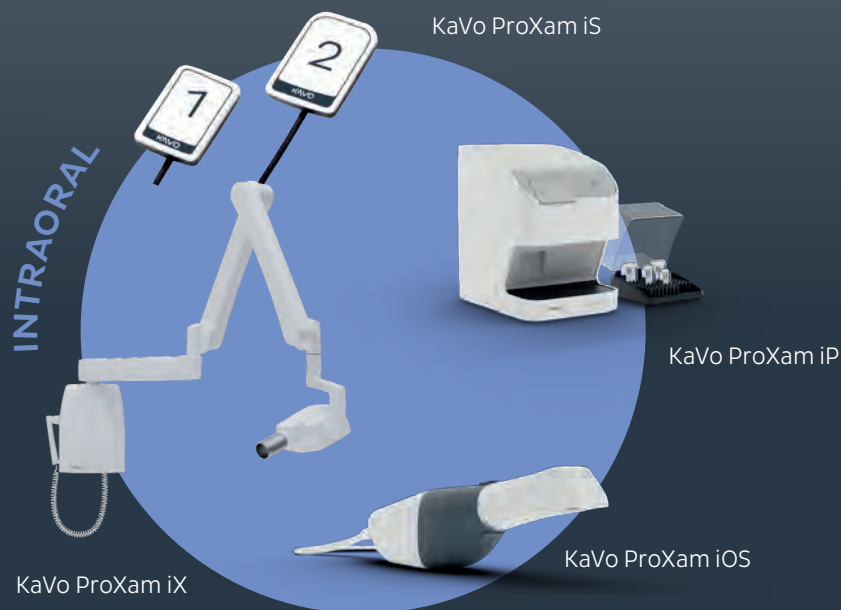
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# New start funding

Looking to open a practice? **Stuart Burn** considers funding

**W**hen opening a practice, traditional banks are often the first funding option considered, but they typically focus on mortgages for premises or overdrafts for working capital. For equipping and fitting out a dental practice, it can be more beneficial to seek funding from a provider that specialises in dental finance and understands the profession's specific needs.

Finance options allow dentists to spread the cost of setting up a

practice, easing pressure on cash flow and improving flexibility. Equipment financing can range from six months to seven years, while fit-out costs can be financed over six months to five years. Benefits may include low-start and deferred payments. Credit approvals are usually quick and valid for a few months, allowing time to arrange essentials such as premises, staffing and marketing.

Leasing enables immediate equipment use while spreading costs. For new or fast-growing practices with limited early profits, leasing offers a tax-efficient alternative to capital allowances. Lease payments are treated as business expenses, providing consistent tax relief throughout the term.

## MAKE A PLAN

When applying for funding, a clear and concise business plan is essential. It should include qualifications, location choice, marketing strategy and personal investment.

A cash flow forecast is vital to identify shortfalls and show awareness of ongoing costs.

By preparing a solid business plan and exploring specialist finance, new practice owners can secure the funding needed to launch successfully while protecting cash reserves.

Regularly reviewing your business plan and forecasts will support long-term success and help ensure your funding remains aligned with growth.



**Stuart Burn**  
Stuart is managing director at Performance Finance.

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# The impact of external factors

**Oliver Acton** discusses ways to handle factors beyond your control

**D**onald Rumsfeld, former United States Secretary of Defense, brought unintended humour into a press conference in 2002 when discussing the threat of weapons of mass destruction: 'There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know.'

Strip away the fact that it's become something of a tongue twister and it does contain an important message, that in any organisation, external factors, outside of your control or knowledge, can have an impact at any time.

Naturally, the smaller the organisation, the less control or influence it is likely to be able to exercise. But as Donald Rumsfeld recognised, no organisation is immune, not even the American military!

## RISK ANALYSIS

Understanding potential risks is important for a practice owner. They shouldn't give you sleepless nights, and understanding what you can mitigate, through foresight, planning and insurance, and what simply must be accepted will mean your business can navigate challenges more easily.

Political factors are hard for a business to control, especially in the short term. Changes in government

policy are directive in nature, a classic example being the changes in working practice imposed on the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic.

That said, in the longer term, change can be affected, through lobbying of local MPs for example.

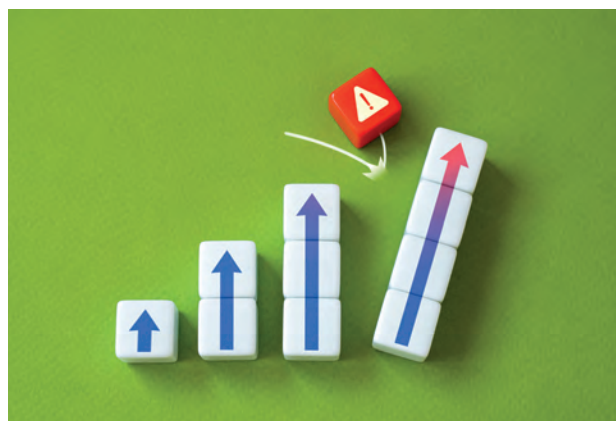
Economic factors, for example inflation, obviously can't be controlled by an individual practice. However, careful and realistic financial planning and cost management can help limit the impact of rising prices.

We always recommend to any practice owner to understand their cost base, what drives it, the sensitivities and where and when action can be taken, for example on the periodic renegotiation of contracts. Likewise, if interest rates rise there can be opportunities for investors to make gains.

## CHANGING TIMES

Social and technological factors also have a huge impact, and very often can be a force for good. Think back 20 years, say, and who would have thought the words 'social' and 'media' would even have been juxtaposed, let alone become the cornerstone for so much marketing and promotional activity.

Understanding your patients, and how to communicate with them, is key. Likewise, advances in technology have made practices more efficient and able to offer a much wider and more



sophisticated range of services.

Environmental factors are becoming an increasingly important part of every business. Naturally, a practice has a responsibility to do the right thing when it comes to something like waste disposal for example, but increasingly we are seeing that a responsible environmental policy is important to employees too.

We can all make a small contribution, and when businesses go the extra mile, for example in the provision of electric vehicle charging points or simply using washable cups rather than single-use plastic ones it is invariably well received by staff.

## STAYING AHEAD

Lastly, there is the competitive landscaper. Again, you can't control what competitors do, but rather than seeing any action as a threat, treat it as an opportunity to improve your own levels.

We definitely find that practices that recognise the impact of external factors and manage them appropriately are the ones setting the standards in the industry, rather than playing catch up.



**Oliver Acton**

Oliver is managing director at Frank Taylor & Associates.

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# How *happiness* leads: from pressure to play

**Rana Al-Falaki** explains how fun and fulfilment can transform performance in any dental practice

**W**hat if the secret to becoming more productive, respected and energised wasn't about working harder... but smiling more? And what if you could be trained to smile more and feel happier?

In a profession that demands clinical precision, regulatory rigour and endless people-pleasing, fun can feel like a forgotten word. But the data tells a different story. Happiness isn't just a by-product of success – it's a driver of it.

Studies show that professionals who are happy at work are 31% more productive, three times more creative, and build more trust with their teams and patients. In fact, positive people are not only more resilient but also make better decisions, solve problems faster, and elevate the mood and performance of those around them. It even enhances communication, health and job satisfaction.

So why do so many dentists feel like fun has no place in the practice – except for forced fun in staff outings?

Let me introduce you to someone who felt exactly that.

## ALL STRESS, NO FUN...

When we first met Dr JF, she was contemplating a career move.



**Dr Rana Al-Falaki**

Rana is founder of Meddent Leadership & Wellbeing Academy, a multi-award-winning periodontist, coach, author, speaker. She blends more than 25 years' experience with the groundbreaking NAIL-IT system to transform lives. For more details, visit [www.meddent.co.uk](http://www.meddent.co.uk).

Despite thinking she had tried everything, she just couldn't muster the enthusiasm for dentistry any longer. Her identity as a dentist had gradually eclipsed the vibrant, curious person she once was – a person who has been full of enthusiasm with a thirst for knowledge and self-improvement.

An associate with more than a decade of experience, she had all the outward signs of success: a busy diary, loyal patients, and strong clinical skills. But inside, she was worn down. Exhausted from the emotional weight of patient complaints (or the fear of them), frustrated by team tensions and inconsistency of team members, and drained by the silent pressure of carrying it all home – mentally and physically.

'It used to be fun,' she said. 'I miss the buzz I had when I qualified – when I actually enjoyed a Sunday because I wasn't dreading Monday! Now I just want to feel like me again and have some fun'.

The spark that brought her into the profession was gone. She didn't want to give up dentistry, she just wanted to enjoy it again, but didn't know how.

## THE MYTH OF BEING 'SERIOUS TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY'

We discovered that Dr JF had internalised a belief many professionals hold: to be seen as credible, you need to be serious. Fun was for weekends. In the clinic, you kept a tight face and tighter standards. After all, wasn't being light-hearted a sign of being unprofessional?

But here's the truth: people don't trust you less when you're positive – they trust you more.

Research consistently shows that warmth and approachability improve patient satisfaction and reduce complaints. In fact, the most effective communicators in healthcare combine competence with connection – and happiness helps drive both.

Dr JF didn't need to leave dentistry, she needed permission to reconnect with the person she used to be.

## THE SHIFT: PERFORMANCE THROUGH PLAY

Through her titanium-level Meddent training using the NAIL-IT Leadership model for optimal performance, we focused on one key area: happiness. Or more specifically – how to embed happiness into daily performance.

This wasn't a motivational pep talk. It was a practical, science-backed, data-driven approach to help her transform her experience of dentistry without changing the job itself.

We worked on three dimensions in parallel:

1. Productivity
2. Balance
3. Fun.

In Dr JF's case, fun was the entry point but, as with all systems, when one improves, the others follow. This represents the PLAY model of optimal performance – where productivity, living, amusement and yielding to good habits come together through practical training.

The A in PLAY stands for amuse and focuses on how to integrate fun into



## PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE HAPPY AT WORK ARE 31% MORE PRODUCTIVE, THREE TIMES MORE CREATIVE, AND BUILD MORE TRUST WITH THEIR TEAMS AND PATIENTS



all aspects of life. We taught and supported her to apply the 'smile to perform' strategy – a method for building positive energy and resilience into the everyday.

It helped her reframe her mindset, be intentional about smiling, integrate more uplifting moments into her

routine, and rediscover the power of humour and self-expression – even in a clinical setting.

The result wasn't just a happier dentist. It was a high-performing one.

In just six months, here's what Dr JF experienced:

- A 20% increase in treatment conversions. With a renewed sense of joy and connection, patients responded differently. Consultations felt more natural. The atmosphere became warmer. Trust increased – and so did uptake
- A stronger dental nurse partnership. Her chairside assistant, previously disengaged and frequently absent, began showing up with more consistency. Their new-found rapport created a calmer, more efficient surgery
- Team culture lifted. Dr JF began bringing lightness into team meetings, adding humour, suggesting small fun rituals like themed huddles or 'wins of the week'. Others followed suit. The energy shifted
- She picked up padel tennis. As part of the programme, we challenged her to prioritise play outside work. She tried it with her family, sparking not just laughter but deeper connection and better health
- Friends and family noticed. She was more present, smiling more, and talking about work with enthusiasm again.

Her biggest realisation was that it wasn't the dentistry she hated, it was the way she was doing it. 'Once I found joy again, everything changed,' she said.

### HAPPINESS IS FOUNDATIONAL

Let's put to bed the idea that happiness is soft. It's measurable, tangible and essential.

The benefits are undeniable:

- It reduces stress and burnout
- It boosts creativity and innovation
- It improves decision-making and resilience
- It enhances relationships, communication and trust
- It increases productivity, energy, and fulfilment
- It increases income and boosts business in dentistry.

When Dr JF began applying the tools of optimal performance – not just mindset, but structured training in wellbeing, communication, leadership, fun and habit change – she didn't just get her spark back. She became a better version of herself. A leader, a team player, and someone who enjoyed showing up every day.

Dr JF's story proves that when we train happiness as seriously as we train clinical skill, the results speak for themselves.

What she learnt, perhaps more than anything, was that happiness doesn't come from external things. Not from more patients, more income, or a new practice.

It comes from who you become. And with the right training, that version of you – the playful, powerful, purpose-driven version – isn't just possible, it's inevitable.

Happiness isn't something you wait for. It's something you train – and when you do, performance follows.

## Smile to perform: how-to guide

- Smile intentionally. Make a conscious effort to smile, even during challenging moments. This wasn't about faking it, but about shifting state – for yourself and those around you. This is a conscious habit change that can shift your entire state
- Mindset of positivity. Focus on what had gone well, reframe your day through the lens of gratitude, progress, and possibility
- Integrate positive experiences. Rather than waiting for fun, weave it into your day: music before clinic, mindful walks after work, and light-hearted moments with the team
- Laughter and humour. Give yourself permission to laugh again – find joy in the small things, and use humour to build connection with patients and colleagues
- Express yourself. Open up more – share ideas with the team, emotions with your family, and allow yourself to be fully present and authentic both at work and at home.





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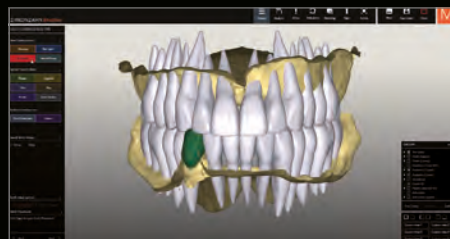
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# The power of unified communication

**Faye Mear** discusses how to get everyone on board with practice messaging

**I**n a competitive market, patients are not just influenced by the clinical excellence you can offer or the fancy technology you use, the quality and consistency of communication from every member of your team is equally important. Whether it's talking about higher value treatments, special patient events or limited-time promotions, how your team speaks to patients can make all the difference.

Even when time and money have been invested in marketing, some practices fail to see a consistent return and this can be because not all team members are on board in conveying your key and current messages. A receptionist might be unaware of a tooth whitening discount. A dental nurse might downplay a treatment's benefits. A hygienist may not mention available cosmetic options. These seemingly small disconnects are, at the very least, missed opportunities but, at worst, can create confusion, erode trust and ultimately make patients go elsewhere.

## WHY UNIFIED TEAM COMMUNICATION MATTERS

### 1. Builds trust through consistency

Patients expect clarity and coherence. When everyone – from the receptionist to the principal – delivers consistent messaging about treatment options, pricing and promotions, patients feel safe and will trust you more. This in turn encourages patient retention and greater treatment uptake because patients feel confident in the practice's professionalism and care.

Conflicting or vague information lay seeds of doubt, making individuals reluctant to go ahead with treatments.

### 2. Supports patient decision making

Patients seldom make decisions based on one conversation alone. If everyone in the team is aware of where a patient is on their journey, they can have conversations along similar lines to reinforce and encourage.

It doesn't have to be stuck record/hard sell stuff – many people shy away from the idea that they are 'selling'. However, coming from a perspective of care and interest in the patient coupled with an awareness of their situation means every team member can play a role in supporting the patient along their decision-making journey.

### 3. Boosts team morale and ownership

When every team member is kept informed about what's going on at the practice, they will feel more involved and invested. This is great for building a greater sense of trust and confidence in each other and in the team through the shared purpose and common goal of offering patients the best possible support and care.

### 4. Enhances patient experience

A well-informed team creates a smoother and more enjoyable patient journey. If a patient mentions something they saw on your social media, as a pop-up on your website or in an advert, they should feel understood and supported – not met with blank looks or awkward silences.

## COMMUNICATION PITFALLS

### Siloed knowledge

- The problem: often, the clinical team is aware of new services or offers coming on board, but other team members (often your reception team) are not kept in the loop
- The solution: organise regular, informal training sessions for the whole team whenever a new service or promotion

is launched. These sessions should explain the treatment and benefits in simple, non-clinical terms, clarify the ideal patient profile and give advice on the key talking points and FAQs

- Top tips: get all the clinicians involved in running these sessions for the rest of the team – they are excellent practice for them in preparation for talking to patients about the same. As toe-curling as it may be, role-playing is an excellent way to boost confidence and refine messaging. Get team members to practise conversations they might have with patients about the promotion or treatment.

### Infrequent updates

- The problem: promotions or new services are launched without enough notice, explanation or promotion, leaving staff underinformed and therefore unlikely to talk about it
- The solution: plan ahead. Create a calendar of when events, promotions or treatments are likely to start and share with the team. Knowing what's in the pipeline will give your team a sense of security and trust. Rather than expecting messages and information to move through your team by osmosis, make short weekly meetings or a daily morning huddle part of your team's routine. They are an ideal time to remind the team of current offers or treatment focuses, announce any upcoming marketing campaigns and identify individual patients who are at pertinent places in their treatment journey and may need some extra care, understanding and support from everyone on the team
- Top tips: repetition, enthusiasm and consistency will build confidence and rapport within your team and support better communication by everyone with your patients.



**Faye Mear**

Faye is client liaison at Corona Marketing, a dental marketing agency. Email her at [faye.mear@coronadc.co.uk](mailto:faye.mear@coronadc.co.uk).

### Lack of confidence

- The problem: team members may feel uncomfortable discussing treatments because they're not confident in the details or benefits
- The solution: alongside non-clinical knowledge sharing sessions and regular briefings, equip your team with extra tools to support confident communication about specific treatments or promotions. Circulate and print 'cheat sheets' with non-clinical bullet points about treatments and offers, along with FAQs patients may ask. Share social media posts, email newsletters and advertising that is being seen by patients, so team members know what's being publicly circulated so they can be ready to deal with any questions or enquiries. Empower your non-clinical team. Receptionists, admins and treatment coordinators are your frontline in communication, so invest in their professional development like you would for a clinician or dental nurse. Provide customer service and complaint handling training so they learn how to handle all enquiries and questions confidently
- Top tips: ensure that the whole team knows where to find answers and information. Ask staff to follow the practice's social media and subscribe them to your patient communications so they're in tune with your current public messaging and can echo it in their conversations.

### Over-reliance on the dentist/patient relationship

- The problem: expecting your clinicians to do all the communicating limits opportunities for patient engagement and puts undue pressure on select team members who are trying to do their job like everyone else
- The solution: make interacting and talking to patients everyone's 'problem'. It's a myth that the only person a patient will listen to in a practice is their clinician – in fact, I think that the greatest amnesiac for any patient (and particularly the nervous ones) is the dentist's chair! Everyone on the team should acknowledge and be welcoming to all visitors to the practice and be open to a conversation – even if it's about the weather! This will help patients feel comfortable and at ease and therefore more open to engaging, trusting and staying loyal to your practice for the long-term
- Top tips: build a culture within your practice where everyone understands their role in supporting patients, where it's normal for everyone to talk positively and knowledgeably about treatments and where communication is proactive, rather than reactive.

### AUTHENTIC MARKETING

The most effective marketing doesn't lie in social media posts and glossy brochures. It lives and breathes in every conversation, every welcome and every reassurance given by every member of your team. When your team members are informed and empowered, they will feel confident to communicate and become authentic marketers of your practice.

Investing in team communication isn't just about increasing revenue – it's about creating a seamless, engaging patient journey that turns interest into action, treatments into long-term trust and your practice into a better place to work.

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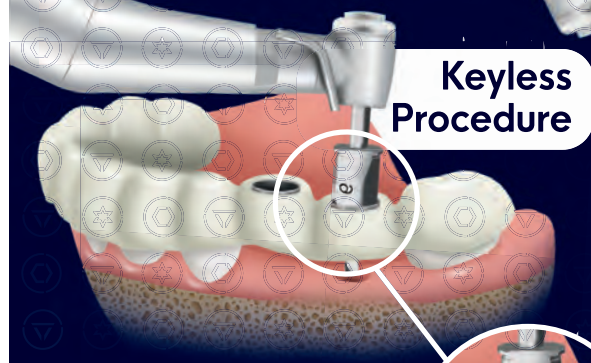
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# Tools for growth and development

Mervyn Druian and Bernita Shelley discuss the value of having a mentor and a coach in your life

**T**he role a mentor or coach can play in your life should not be underestimated. By providing guidance, support and valuable insights based on their own experiences and expertise, they can help you navigate challenges, make informed decisions and develop your skills and knowledge in specific areas. Mentors and coaches can offer fresh perspectives, challenge your thinking and hold you accountable for your goals and actions.

What's more, having a mentor or coach can accelerate your learning curve, help you avoid common pitfalls, facilitate career progression and provide you with valuable networking opportunities. They can also serve as a source of motivation and encouragement, pushing you to reach your full potential.

Utilising their expertise can help reduce stress and improve your happiness and wellbeing.

Overall, having a mentor or coach can be a game-changer in both your personal and professional growth. It is like having a trusted adviser by your side at all times!



**Mervyn Druian**

Mervyn is a cosmetic dentist, one of the founders of the British Dental Bleaching Society and the honoured international president of the Alpha Omega Dental Society. He is co-author of *Dream Believe Achieve*. For more details, email [contact@dba-success.co.uk](mailto:contact@dba-success.co.uk).



**Bernita Shelley**

Bernita is a dental hygienist, coach and artist who blends her love for oral health, personal development, and creativity to positively influence others. She is co-author of *Dream Believe Achieve*.

## MENTORING

Having a mentor for your dental career can be incredibly helpful. Mentors can share their expertise, guide you through different procedures and provide tips for success. They can help you navigate the challenges of the profession and offer advice on building a successful dental practice. It is like having a dental guru to learn from!

Key benefits of having a mentor include:

- Guidance and support. Having a mentor can provide valuable guidance based on their own experiences and expertise
- Knowledge and skill. Mentors often have a wealth of knowledge and skills in a specific field. They can share their expertise with you, helping you to develop new skills and expand your knowledge base
- Networking opportunities. Mentors can introduce you to their professional network, opening doors to new opportunities and connections. This can be incredibly valuable for career growth and personal development
- Motivation and inspiration. A mentor can be a great source of motivation and inspiration. They can push you to reach your full potential, provide encouragement during tough times, and help you stay focused on your goals.

However, when it comes to mentorship, it's not a case of one size fits all – finding the right mentor is key. Look for someone who aligns with your values, has the experience you're seeking, and is genuinely invested in your growth.

## Using a mentor or coach: *benefits*

Mentors and coaches can...

- Help you with guidance and support
- Hold you accountable for your goals and actions
- Help you identify areas for improvement and provide you with guidance on developing specific skills
- Provide you with networking opportunities
- Help you with both personal and professional growth
- Boost your confidence and motivation
- Provide long-term guidance.

**MENTORS AND COACHES CAN OFFER FRESH PERSPECTIVES, CHALLENGE YOUR THINKING AND HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR GOALS AND ACTIONS**



# Mervyn's mentor *Dr Omer K Reed*

I met Omer in the early 1970s when he was invited to South Africa as a guest lecturer. Omer was from Phoenix, Arizona, and was world-famous at that time for his presentations on clinical dentistry and practice management.

In his own way, Omer changed how dentistry was practised and helped make it become patient-driven instead of dentally driven. In other words, the patient always came first.

Omer became a mentor to me and my dental team, as well as a great friend of my family. My career took off in the most positive direction once I embraced the knowledge, expertise and skills taught by him.

I listened to his invaluable advice, reflected on it and applied it to my own situation. Learning from Omer's wisdom propelled me to the next level.

For almost 20 years, I would travel to Arizona, often accompanied by team members, to attend courses and lectures with Omer. Through his mentorship, training and encouragement, the London Centre for Cosmetic Dentistry became one of the leading practices in the UK, allowing us, over time, to become trainers and indeed mentors to many other dentists and their teams.

One of the courses Omer ran was titled 'People without perio'. The aim was to get patients as healthy as possible, and for them to stay that way. The key was to have a hygiene department full of capable, enthusiastic hygienists. Patients would see the hygienist (depending on their needs) every three months, with plaque scores and bleeding scores taken at every visit. We have people coming for care in their ninth decade and they are fully dentate. Many of the patients only need to see the dentist on an annual basis. An important factor too is that in a successful preventive practice, the hygiene department accounts for at least 25% of the practice turnover. This is before the dentist even lifts a handpiece.

Omer also flagged – almost 25 years ago – the link between gum disease and systemic diseases. This is now appearing in our media as if it is new news.

It is so important to make your patients aware of the impact their oral health can have on their overall health and the effect it can have with systemic diseases such as diabetes. Always communicate this on a regular basis to your patients and encourage them to visit the hygienist every three months.

Stay open to other people's advice and opinions – one can always learn from others even if we do not agree with them at first, so long as you feel comfortable with the advice and opinions.

## **COACHING**

A coach and a mentor serve different purposes, but both can be valuable in personal and professional growth.

A mentor is someone with more experience and knowledge that can provide you with guidance and advice based on their experiences. A coach will focus on helping you identify and achieve your goals, using various techniques and tools to support your growth, provide accountability and help you to overcome obstacles.

A coach will help you to develop your own solutions and will empower you to take action. Coaching is a collaborative relationship.

Find a life coach to support you with goal attainment, happiness and reducing stress. They will help you raise awareness to enhance the quality of your life, focusing on positive expansion and forward movement.

This is done through the exploration of new thinking and action steps, focusing on the future, taking action and reflecting.

The aim of coaching includes raising awareness, discovering your potential, using your potential, learning self-responsibility and self-accountability. This will enhance your quality of life, aligning your values with your lifestyle.

It will improve your growth, help you to embrace change, increase performance, view new perspectives and explore new possibilities. In short, it will assist you with your personal and professional development.

A coach can help you reach your full potential, enable you to be the best version of yourself and inspire others to do the same.

## **UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL**

Mentoring and coaching are powerful tools for growth and development, offering guidance, support and accountability. Together, they help you gain clarity, build confidence, and achieve personal and professional goals.

By learning from others and embracing self-discovery, you can unlock your potential, overcome challenges, and create a more fulfilling, purpose-driven life.

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*Mervyn and Bernita will be hosting a study day on how to succeed in dentistry on Saturday 25 October in London. For more details and to book, email [contact@dba-success.co.uk](mailto:contact@dba-success.co.uk).*



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# Elevate your management

**Amanda Reast** explains why UK dental practices need professional leadership more than ever

**T**he dental profession in the UK is built on clinical expertise, compassionate care and patient trust – but behind every successful practice lies a crucial element often overlooked: operational leadership.

This might be compliance with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the General Dental Council (GDC), recruitment, HR, finance or patient management systems.

Running a dental practice is no small task and many practice managers have no formal training when starting out. I know this because I was one of them when I first took on the role.

After 29 years as a registered dental nurse in the NHS, I had no desire or intention of ever moving into management. It was simply not my ambition; patient care, chairside support and mentoring new nurses were my passion. However, as my boys grew up, I realised I wanted to make my own impact in practice leadership. I wanted to change the way dental teams were led and so I stepped into my first management role. I quickly discovered how little I knew.

What followed was a journey that took me from feeling overwhelmed to becoming a chartered manager, a professionally recognised leader

equipped to transform the way a practice functions.

This is for dental practice owners, clinicians and team leaders who want to understand the value of formal management training and why investing in it could be one of the most profitable decisions for your business.

## THE RISE OF THE ACCIDENTAL MANAGER

Research by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) shows that, in the UK, 82% of managers are promoted to leadership roles

without receiving formal training in management and leadership. These 'accidental managers' are often promoted based on factors like popularity, job performance or availability, rather than their demonstrated leadership abilities.

In dentistry, this was highlighted in a 2024 British Dental Journal study, in which dental practice managers reported feeling:

- Unprepared for their roles
- Isolated in their responsibilities
- Under-equipped to lead in heavy compliance areas.

Many had come from dental nursing, reception or treatment coordinator (TCO) roles and found themselves suddenly responsible for staff wellbeing, audits, finances, marketing and strategic planning.

The result? Burnout, ineffective leadership, high staff turnover and poor retention, as well as inconsistent patient experiences.

For business owners, it sends a clear message: a strong clinical team is vital, but without professional leadership, the business will struggle to grow sustainably.

Let's look at the numbers:

- CMI research shows that organisations with trained managers see a 23% boost in performance and a 32% rise in employee engagement
- Chartered managers that receive pay rises add an estimated £62,000 in value to their organisation annually through increased productivity, better decision making and improved team outcomes
- On average, chartered managers add £391k in added value to a business.

## Effective, intentional leadership: five steps

1. See yourself as a leader: if you manage people or systems, you are already a leader, now it is time to upskill and equip yourself effectively
2. Invest in development: encourage managers in your team to pursue Chartered Management Institute (CMI) qualifications or apprenticeships – it is an investment that pays back many times over
3. Mentorship matters: seek mentors through CMI or professional networks. Having the right support can be game changing
4. Build with purpose: leadership is not about telling people what to do, it is about building a culture of trust, empowerment, accountability and shared values
5. Show the impact: CMI's chartered pathway focuses on real-world change, so whether it is improving audits, reducing staff turnover or growing revenue, document your impact.



### Amanda Reast

Amanda is business manager at The Dental Architect. She is a chartered manager, an accredited member of the Institute of Consulting and is working towards chartered consultancy. Amanda is also a board member for the Chartered Management Institute, and completed a postgraduate diploma in clinical education, coaching and mentoring in 2024. Amanda won Practice Manager of the Year at the 2024 Private Dentistry Awards and the 2025 Dentistry Awards.



## WHAT IS A CHARTERED MANAGER?

A chartered manager is the highest accolade that can be achieved in the management profession.

It is awarded by the Chartered Management Institute, a professional body in the UK dedicated to management and leadership and backed by a royal charter recognised globally.

To become chartered, professionals must demonstrate:

- Proven management skills
- Strategic thinking
- Ethical leadership
- Impact on people, performance and processes.

This is not a course, but a mark of competence, much like the General Dental Council (GDC) is for clinicians. It shows your leadership meets a recognised standard.

## PATHWAYS TO CHARTERED STATUS

There are three routes to becoming a chartered manager:

- Experienced route – ideal for managers with five or more years' experience, you submit a reflective report and complete an interview assessment

- Qualification route – based on completing a CMI accredited Level 5 or Level 7 diploma in management and leadership
- Chartered manager degree apprenticeship (CMDA) – designed for newer professionals studying management while working.

I chose the qualification route, which provided structure, confidence and deep insight into how to lead effectively in a healthcare setting.

Once I completed my training and earned chartered status, the impact was immediate and measurable in the following areas.

### Care Quality Commission confidence

Our last CQC inspection was flawless – not one action point was required. With systems in place and evidence-based leadership, compliance became proactive not reactive and, believe me, it was a comprehensive inspection.

### Team empowerment

I introduced structured appraisals, individual training plans, feedback systems and leadership that listened. As a result, staff morale rose, retention improved and recruitment became easier.

### Operational efficiency

Practice workflows were streamlined, adopting new technologies, improved and effective communication and reduced time spent on firefighting issues.

### Business growth

Through better planning, marketing and service delivery, our profit margins improved. Patient satisfaction scores increased as well.

## VISION WORTH PURSUING

Every dental practice should consider the chartered manager pathway.

As a business, a chartered manager can bring the following benefits and impact:

- Compliance assurance – aligning with GDC, CQC and regulatory body requirement though structured governance
- Team wellbeing – boosts morale, reduces burnout and builds trust
- Patient experience – enhances consistency service quality and patient satisfaction
- Business impact – increases profitability, strategic growth and long-term sustainability.

Looking back, I never planned this path. In fact, if someone had said I would go from trainee dental nurse to multi-award-winning manager, I would have laughed! It has been a journey of growth, confidence, purpose and intentional leadership.

Is this the role I imagined? No. But is this the role I chose to master? Absolutely, and I wouldn't change it.

For some time, I have been mentoring other managers outside of dentistry, however, since winning various dental awards, more managers in the dental sector are curious, so here it is!

If you work as a dental nurse, clinician or new manager, ask yourself: what is the highest standard I can reach?

If leadership is part of your journey, chartered manager status offers not just recognition but also transformation for you, your team and your patients.

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*Get in touch with Amanda at [manager@thedentalarchitect.com](mailto:manager@thedentalarchitect.com) or visit [thedentalarchitectacademy.com](http://thedentalarchitectacademy.com).*



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# The feminine edge in dentistry

**Sarika Shah** explains how, by embracing their unique strengths, women can reshape dentistry from the inside out

**W**hen I started my journey in dentistry, I didn't see many women leading practices or shaping the culture of modern clinics. Today, we're witnessing a shift – more female clinicians are stepping into leadership roles, but we still have a long way to go.

The truth is, women bring a different kind of strength to leadership – one that is collaborative, emotionally intelligent and deeply intuitive. In private dentistry, these qualities aren't just 'nice to have', they're essential.

## COLLABORATION OVER HIERARCHY

Female leaders naturally lean toward collaboration rather than control. In my own practice, Platinum Dental Care, I've built a leadership style that encourages input from every member of the team – regardless of title or experience. This open, inclusive approach has created a strong sense of ownership and engagement.

Rather than a rigid top-down structure, female leadership often fosters circular, trust-based teamwork. We bring people into the conversation, not because we

lack confidence but because we understand the power of collective intelligence and ideas.

## EMPATHY AS A CLINICAL STRENGTH

Empathy is often underestimated as a leadership tool, yet it's the foundation of patient care and team wellbeing. Female leaders tend to have high emotional sensitivity – noticing unspoken tensions, anticipating needs, and responding with compassion rather than defensiveness.

When a team member is struggling, we instinctively check in. When a patient is anxious, we create space for reassurance. This ability to tune in, emotionally and intuitively, leads to stronger connections, deeper trust and ultimately better outcomes.

In a high-pressure, fast-paced environment like private dentistry, this is not weakness – it's strategic strength.

## GRACEFUL RESILIENCE

Resilience isn't just about pushing through; it's about adapting with grace. Female leaders have often had to juggle personal responsibilities, societal expectations and professional ambition simultaneously. That experience breeds a quiet but fierce resilience.

We may not shout the loudest, but we hold steady. During times of uncertainty – economic downturns, clinical stress, team changes – we bring a grounded presence that helps others stay centred too.

Our ability to stay emotionally regulated under pressure becomes a stabilising force in the practice.

## PURPOSE-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Women are often motivated by meaning and connection. We don't just think: 'Will this treatment be profitable?' we also think: 'Will this improve our patients' lives? Will it support our team's growth? Is this aligned with our values?'

This purpose-driven approach ensures that decisions aren't just financially sound,



**Sarika Shah**

Sarika is the founder and owner of Platinum Dental Care in London. She is an Invisalign and cosmetic dentist. She created the leadership course, Flourish as a Female in Dentistry for women in dentistry. For more details, visit [www.flourishasafemale.com](http://www.flourishasafemale.com).





but also ethically and emotionally sustainable. In my own practice that means prioritising leadership skills and CPD that genuinely benefits the team, offering mentorship and support to other clinicians, and investing in technology that enhances patient care – not just productivity.

When we lead from purpose, performance follows.

### CREATING CULTURES OF BELONGING

Women often excel at creating emotionally safe environments – where people feel seen, valued and encouraged to grow. The team culture at Platinum Dental Care isn't an afterthought. It's built into how we communicate, how we celebrate wins, and how we navigate challenges.

I often use restorative, not punitive, conversations when things go wrong. We focus on learning, not blame. That sense of psychological safety increases team loyalty, creativity and overall wellbeing. It also creates the kind of environment where female clinicians can truly

thrive – without having to suppress their authentic selves.

### ENCOURAGING MORE WOMEN INTO PRACTICE OWNERSHIP

One of my greatest passions is encouraging more female dentists to become practice owners. For too long, ownership has felt out of reach – whether due to lack of mentorship, financial uncertainty or the belief that it's 'too much' alongside family life.

But the future of dentistry needs more women at the helm.

Ownership gives us the platform to shape culture, empower others, and build practices aligned with our values. Through Flourish as a Female, I work with women to explore these possibilities. We talk openly about leadership fears, imposter syndrome, financial planning, and building supportive networks.

If you're a female clinician reading this and wondering: 'Could I be a practice principal one day?' – the answer is: 'Yes, absolutely'. Not by becoming someone else, but by embracing your own way of leading.

### THE POWER OF FEMALE MENTORSHIP

Women thrive in community, not competition. One of the most powerful aspects of my journey has been connecting with other women who have walked the path before me – and now offering that same support to others.

We don't need to figure it all out alone. When we lift each other up, we all rise. And as more women enter leadership, we model what's possible for the next generation.

### REDEFINING STRENGTH

It's time to expand what leadership looks like in dentistry. It's not about commanding attention or ticking boxes. It's about leading with emotional intelligence, clarity and care. It's about trusting your instincts, even when they don't fit traditional moulds.

The feminine edge isn't a liability – it's our superpower. And as more women embrace their unique strengths – not only as clinicians but as practice owners, mentors, and changemakers – we'll reshape dentistry from the inside out.

The advertisement features a dark blue background with a white Kavo UniQa dental unit. The unit includes a red patient chair, a control panel with the Kavo logo, and various dental instruments. A red circular badge in the bottom right corner highlights the price. On the left, a list of features is preceded by checkmarks. A QR code is located in the bottom left corner. The text 'THE ELEMENTS OF EXCELLENCE' is positioned above the list of features. The Kavo logo and 'UNIQA' are in the top right corner. The website 'www.kavo.com' is at the bottom right.

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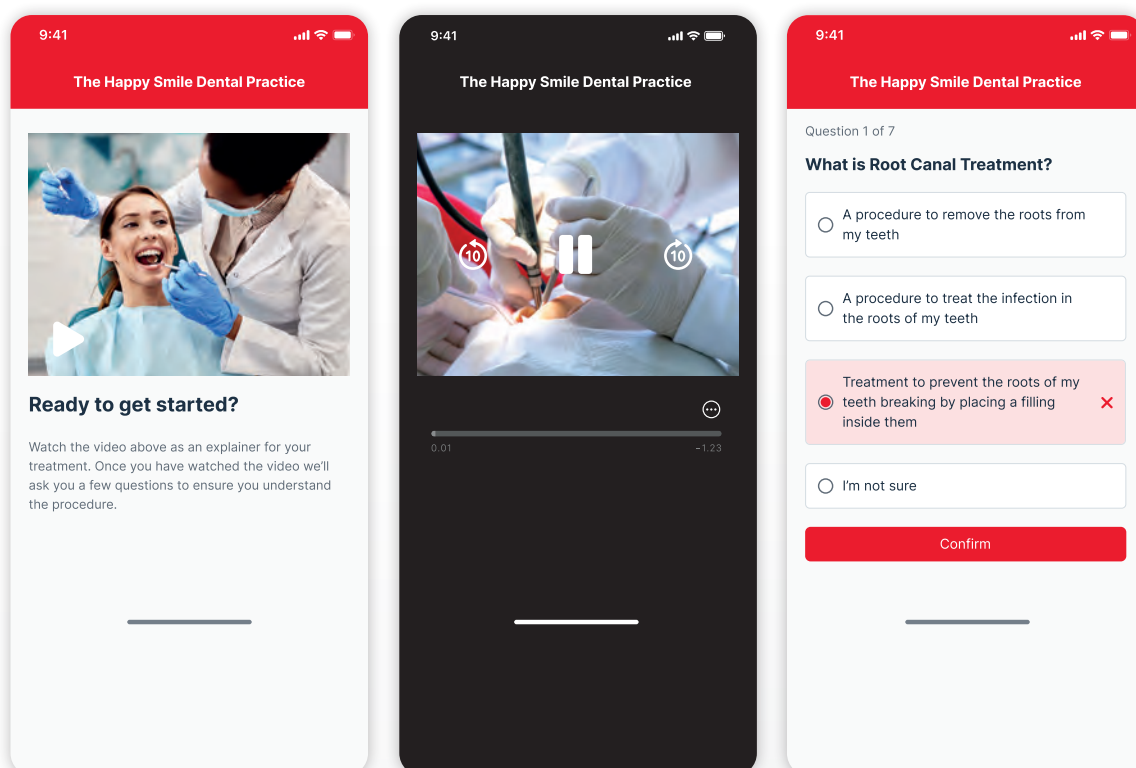
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# The secret to successful recruitment

**Del Kahya** explains how to remove the headache of recruiting in dentistry

**L**et's be real – every dental practice has complained about the struggle to recruit. But have you stopped to look at how you're doing it? It's easy to blame the market, but often, the real issue lies in the process – or lack of it.

As someone who's been deep in the trenches as a business development manager and recruitment manager, I have seen it all: the mistakes, the wins, and everything in between.

Luckily, in our company, we've found a way to remove the headache of recruitment – and it all boils down to having the right approach, the right people and the right support system in place.

## FIRST STEPS

What really sets your practice apart from the rest? Why should a candidate choose you over another opportunity? Sure, pay matters, but it's about more than that. It's about the experience and the connection you create from the very first interaction.

Let's talk about your job advert for a second. Who's posting it, and how? If it's just a 'tick-the-box' exercise for someone, you've already lost.

A job ad is your first chance to stand out, and if it's generic or uninspired, it won't get you the attention you want.

You need to write your ad like you're looking for the job yourself.

Make it exciting, engaging and reflective of the actual experience at your practice.

Think about it: would you apply to your own ad? Consider timing, too – posting at the right time can make all the difference.

Once that ad goes live, the next key question is: who's reaching out to those candidates, and how? Forget about those cold, formal emails. If your recruiter isn't using a direct work phone to text candidates, you're missing a huge opportunity to connect. The recruiter's job is to cut to the chase and get straight to the point. Don't waste time with a slow back-and-forth – if you want the best talent, you need to act fast.

## THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Then there's the recruitment process itself. Picture this: you've found the perfect candidate. They're interested, but here's the catch, they've got another offer from a competitor. What's going to make them choose you?

It's the recruiter. The person who's not just selling the job, but who's selling your practice. That's someone who builds rapport, understands your business, shares your values, and knows how to make candidates feel connected from the get-go. No one wants to be interviewed by someone they can't relate to.

Charisma counts. It's not just about being likeable, it's about creating a genuine connection and showing enthusiasm for the role and your team.

Once that candidate is on board, don't drop the ball. The job doesn't end when the contract is signed. The best employees need more than just an epic payslip, they need a work environment where they feel supported and have room to grow. If you're not creating that, you're going to lose them just as fast as you found them.

Here's the truth: you can offer the highest salary in the industry, but if the recruiter doesn't understand your practice's needs or fails to connect with the candidate, that top talent will walk away.

These are the real questions:

- Are the people handling your recruitment the right fit for your practice?
- Do their values align with yours?
- Are they capable of judging character and making lasting connections?

If the answer's no, you might just be losing the very people you're trying to attract.

## SET UP FOR SUCCESS

Now that you've had a chance to take a hard look at your approach, ask yourself: is your recruitment process really set up to succeed? Are you ready to make the changes needed to land top talent, or are you just going to keep complaining about the 'struggle'?

Recruitment doesn't have to be a pain. With the right mindset and strategy, you can attract and create an epic team! It's all about taking a step back, re-evaluating your approach, and committing to do things differently.



**Del Kahya**

Del is a business development manager as well as a recruitment and training manager.



**A**s dentists, we pride ourselves on our ability to diagnose problems and recommend solutions.

But what happens when the patient nods along and still walks out the door without committing to treatment? Often, the issue isn't their resistance but rather a breakdown in clarity and communication.

Assuming we know what a patient is thinking or feeling is a common trap, but it's one that can cost us trust, acceptance and long-term loyalty. Instead of mind-reading, mastering the art of clarity can transform patient interactions and ensure your recommendations are understood and valued.

### THE PROBLEM WITH MIND-READING

We all 'mind-read'. A patient's facial expression, tone or silence leads us to fill in the blanks: 'They're worried about the cost', or 'They're not interested in this treatment'. But these assumptions are often wrong. And worse, they prevent us from addressing the patient's true concerns.

When communication relies on assumption rather than confirmation, patients can feel unheard, misunderstood or pressured. This dynamic can erode trust and create barriers to moving forward with treatment.

### MIND THE GAP

In every interaction, there are four potential gaps where communication can break down:

1. What you say versus what you meant: you think your explanation is clear, but subtle language choices or missing details might confuse the patient
2. What the patient hears versus what they understand: patients interpret your words based on their own experiences, emotions or misconceptions

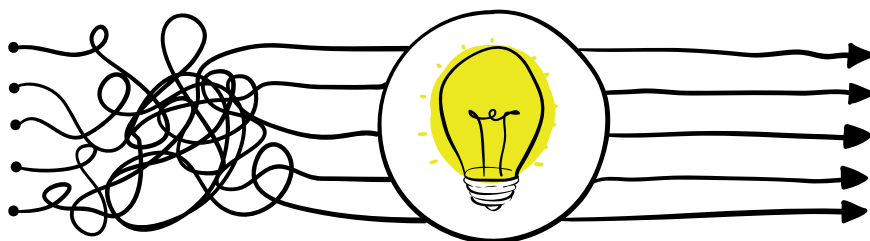


**Barry Oulton**

Barry is a practising dentist and the founder of The Confident Dentist. He is a qualified coach and experienced trainer, certified in hypnotherapy and a master practitioner in neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

# Mastering patient clarity

**Barry Oulton** reveals the impact mind-reading is having on your communication with patients



3. What the patient thinks versus what they feel comfortable sharing: patients may not voice their true concerns, leaving important issues unaddressed
4. What you assume versus what the patient actually needs: mind-reading leads to missed opportunities to clarify or guide the conversation.

### CLARITY AS THE ANTIDOTE

The solution to these gaps is simple: stop assuming and start asking.

When you clarify, confirm and listen actively, you ensure both you and the patient are on the same page. Here's how to master clarity and communication in your practice.

#### 1. Ask better questions

Open-ended questions are the cornerstone of clear communication. They invite the patient to share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns without fear of judgment.

- Instead of: 'Does that make sense?' ask: 'What are your thoughts about this treatment?'
- Instead of: 'Do you have any questions?' ask: 'What questions do you have about this plan?'

These shifts create space for patients to articulate their understanding and allow you to address gaps or misunderstandings.

#### 2. Reflect and clarify

Reflecting back what you've heard is a powerful tool for ensuring mutual understanding. For example:

- 'It sounds like your main concern is how the treatment will fit into your schedule. Is that right?'
- 'Let me make sure I've understood you. You're interested in this option because it's less invasive, correct?'

Reflecting not only shows patients that you're listening but also gives them a chance to correct or expand on what they've shared.

#### 3. Use visual aids

Many patients struggle to process verbal explanations alone. Incorporating visuals like diagrams, photos, or videos can bridge the gap between what you're saying and what they're understanding.

For example, showing a diagram of how a dental implant works can make the benefits more tangible and relatable than a verbal explanation alone.

#### 4. Confirm understanding

Don't end the conversation with a vague: 'Does that make sense?' Instead, invite patients to explain their understanding back to you. For instance:

## REGULAR TEAM TRAINING CAN HELP EVERYONE MASTER THE SKILLS OF CLARITY, REFLECTION AND ACTIVE LISTENING

- 'Can you share how you see this treatment helping you?'
- 'What do you think the next steps are based on what we've discussed?'

This technique ensures they've grasped the key points and provides an opportunity to clear up any confusion.

### THE IMPACT OF CLARITY ON TRUST

When patients feel heard and understood, their trust in you deepens. Clarity removes barriers to communication, making it easier for patients to express their needs and accept your recommendations. This trust doesn't just improve case acceptance, it also builds long-term loyalty that benefits your practice for years to come.

However, clear communication isn't just the dentist's responsibility. The entire team – from the receptionist

to the dental nurse – plays a role in ensuring patients feel supported and informed.

Regular team training can help everyone master the skills of clarity, reflection and active listening. In my coaching programmes, I help practices align their communication strategies so every team member contributes to a seamless patient experience.

When patients encounter consistent, empathetic communication at every touchpoint, their confidence in your practice soars.

### CLARITY CREATES CONFIDENCE

By replacing assumptions with clear communication, you create an environment where patients feel understood, valued and empowered to make informed decisions. This shift not only improves patient outcomes but also strengthens trust and loyalty in your practice.

Remember, clarity is a skill that can be learned and refined. When you invest in mastering this skill, you're not just improving communication, you're transforming your patient relationships and elevating the standard of care in your practice.

In summary, to master patient clarity and improve communication:

- Ask open-ended questions: create opportunities for patients to share their true thoughts and concerns
- Reflect and confirm: show you're listening by summarising and clarifying their responses
- Incorporate visuals: make explanations tangible with diagrams, photos or videos
- Empower your team: train your staff to communicate clearly and consistently at every touchpoint
- Build patient trust: use clarity to foster understanding, confidence and long-term loyalty.

By focusing on clarity, you eliminate the guesswork in communication, ensuring every patient interaction is productive, positive and aligned with their needs.

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# Built for pressure

**Jen Upton** explains how strategic staffing can support CQC compliance

**A**ny practice manager will tell you that a surprise inspection, a last-minute absence or an understaffed diary aren't rare occurrences. When a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspector walks through your door, they don't just assess your paperwork. They observe your team dynamic, your infection control processes, and your ability to deliver safe and effective care under pressure.

But what happens when your dental nurse calls in sick on the morning of your CQC visit? Or when you're already short-staffed and running behind on audits? That's where locum support – when used effectively – becomes more than a temporary fix. It becomes a strategic part of safeguarding your standards.

## BEYOND THE PANIC BUTTON

For many practices, agency staff are still viewed as a backup plan – the last resort when things go wrong. But with the right mindset and partnership in place, locum support should be integrated into your ongoing risk management approach.

Rather than scrambling for cover, dental practices that build a relationship with a trusted agency can access pre-vetted, fully compliant professionals who are ready to step in.

The goal isn't just to fill a space. It's to ensure that quality of care, patient safety and compliance are never compromised.



**Jen Upton**

Jen is the marketing and people engagement director at S4S Team, a leading locum dental agency. With 15 years of experience as a dental nurse, she has worked both as a locum and within recruitment, giving her a deep understanding of the challenges faced by clinicians and temporary staff alike.

## CQC PRIORITIES AND PEOPLE POWER

CQC inspectors pay close attention to how staff are deployed and supported. They look at whether enough qualified staff are present to safely meet the needs of patients. They check how infection prevention and control procedures are carried out in real time. And they expect to see that all team members, including temporary ones, are properly inducted, supported, and competent.

When a skilled locum is in place, they often bring experience from a wide range of practice environments, meaning they can hit the ground running. And when the agency has provided full compliance documentation, including right to work checks, DBS, immunisation records, and references, you're already ahead in demonstrating good governance.

## A staffing partnership

A good agency will:

- Provide fully compliant staff with all documentation ready to go
- Support you in preparing for inspections with flexible, short-notice availability
- Offer locums who are well briefed, punctual and practice-ready
- Understand your values and try to match staff who align with your team culture.

This relationship isn't just transactional. A good agency becomes a staffing partner – one that supports your practice through both the everyday and the exceptional.

## MAINTAINING CONSISTENCY DURING INSPECTIONS

Continuity is a key concern for many practices when it comes to agency staff. But with careful selection and repeat bookings, locums can become regular, reliable members of your extended team.

Familiar faces during inspections can boost morale and help maintain routines.

Even if the inspector knows the nurse isn't a permanent team member, what matters more is their competence, confidence, and how seamlessly they integrate with your systems and processes.

Some practices even take a proactive approach by scheduling regular locum support in advance of planned audits or compliance catch-ups, ensuring no gaps in cover and allowing the permanent team to focus on preparation without added clinical pressure.

## YOUR STANDARDS DESERVE A SAFETY NET

In today's dental landscape, short staffing isn't a matter of if – it's when. Whether it's unexpected illness, maternity leave, or a surprise CQC inspection, the stakes remain the same: safe, effective and consistent care.

Having a responsive, reliable locum strategy in place isn't just smart staffing, it's proactive leadership. It shows foresight, protects your team from burnout, and sends a clear message to inspectors and patients alike: 'We are always ready'.

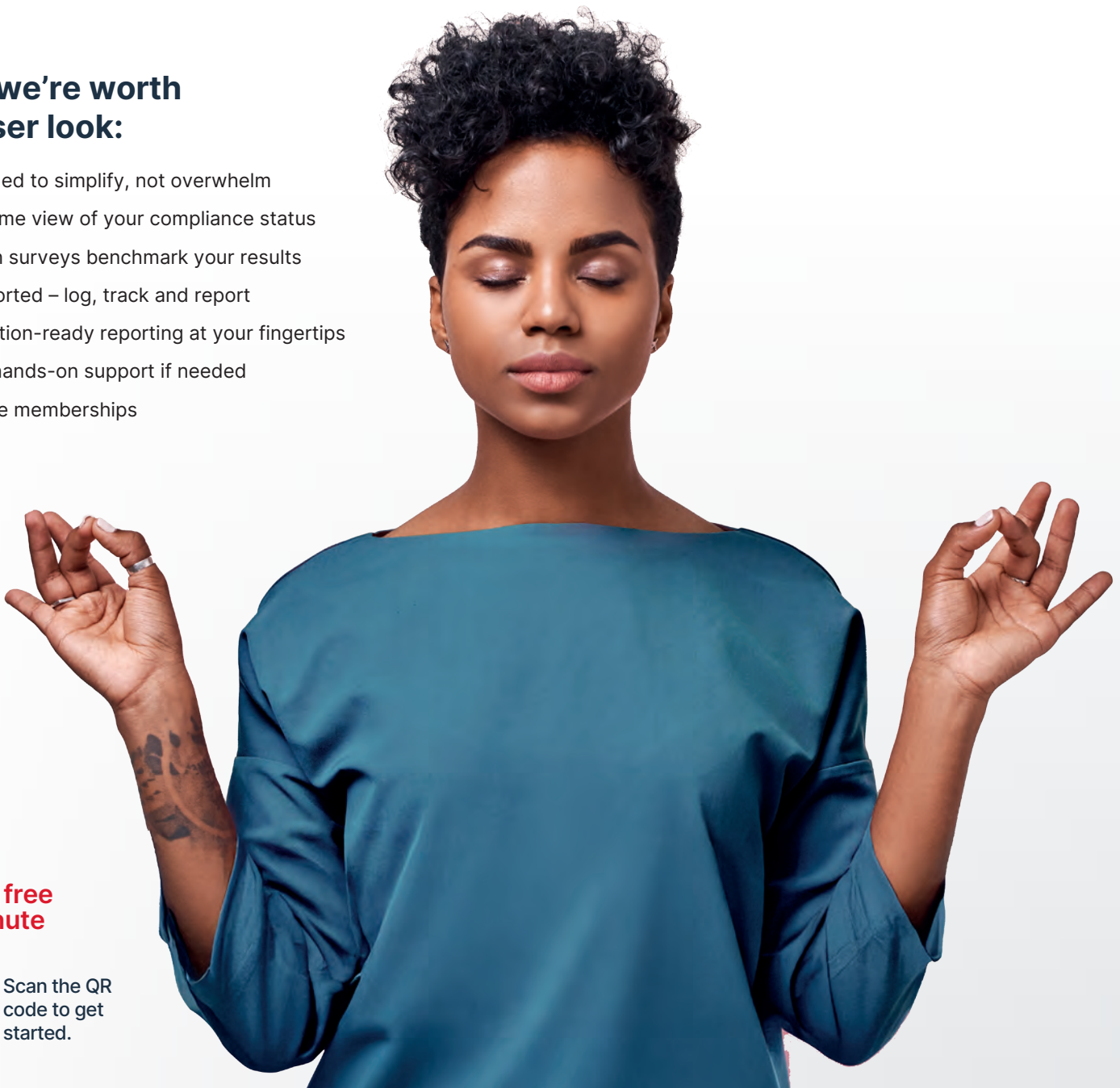
When you view locum support not as a last-minute solution but as part of your ongoing commitment to excellence, you build resilience into your practice – and that's what truly sets high-performing dental teams apart.



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# Breaking free from burnout

**Mark Topley** shares a guide to sustainable leadership for practice principals

**R**unning a practice can often feel like sprinting a marathon with no finish line. You're not just a clinician, you're a manager, leader, HR department, marketing lead, finance director, and occasionally, emotional support for the whole team. The pace can be relentless. And the consequences can too often be burnout, fatigue, and frustration. Not just for you, but for your entire team. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Burnout isn't a badge of honour. And being 'always on' isn't the price you pay for owning a practice. In fact, sustainable leadership, the kind that allows you to grow a business and enjoy your life, isn't just possible – it's essential.

To get there and lead well, you simply need to let go.

## LOSE CONTROL

One of the biggest mindset shifts for any principal is this: you don't have to do it all – and you shouldn't.

I am constantly amazed by the things that principals get involved in. Asking for advice on the best deals for energy contracts, air conditioning units, furniture and all manner of stuff which could very positively be delegated to others, albeit with the right structure and system.

Many owners I work with have unintentionally built a leadership model based on control rather than

trust. They hold on to too much, take responsibility for everything, and wonder why their team doesn't step up. But here's the truth – the best leaders don't do more, they enable more. That means sharing responsibilities, defining ownership clearly, and allowing others to lead within their roles.

Delegation isn't about handing off tasks, it's about building capacity across your team so your business can function without you being the bottleneck.

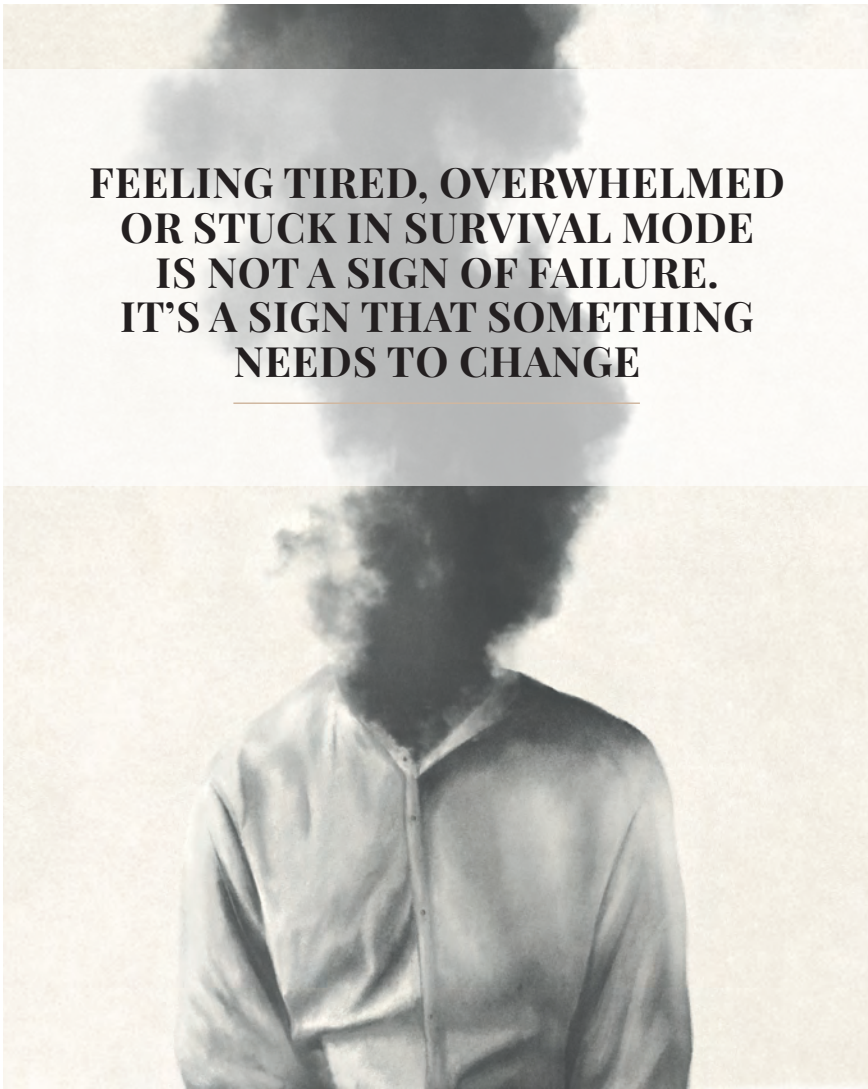
If you're still doing things others could be doing, or should be doing, your leadership is leaking energy and profitability every day.

## ENERGY BEFORE EFFICIENCY

Most owners don't need more productivity hacks – they need more energy clarity.

Time is fixed, but energy and focus are renewable, if you manage them right.

Practice owners thrive when they stop reacting and start aligning their



**FEELING TIRED, OVERWHELMED  
OR STUCK IN SURVIVAL MODE  
IS NOT A SIGN OF FAILURE.  
IT'S A SIGN THAT SOMETHING  
NEEDS TO CHANGE**



**Mark Topley**

Mark is the founder of [responsibledentistry.com](http://responsibledentistry.com) and the Great Boss Academy – businesses that provide coaching, consultancy and training for leaders, owners and managers who want a more successful, positive and sustainable business.

work with their natural energy rhythms. That means:

- Protecting your best hours for high-value thinking, not admin or back-to-back patients
- Scheduling real recovery into your day (a short walk, deep breath, or screen break is not indulgent, it's fuel)
- Tracking what drains you – and fixing it, fast.

Burnout doesn't happen in a single day. It creeps up in through thousands of small decisions that ignore your energy.

### KINDNESS AND CLARITY

A common leadership myth is that kindness leads to complacency. That if you care too much or give people too much trust, they'll take advantage. It's why so many principals swing between micromanagement and avoidance, either too controlling or too hands-off.

But great leadership isn't about being tough or nice. It's about being clear.

Set expectations. Communicate them early. Hold people to account. And then, catch them doing things right.

Don't let the poor behaviour of a small handful of people shape how you lead everyone else. Focus on the majority who want to do a great job, and give them the clarity, support and feedback they need to thrive.

Team members don't step up unless they're invited to. They don't take ownership unless it's given, alongside a clear picture of what 'good' looks like. If you're doing all the heavy lifting, you're not leading, you're just surviving.

You don't need to lower your standards. You need to raise the level of your leadership.

### THE LIFE-CHANGING SHIFT

Most practice owners were never taught how to lead; they just took on more and more responsibility until it started to wear them down. Over time, the cost adds up: stress, staff turnover, constant firefighting, and a business that leans too heavily on you to function.

The fix isn't another quick hack or motivational quote. It's about doing the deeper work – creating

a rhythm of leadership that actually supports you, not drains you.

That means:

- Spotting where your leadership is leaking time, energy or profit
- Sharing or reshaping responsibilities so you're not the bottleneck
- Structuring your week to protect your energy and priorities
- Turning expectations into ownership, so the team starts to lead themselves.

This kind of shift doesn't happen by accident. But when your leadership clicks, everything else – time, energy, profit, productivity, success – starts to follow.

Your role as a leader isn't to carry the weight of the practice, it's to build something that can thrive without breaking you.

Feeling tired, overwhelmed or stuck in survival mode is not a sign of failure. It's a sign that something needs to change – and the good news is that you can change it.

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# Carol Somerville Roberts



**Andrea Ubhi** kicks off her new series by speaking to **Carol Somerville Roberts** about finding her people, overcoming a GDC investigation and leading with purpose

**T**o launch the 'Voices from the edge' series, I reached out to Dr Carol Somerville Roberts with a set of questions designed to go deeper than the usual profile interview. Her written responses were generous, honest and deeply human.

In a profession that often prizes perfection and polish, few speak openly about the messier truths behind leadership. In this candid conversation, Carol – practice owner, president-elect of the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (BACD), and self-confessed former micromanager – shares what it really takes to lead with integrity, survive professional storms, and find personal peace after nearly three decades in dentistry.

From a GDC investigation that shook her to the core to letting go of fear and control, Carol brings grit, grace, and a voice we need more of in this industry.

## Get to know Carol

Dr Carol Somerville Roberts BDS MFDS RCS is clinical director of Evolve Dentistry, a fully private practice in Portishead that she founded in 2009. Now leading a team of 22, she brings nearly 30 years of clinical experience and business leadership to her role. Carol is also president elect of the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, where she champions excellence, education, and ethical standards across the profession.

### Let's start with where you are now...

I am the owner of a fully private practice called Evolve Dentistry in Portishead, which I set up as a squat in 2009. I started with four team members, now we have 22.

Right now, I'm taking a step back from clinical dentistry following an elbow operation a few weeks ago. I'll be off for another couple of months and will then phase my return.

Pre-COVID-19, I never would have imagined stepping away from clinical work for this long, but the pandemic taught me something crucial: no one is indispensable.

Over the years, I've invested heavily in building and developing my team. I trust every team member implicitly, which has allowed me to step away with confidence.

Before my operation, I worked three days a week with patients, had one day dedicated to working on the business, and took one day off. I'm also the president-elect of the BACD – a voluntary role that demands a fair bit of my time.

At the heart of everything I do is a desire to deliver the best possible experience – for patients, my team, and peers. That's what keeps me driven.

### Looking back, what was a turning point in your dental career?

Two moments stand out. First, when I was an associate, my boss asked

me to run his practice while he and his wife took a 12-month sabbatical. I naively said yes. One year became two, and I realised: if I could run his practice, why not my own?

The second moment came when I attended my first BACD conference. I instantly knew I'd found 'my people'. The relationships and knowledge I gained there have influenced every step of my career since.

### When have you felt truly at the edge – personally or professionally?

In 2015, I received the letter every dentist dreads: a notification from the GDC that I was under investigation.

A charity had taken issue with some wording on my website and reported me without ever contacting my practice. It took 15 months to reach a hearing. At one point, I was told the case was being dropped, only to have that decision reversed before it was confirmed in writing. That false hope was crushing.

The night before the hearing, a colleague shared the case publicly on Facebook, calling out the absurdity of it. I was devastated – I'd told only a few close friends. I felt ashamed, convinced that only 'bad' dentists went through fitness to practise hearings. But the support I received after that post was overwhelming. I now believe we need to be far more open about these experiences. Too many suffer in silence.

**What truth do you believe about leadership in dentistry that not everyone agrees with?**

Not everyone is cut out to be a leader. You can't be everyone's best friend. As a leader, you need to create a vision and inspire your team to follow it.

**What's been your biggest internal challenge as a leader?**

Maintaining composure. No matter what's happening behind the scenes, you need to show up and set the tone for your team.

You don't get to gossip or offload like everyone else. From that, I've learned I'm more resilient than I thought.

**What does integrity mean in private practice?**

It means doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.

I need to sleep at night knowing I've done right by my patients and my team.

**What do you wish more practice owners would talk about?**

Their numbers. There's so much tension around associate percentages. Principals think associates should be more grateful; associates think principals are greedy.

If owners sat down and discussed the actual numbers involved in running a practice, there'd be more understanding and less resentment. Also, share the targets and achievements with your team. Let them know what they're aiming for and what's in it for them when they do.

**What conversation or topic is the profession avoiding?**

Older women. Around 50, many women face a perfect storm: ageing parents, children leaving home, and the menopause. It can be overwhelming and isolating. Confidence often dips, especially with the rise of Instagram dentists, older women can feel irrelevant. We need more open conversations about this stage of life.

**Has your definition of success changed over time?**

Absolutely. After 29 years in dentistry, my perspective has evolved. Success used to be about career progression and material milestones. Now, it's about having freedom. Freedom to do what I



love – mainly travelling, spending time with family and friends, walking my dog. Simple things.

**What are you currently unlearning or letting go of?**

Micromanagement, I am a stickler for attention to detail, but I trust my team. They know the vision, and the mission. As long as they can justify their decisions and are acting in good faith, I will support them.

**And on a personal level?**

Fear. I've let go of worrying about what others think. People are usually too busy to be thinking about you. None of us are as important as we think we are.

**What advice would you give your younger self?**

Enjoy the ride! Don't obsess over the destination. I spent too much time thinking: 'I'll be happy when...'

Also, stop comparing yourself to others, you're on your own journey.

**What would you say to someone disillusioned with dentistry right now?**

If you're unhappy, move on. There is a practice or community out there where you will thrive. But if change isn't immediately possible, fake it until you make it – you might just surprise yourself.

**What would you say to the version of you who was still figuring things out?**

This too shall pass. Whether it's a good day or a bad day, tomorrow is another day.

**HONEST, SHARP AND UNAFRAID**

Carol's story is a reminder that leadership isn't about having it all figured out. Rather, it's about staying in the room when things get hard, learning to trust others (and yourself), and having the courage to tell the truth even when it makes others uncomfortable.

Throughout our conversation about leadership, letting go, and the invisible weight many women in dentistry carry, Carol was honest, sharp and unafraid to say the things many only think.

I'm honoured to share her story as we open this space for real, raw reflections from the people shaping our profession.

As we continue to platform voices from the edge, let's be honest about what it really takes to thrive in this profession: resilience, reinvention, and a refusal to walk alone.



*This series is looking to spotlight honest, bold voices in dentistry – especially those who've stood at the edge and led with integrity. If someone comes to mind, get in touch with Andrea on Instagram @andreaubhi.*



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**Rachel Jackson**

Rachel is the founder of Superior Smiles, a practice she created to bring her vision of outstanding, patient-focused dentistry to life. With more than 20 years of experience, she has worked with some of the UK's top dental practices, building a strong foundation in clinical excellence and patient care.





# ‘A pizza party is just papering over the cracks’

For practice owner **Rachel Jackson**, burnout was the wake-up call she ‘didn’t know she needed’. Here, she explains why she goes beyond superficial fixes to address workplace stress

Words: Julie Bissett

**B**urnout is a complex cycle that is challenging to break. Few understand this better than Rachel Jackson, owner of Superior Smiles in Knutsford, Cheshire. She began her career as a practice receptionist in 2004, became a qualified dental nurse in 2007, and steadily rose to lead dental nurse, then practice manager and business manager, finally opening the doors to her own private clinic in 2018.

However, establishing her squat practice took its toll. What was meant to be her next big step faltered, and Rachel struggled to balance the demands of practice management with her own wellbeing.

The qualities that had driven her forward were now responsible for an unsustainable pace of life.

Consequently, she has developed an acute awareness of burnout and its risks. Today, her business philosophy is built on a non-negotiable foundation: a healthy work

environment prioritising everyone’s wellbeing. Because, as Rachel well knows, its absence comes at a high price.

## WAKING UP

Last year, Rachel experienced a life-altering period that compelled her to stop and reflect on everything – her work, her habits, her leadership and, ultimately, herself.

‘I used to believe that working 12–14-hour days was simply a part of running a business and that exhaustion somehow equated to dedication,’ she says. ‘I was always connected, always responding, always available. But the truth is? That level of grinding isn’t sustainable, and certainly not productive. I had to step away from the practice and let my team manage without me, and I was terrified.’

She recalls: ‘For years, I had trained myself to believe that being a good leader meant always being available. I would wake up and check emails before leaving bed, constantly stressing over things that hadn’t happened yet. I was checking the business Whatsapp before I brushed my teeth, convincing myself I was



being efficient. But the truth is, I was pushing myself into burnout.

'When I finally stopped, I realised something that completely changed how I lead: everything was fine without me.'

'I made a promise to myself: no more phones in bed. No emails before coffee. No Whatsapp checks before I've even started my day. Everything can wait. Because when you start your day already stressed, you don't fix the problem – you just stress over it twice. And when you're stressed, your team and patients feel it. Energy is contagious.'

Making these essential changes, she discovered that 'patients didn't fall through the cracks – and the team stepped up to make decisions confidently'. For Rachel, this trust builds morale, ownership and leadership across the board. 'They trusted themselves because I had already given them the tools, and now they had the space to use them.'

Initially feeling compelled to 'approve everything and be part of every decision', she quickly learned that 'if a team member can justify their choice and it's rooted in good intent, then there's no such thing as a "wrong decision", just a different one'.

### STRESS-FREE SOLUTIONS

She also altered her habits at home. Instead of seeking quick fixes and using food or a glass of wine for a dopamine boost, she began reconnecting with what truly mattered: lunch with the team, laughter with friends, exercise, time with family, and genuine conversations.

'Being more present, more human and more reasonable with myself has changed everything. I'm happier. I'm more resilient. And, most importantly, my team and business are better because of it.'

'Ultimately, no one ever asked me to be "always on" – I put that pressure on myself. Sometimes, burnout is just the consequence of your own actions. But the beauty is: once you realise that, you can change it.'

She believes that managing workplace stress requires more than superficial solutions. Brief interventions rarely address the more profound, more systemic challenges of burnout in dentistry.



She says: 'Burnout rarely announces itself. It creeps in quietly. I've learned to look for subtle changes, like a team member who was once proactive becoming withdrawn, less engaged, or constantly overwhelmed by tasks that used to be routine. You might notice them taking more sick days, missing small details or becoming short-tempered with others.'

'Often, it shows up as emotional exhaustion before anything else. In dentistry, where patient care depends on emotional presence, that can be detrimental not just to the team but to the whole practice culture.'

'One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that tackling burnout in dentistry isn't about surface-level fixes. A pizza party or a quick "wellness day" isn't going to solve deep-rooted stress and pressure.'

'Burnout is complex and a cycle that's hard to break. When the owner or the clinician gets burnt out, that stress trickles down to the dental nurses, the reception team and the managers until everyone's running on empty. And the worst part? We often push through because that's what we've always done. But that's not sustainable.'

'I'll be honest: I've been guilty of cancelling check-ins when the day gets too busy or brushing over signs that someone's struggling because I've been overwhelmed myself. But I've realised that the solution isn't about grand gestures; it's about listening.'



Actually listening. Sometimes it's as simple as pulling someone aside for an informal coffee and a chat, not a formal meeting, not a "performance review", but just a chance to check-in.

'Creating a space where people feel comfortable opening up is key, starting with showing that you genuinely care. It's also about accountability, sticking to regular check-ins, following through on training plans and addressing issues before they escalate. If someone's not performing or seems off, the first question should be: what's really going on?'



## LEARNING HOW TO FAIL

Rachel's approach has evidently evolved as a result of her experience. She now promotes a culture of learning by encouraging her team to embrace the concept of FAIL – 'first attempt in learning'.

Mistakes are not errors; instead, they are seen as opportunities for growth. By shifting the focus from blame to learning, she ensures her practice fosters an environment where employees feel supported rather than scrutinised.

Here, Rachel shares some insight into how to break free from the destructive cycle of stress before it spins out of control – and help others achieve the same happy equilibrium:

1. Balancing productivity with a stress-free work environment is the sweet spot and the most challenging aspect. In a busy, high-end practice like mine, efficiency is essential. However, pushing too hard for performance without adequate support can quickly lead to burnout. We have cultivated a culture where systems do the heavy lifting. Clear protocols, strong communication,

and the empowerment of the team to take ownership of their roles enhance efficiency without negative impact. Productivity shouldn't feel like pressure when the foundations are solid

2. A team that embraces your business ethos is essential, but each team member must feel connected to the brand. A well-designed clinic is meaningless if the energy and attitude do not align. Your team needs to feel engaged with your mission – in both words and actions. That clarity is vital. We discuss our standards, our vision for the patient experience and how every role contributes to that vision. Regular check-ins, a shared team language, and involving them in decisions that affect their daily activities support that sense of ownership. When your team understands the 'why', the 'how' becomes much easier
3. There are several practical and sustainable strategies to avoid burnout. Don't skip check-ins. Even on the busiest days, take time to talk to your team. Protect your systems. Your workflows should handle the

pressure, not your people. Train beyond the clinical. I prepare my team in resilience, communication and proactiveness – skills that safeguard the team emotionally and professionally. Model this behaviour yourself. Your team will follow your lead if you're burning out and pushing through. Take breaks. Ask for help. Be human

4. Conversations with team members who may face challenges yet hesitate to express their emotions can be difficult. Remove the formality. Some of the most honest discussions I've had with my team didn't take place in a meeting room; they happened over coffee in the staff room or during a quiet one-on-one in the surgery. Set aside the clipboard. Create a safe space. Start with: 'You seem a little off lately; how are you, really?' Then just listen. Allow the silence to linger. Not everyone is ready to open up right away, but when they sense that you care more about them as a person than merely a problem to solve, the conversation shifts
5. There was a time when one team member started making minor mistakes – nothing drastic, but it was unusual for her. In the past, I might have jumped straight into giving feedback. However, I've learned to pause. Instead, I asked how she was coping, and it turned out she was dealing with something significant outside of work. We were able to support her by temporarily adjusting her workload, which completely transformed her energy and performance. That conversation also allowed the rest of the team to feel more comfortable being honest, thereby changing our dynamic for the better
6. For practice owners on the brink of burnout, the first step is acknowledging it. You're not weak for feeling it. You're human. Secondly, get real about your systems. If your practice cannot run without you, that's a business structure issue, not a personal failure. And finally, let go of the pressure to do it all alone. Delegate. Train your team well. Trust them. You deserve to build a practice that runs beautifully, not just for your patients but also for you.



# Harrods meets dentistry

**Zayba Sheikh** shares what it took to launch Ruh Dental inside the world-renowned department store and what it means for patients, the brand and the future of wellness-led dentistry

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**Q Can you tell us about your journey into dentistry?**

**A** I qualified as a dentist in 2010, but I always knew clinical dentistry wasn't my true passion. I enjoyed the science and the people skills, but my core ambition was always in business. I wanted to align that with dentistry in a meaningful way.

I started out in the NHS, then moved into private dentistry and worked my way up, always knowing I wanted my own setup. I come from an entrepreneurial family – my dad and uncle worked together in care and property – so I was exposed to the business side from a young age.

I saw an opportunity to build something niche in private dentistry. At the time, there wasn't much competition in cosmetic dentistry, and I spotted a clear gap in the market. That's when I launched my first private clinic. I opened it on Fleet Street in 2015 while five months pregnant, so I was thrown in at the deep end as a first-time mum and first-time clinic owner. From there, I built the brand and expanded steadily.

**Q What inspired you to create the Ruh Dental brand?**

**A** Ruh Dental was born from a desire to redefine the dental experience. I saw the artistry in cosmetic dentistry – something far beyond the clinical and scientific perception most people have – and wanted to combine that with a luxury hospitality approach.

The goal was to create a brand that delivers more than just treatment – it offers a complete, personalised experience.

As a dentist, you're often so focused on the technical side that you can miss the bigger picture, so wanted to step back and shape the entire patient journey – from the moment someone walks through the door, every touchpoint should feel elevated.



## Beyond Harrods

Ruh Dental Knightsbridge (located inside Harrods) joins its other clinics, which can be found on London's Fleet Street and Notting Hill Gate, and Manchester's Spinningfields.





**Zayba Sheikh**  
Zayba is CEO of Ruh Dental.

Today, people are seeking that – they want more than just clinical care. They want a positive, even enjoyable, experience. That trend has grown over the years, and it's exactly what we set out to deliver.

For me, it wasn't just about growing a business – it was about raising the standard in the industry.

**Q How does Ruh Dental stand out as a brand?**

**A** It's really about experience and patient happiness. We focus on transforming the whole person. We say we deliver life transformations, not just nice smiles – people leave feeling more confident and happier, and that deeper change sets us apart.

Everyone's doing good work and trying to help patients, but what makes us different is striving to be the best, not being a one-man band. We're a group of elite clinicians, and we're also a female-led business, which matters to our team. Especially now, with so much focus on flexible work and purpose-driven brands, people choose companies with deeper values. That's what sets us apart – our values.

**Q How did the Harrods partnership come about?**

**A** It came through an investor I came across, who I pitched to about Ruh's growth. I've always wanted to grow Ruh with a solid UK footprint to stand out internationally, especially in the Middle East. I knew for the Middle East, an international brand needs global recognition – Harley Street, Mayfair. I was speaking to some investors, and one said, 'Have you ever thought about pitching to Harrods?' I hadn't – I wasn't sure dentistry worked in a department store. But Harrods isn't just a department store – it's a globally recognised brand.

I worked my way into a pitch with them. I always say it felt like Dragon's Den meets The Apprentice. It was overwhelming – I'd never pitched at that level. It took over 18 months of back-and-forth pitching and refining, so it was a big experience.

They've also got a strong female-led team, but they're retail experts, not healthcare. So when it came to healthcare – blood, regulations, risk of allergic reactions – that was scary for them. I had to really pitch my credibility and reassure them Ruh was the

right brand. They vetted us thoroughly, but that process gave us credibility – no other dental group has been in Harrods in the store's history, so to be Harrods-approved and introduce cosmetic dentistry to its clients is a huge achievement.

**Q What was your reaction when they said they'd like to partner with you?**

**A** They kind of keep you in the dark – lots of back and forth, hurdles they thought we couldn't overcome. But I was solution-driven, always saying, 'I'll make it work,' even if I didn't yet know how. When they said yes, I was like, 'Wow.' It felt like passing an exam – recognition.

When you run your own business, you don't get daily validation. You have to give it to yourself, even when things go wrong. So Harrods recognising us was validating – that what I'm doing is good, meaningful, impactful. Being female-led helped too as it helped me connect with them.

But while I was proud and excited, I was also nervous – now I have to deliver. Getting in is one thing, performance is another, and this has never been done before! When I speak to other dentists about working with Harrods, they say, 'This could be amazing – or a huge flop.' And they're right – I don't know, but I do know I had the guts to try. If it doesn't work, at least I tried. But if it does, it'll be one of the biggest things we've done – not just for us, but for the industry, proving this model can work.

**Q What impact do you think this could have on patients' perception of dental care?**

**A** Patient perception is already changing – through social media, podcasts, more awareness of healthcare and wellness. Cosmetic dentistry is evolving, and I think this partnership brings it further into the wellness and beauty space.

It introduces cosmetic dentistry in a regulated, high-standard way. Things like whitening used to be done in shopping centres – we want to do it properly, above standard, within Harrods. It's already trending, but now it'll trend holistically – teeth, aesthetics, laser, hair – a 360-wellness approach. Cosmetic dentistry will become a wing of wellness.

**Q As a luxury department store, how would you say your brand aligns with Harrods?**

**A** Our values align. For them, excellence is standard – going above and beyond. They train their teams to never say no to a client and we have always aspired to that – not just in how our clinics look, but how we treat patients and the results we deliver. If your values align, clients trust that.

**Q Besides the location, how does this clinic differ from your other practices?**

**A** It's a smaller site with one surgery setup whereas our other clinics are full setups. This one's integrated into Harrods, part of the Harrods client journey, so it's bespoke around Harrods – how they pay, get rewards, what they expect.

The flow is different – at our clinics, it's a standalone journey, but at Harrods it's part of the whole experience – shopping, dining, and now dental care. It's elevated by the luxury around it. Plus, their clients love the points!

**Q Did you encounter any obstacles or difficulties with the project?**

**A** Yes, a lot. This has been our biggest challenge. We've always worked independently – I've got my team, I can hire consultants, make quick decisions, but Harrods is a different beast.

We had to adapt to their way of working, which is on another level. I'm a small business – they're global.

They need sign-offs from Qatar, they go through chains of command, whereas I can make decisions with four people around a table in hours. With them, I've gone from five people on a call to 25.

It's been challenging – not negatively, but as a growth push. It's really stretched us, but we were ready for that.

All growth has a positive effect – we always see challenges as learning opportunities which keeps my team motivated and excited. I always say: 'If you weren't challenged, you'd be bored,' and they agree.

So, this has been positive for the brand – the team feels proud and motivated, and they're learning, growing and adapting. And that makes us stronger as a team. We know we want to grow the brand, and we're evolving to do that.



**Q What does this milestone mean to you personally?**

**A** For me – I'm a mum of three, all under eight. As women, we often want it all, and we try to pretend kids don't affect work, and vice versa. But I don't believe in perfect balance – it's unrealistic. This milestone shows you can have ambition as a mum. For me, it's progression not just in my career, but as a working mum. That's deep.

Day-to-day, it's hard – but now my kids see that I have goals. I'm not just mum – I have my own identity. This is a step toward who I'm becoming as a woman. Everyone's journey is different, but for me, this is about doing my best in both roles – motherhood and ambition.

**Q Looking forward, what is the focus for the Ruh Dental brand?**

**A** To keep elevating who we are in the industry. I want us to be known as a high-level brand. The competition is fierce, so it's about separating ourselves.

My focus is to maintain strong values, elite customer care, and stay in the space of wellness, luxury and hospitality. And I'm already looking at opportunities to grow Ruh in the Middle East – that's where I see the future of the brand.





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# ‘Evolve – or die’

Marketing expert **Derek Uittenbroek** reveals how setbacks can shape a journey and drive a business forward

Words: Julie Bissett

**R**ecent years have taught us that entrepreneurs must be swift in adapting to change to succeed during difficult times. Turning points drive evolution, and those in dentistry arguably understand this better than most.

Derek Uittenbroek is the founder and CEO of Ignite, a growth agency that specialises in helping ambitious dental practices thrive using paid advertising and conversion content. Rooted in ‘buying psychology’, this strategy tackles the challenges of a dental marketing environment in a state of flux. And Derek believes it’s a case of ‘evolve or die’ for dentists – those who fail to adapt will fall behind. He makes a strong point, and it serves as a stark warning: the days of ‘build it and they will come’ are over.

Derek has undergone his own evolution, both professionally and personally. His life has been characterised by numerous watershed moments – experiences that have taught him to be prepared for change. It is also a fundamental aspect of his business model, which has recently shifted its focus to content strategy to complement its paid advertising support and highly successful open-day campaigns. And he has used his non-linear career development to fuel growth for his clients.

## BORN TO MOVE

Born in the Netherlands, Derek led a largely peripatetic life in his early years, moving to the US in 1996, to the UK in 1998, to Malaysia in 2000, and then back to London in 2005. He recalls the first move to the States as a time of emotional upheaval: ‘I was born in a small village in the Netherlands – very quiet, very safe. Then, when I was nine, my family moved to Connecticut. It all happened pretty quickly. I didn’t speak any English, and it was a massive culture shock.’

With his subsequent move to the UK, he found the transition considerably easier, attending an international school in Surrey. ‘By then, I spoke the language, and it was a much more welcoming environment.’

Relocating to Penang in Malaysia two years later, he says this was a ‘totally different world’.

‘I had grown used to adjusting. It was an amazing place – really diverse and vibrant and I look back at that time fondly. Eventually, I returned to the UK to study business at King’s College London.

‘By that point, the moving around had done its work. It taught me how to be comfortable with change and get along with people from diverse backgrounds. It gave me the ability to build relationships quickly, even when things felt unfamiliar. And it’s helped at every stage of my career.’

It’s a path that has been equally chequered. In 2008, Derek secured a job in the City – unfortunately, just two weeks before the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the ensuing global financial fallout. Once again, feeling like a fish out of water, he adapted. ‘I started just before the financial crash, a bit of a misfit – this Dutch international kid in a very old-school British environment. But I found my way.’

A career change led him to join Accenture in 2010. While there, he was exposed to various projects and industries, discovering another superpower. ‘I knew how to land on my feet. I could read the room and figure things out quickly, and I progressed rapidly.’

Two years later, he established Fundthegap, an online equity fundraising platform that helped UK start-ups and SMEs raise cash from investors. He sold the company in 2013 with just enough money in the bank to cover legal fees. He then joined a bank as a contractor while determining his ‘next steps in life’.

## LIGHTING THE SPARK

In 2017, he was let go from the bank just two weeks before his first child was due. Not one to dwell on a run of bad luck, he learned how to run Facebook ads and started Rocket Marketing, which was later rebranded as Ignite Growth and then Ignite.

Ultimately, he took the plunge to go full-time. ‘When I became an entrepreneur, this adaptability became even more critical. Running a business means constantly evolving – reading the market, adjusting to what your customers need and spotting where things are going. You have to keep changing.’

And this background has also shaped how he leads. ‘The way I’ve built the team at Ignite is very reflective of that. We’ve got people from all walks of life, with different backgrounds and cultures. We look







for people's strengths and try to create a culture where people can be themselves.'

Being thrown in at the deep end seems to suit him. But there is a downside – he doesn't always feel fully rooted anywhere. 'That's the third culture kid thing,' he says. 'But overall, I see it as a gift. It has made me more resilient, more open – and I'd like to think it's made me a better leader, too.'

### GUT PUNCHES AND GOOSEBUMPS

Fate took another unfortunate turn with the onset of COVID-19. In 2020, Ignite lost 95% of its turnover – 'moments like these that can feel like gut punches', Derek admits. However, the pandemic sparked an idea that left a lasting legacy.

'Clinics were closed, but patients still needed help and no one was marketing. So, we decided to help our clinics pivot to video consultations – not just for emergencies, but also for elective treatments – when it felt appropriate and right. During lockdown, people were sitting at home with time, with money and with things they wanted to fix. We created guides, training and free videos. We helped practices set up the systems. We gave it all away to help people stay connected to their patients – not just to our clients, but across the dental industry. And it worked. One dental practice reopened with 46 Invisalign Clinchecks lined up – all booked remotely during lockdown. That moment still gives me goosebumps.'

As a result, Ignite bounced back in 2021 to grow to 2.5 times its previous year's figure, thanks to Derek's ability to rise to a crisis. By 2023, the 27-strong team of 'Igniters' had worked with 400-plus clinics and generated millions in treatment revenue.

'It showed that if you stay calm, lead and truly serve your clients, especially in tough times, it comes back around. So yeah, the busts hurt. But they also built me – how to lead when things fall apart and how to create something that can bend without breaking.'

### FACING FAILURE

Derek often emphasises that patient journeys are 'messy' rather than linear. He believes that clinics successful in supporting patients are those whose content acknowledges this complexity, guiding patients through every stage of their decision-making process and aligning messaging with each phase to build trust along the way.

Interestingly, this perspective seems rooted in his own ability to recognise life's 'messiness' and to push back during setbacks. He believes the flashpoints in his career have proved the most critical times. 'Setbacks have taught me a lot – not just about business, but about myself; about how to stay calm when the floor drops out.

'Once you've cold-called during the worst financial crisis in decades, nothing else really fazes you,' he laughs. 'With Fundthegap, we focused far too much on the product and not enough on the people we were trying to serve. Ultimately, we ran out of cash. Thankfully, we managed to sell the business just before it went under. But that period hit me hard.

'I was facing my first significant failure – and it was my fault. I realised I didn't understand marketing. I didn't understand consumer behaviour or how to sell. So, I threw myself into learning everything I could – SEO, Google Ads, Facebook Ads,

copywriting, buyer psychology, and more. That obsession eventually became the foundation for Ignite.'

### SETTING BOUNDARIES

Derek lives with his wife, Lovina, and their three daughters in West Hampstead, London. He appears settled – for now.

Family comes first, but he still spends spare headspace thinking about the business – 'sales, psychology, buyer behaviour and branding – all the things that help people make better decisions and communicate more effectively,' he says.

Most of his free time is spent with Lovina and the girls – 'soft plays, playgrounds, scooters, birthday parties,' he says. However, his passion for helping clinicians and all it entails is evidently never far away. So, having found this 'happy place', it might seem odd for him to be stepping back into the spotlight.

'In the early days of Ignite, there were no boundaries. Clients had my number, and I was available at all times. But it burnt me out. So, I made a conscious decision to step back, reclaim some sanity, rebuild my boundaries and reposition the brand.

'The dental marketing space is messy right now. It's full of bold promises, shiny guarantees, and many low-quality agencies popping up overnight. People with little to no real experience are selling clinics the dream of quick wins and guaranteed ROI.

And dentists are getting burned.

At the same time, everyone's obsessed with tactics and short-term numbers. However, no one is creating real brands

that patients truly believe in. That's where I want to lead. And I genuinely believe I have something to contribute, but this time I'm doing it with boundaries.

'Online again, I'm sharing ideas, frameworks and mindset shifts. I'm trying to be a voice of reason in a noisy space and rebuild trust because I think the industry needs it.'

For Derek, that trust-building is a deal breaker.

'Patients don't just buy treatments; they want someone who understands and whom they can buy into. You can't establish that by hiding behind a logo. When you show up honestly and consistently online, you give people a reason to choose you before they meet you. That changes everything.'

### NEXT-GEN APPROACH

Meanwhile, Ignite continues to flourish. Having recognised that it is clinics with strong branding and content that thrive, Ignite has created a comprehensive content division, encompassing videography, content strategy and storytelling, and launched Ignite Social Studio, along with a podcast, *The Patient is Always Right*.

Derek says: 'Podcast-style content is powerful for clinics. It positions the owner as the expert and provides months of content in a single shoot. We help dentists build a trusted brand that attracts the right patients: those who value your work, show up, say yes, and refer others.

'Sustainable growth comes from establishing long-term relationships, not chasing quick wins or offering discounts.'

For Derek, nurturing a successful business is not about growing faster, but better. And dentistry is ripe for this approach. 'I sense the old way is over, and we're here to lead what's next.'

---

*Follow Derek on Instagram at @derekignite.*



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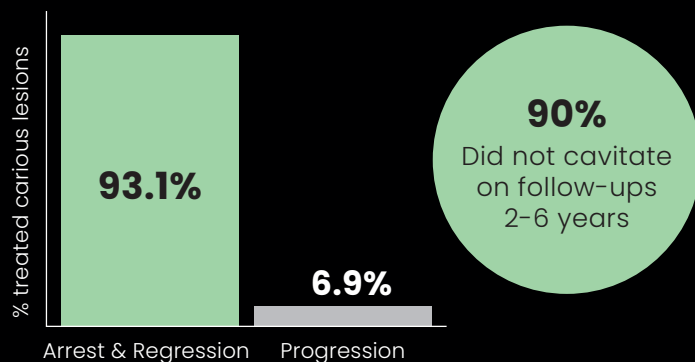
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<sup>1</sup> Godenzl D et al. J Am Dent Assoc. 2023:S0002-8177 (23)00416-6  
\*Long-term clinical study in public pediatric dental clinic in Chur, Switzerland

# PRIVATE

DENTISTRY AWARDS 2025

## Crafting a winning entry

The submission deadline for **Private Dentistry Awards 2025** is fast approaching – here’s how to construct a winning award entry!

The Private Dentistry Awards has earned a reputation within the profession for being prestigious, professional and polished. And while there’s no doubt that entering the awards can elevate your practice’s reputation, enhance team morale, attract new patients, and affirm your professional standards, creating an award entry is not something to be rushed or approached casually. It takes strategy, storytelling, evidence and precision.

So, with the entry deadline just around the corner, here are the essential stages of crafting a compelling, professional entry to help make an impression on the judges.

### GETTING STARTED

The first thing you need to do is read the dedicated entry guide. This year’s guide is available to download via [dentistry.co.uk](http://dentistry.co.uk).

Read the award category descriptions carefully and identify the ones most relevant for you.

Pay attention to the criteria and ensure you (or your practice) meet any eligibility obligations. Address each one separately. Think of it like answering exam questions: even if your overall

story is strong, missing a key element can lose you vital marks.

Before you start writing, plan your entry. Hold a team brainstorming session. Involving those who can offer insight and evidence, use this session to gather:

- Success stories
- Data and metrics
- Examples of innovation or exceptional care
- Patient feedback
- Relevant visuals (photos, graphs, testimonials).

Then, build an outline for your entry, matching each section to the award criteria.

### CRAFTING THE ENTRY

The next stage is to craft a compelling narrative. The judges will read lots of entries. Facts alone won’t win. You need to tell a compelling story that connects emotionally and demonstrates impact.

Consider using a simple narrative structure:

- Introduction: briefly describe who you are, your philosophy, and what sets you apart
- The challenge: highlight a problem you aimed to solve (eg improving anxious patient care)
- The solution: explain what you

implemented – be specific

- The outcome: showcase measurable results, improvements, or feedback
- The future: end with how you will continue to improve or innovate.

A story with a clear journey is more memorable than a dry list of achievements.

Be sure to back it with quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Your claims need to be credible. Be selective and relevant – don’t overload.

Judges are looking for sustainable excellence, not one-off wins. Wherever possible, show that your achievements are part of a consistent ethos or long-term strategy.

Once you’ve written the submission, take time to review and refine it. One of the best ways to achieve this is to get feedback; ask a critical colleague as well as a non-dental friend or adviser to review the entry, checking for:

- Spelling and grammar
- Flow and readability
- Clarity and structure
- Alignment with the judging criteria.

Finally, it’s time to submit! Head to [dentistry.co.uk/awards/private-dentistry-awards](http://dentistry.co.uk/awards/private-dentistry-awards) to enter!

*For more details, visit [dentistry.co.uk/awards/private-dentistry-awards](http://dentistry.co.uk/awards/private-dentistry-awards).*

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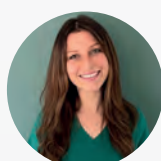


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**Dr. Farooq Ahmed, Consultant Orthodontist**



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The Orthodontic Company

# A new chapter for private dentistry

**Sam Waley-Cohen** explains how PortmanDentex offers the support today's clinicians deserve

**A**t PortmanDentex we believe that the future of private dentistry lies in creating stronger connections between clinicians, practices, and patients. As we continue to grow I'm delighted to welcome Paul Marshall as our new Group CEO. With more than 20 years of leadership experience in healthcare Paul brings with him a deep understanding of how to support clinical teams, invest in smarter systems and processes, and unlock meaningful career opportunities across the profession.

Paul shares our commitment to being a people first organisation. His focus on sustainable growth, workplace culture and clinical excellence marks an exciting chapter ahead.

'PortmanDentex is a group built around people,' Paul says. 'I'm most excited about bringing out the full potential of our clinicians, support teams, and patients by investing in the things that matter including practice and clinician support, technology, community and shared learning.'

## PUTTING COLLABORATION AT THE HEART OF CARE

For dentistry to thrive, connection and collaboration need to become the norm not the exception. That's why we've invested in tools and programmes that bring clinicians together and support smarter ways of working.



**Sam Waley-Cohen**

Sam is founder and chairman of PortmanDentex.

The PortmanDentex Referral Hub now connecting over 650 clinicians across the group enables streamlined referrals across a wide network of specialists and dentists with special interests. From implants and endodontics to oral surgery and orthodontics patients are connected with the right clinician while their referring dentist remains involved throughout the journey.

"This is about leveraging the power of the community and creating flexible and efficient pathways where the right care reaches the right patient. For many clinicians it's not just about delivering care. It's about delivering it together. Whether you are referring a complex case, learning a new skill or connecting with peers for advice having a community around you makes a tangible difference," says Cathal Hayes, Head of Clinical Transformation and Strategy at PortmanDentex.

## CLINICIAN LED BY DESIGN

Our commitment to being clinician led is more than a statement, it's how we're structured. With practising dentists like Rebecca Sadler our Chief Clinical Officer and Catherine Tannahill Director of Clinician Engagement in key leadership positions the decisions we make are grounded in clinical experience. In our own experience, we've seen how clinicians in leadership roles help maintain the highest standards. Their input has influenced everything from mentoring frameworks to digital transformation plans, and this has had a tangible impact on clinician engagement, development, and retention.



This is also reflected in the group's investment in our Clinical Engagement Leads (CELs) and Clinical Governance Lead (CGL) – experienced practising clinicians who mentor, support and guide others across their network.

## SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Through our 'Fast-Track to Clinician Growth' programme and Practice Clinical Lead programmes, early career and ambitious dentists can access structured development to expand their clinical and commercial skillsets. Combined with growing mentorship opportunities, this helps clinicians gain the confidence and support they need to thrive in practice.

With a clear vision, committed leadership and a focus on connection and clinical support PortmanDentex is proud to be shaping a more collaborative sustainable future for private dentistry – one built around people progress and shared purpose.

*For more information, head to [portmandentex.com](https://portmandentex.com).*

# The digital workflow for full dentures

**Zirkonzahn's** lecture tour in Birmingham, Cardiff and Southampton  
from 29 September to 1 October 2025

**Z**irkonzahn (South Tyrol, Italy) will soon begin the fourth part of its 2025 lecture tour, 'High-Tech Meets Handicraft – Optimisation of the Digital Workflow for the Fabrication of Full Dentures,' this time reaching dental technicians and dentists in Birmingham, Cardiff and Southampton from 29 September to 1 October 2025.

The lecturer, DT Lorenzo Pelizzari (instructor and CAD/CAM expert at Zirkonzahn), will present state-of-the-art methods and techniques for the creation of functional and aesthetically pleasing full dentures as an alternative to implant-supported prostheses. Indeed, even if minimally invasive procedures are becoming increasingly important, there are still patients who need a complete restoration after total tooth loss.

Participants will be guided through the challenges faced when creating a full denture with 28 teeth, considering the different initial patient situations: whether the patient is edentulous or wearing existing prostheses in good or poor condition, the lecture will provide insights into the tailored approaches needed for optimal results.

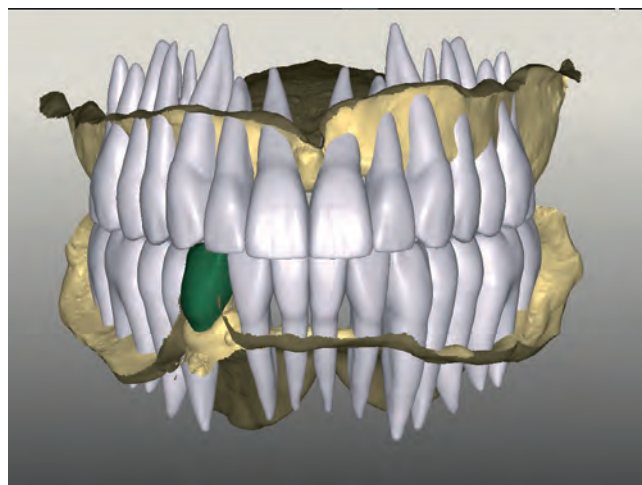
The process of creating high-quality dentures also involves digital technologies and correct materials. For this reason, the lecture will introduce two new PMMA-based, nearly monomer-free resins and will demonstrate how digital solutions with automated set-up functions can simplify tooth placement and gingiva creation, ensuring an efficient, accurate and optimised workflow. Furthermore, participants will benefit from hands-on demonstrations of bonding teeth to denture bases using an innovative protocol based on the principle of cold welding.

The lecture is for both dental technicians and dentists and meets the criteria for the UK GDC's development outcome C.

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*Dr. Anne-Maree Cole – The Littleton Cole Dental Centre, Brisbane, Australia  
DT Werner Sauer – Werner Sauer Smile Design, Brisbane, Australia*

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# YOAT Wire Bender

Trycare shares details of YOAT BENDER II®, the chairside fixed retainer wire fabricator

In the world of orthodontics, precision and efficiency are critical to your outputs. The process of bending wires to fit the unique dental anatomy of each patient has traditionally been a labour-intensive and time-consuming task. However, with advancements in technology, innovative solutions are emerging to streamline this process.

One groundbreaking innovation is the YOAT Wire Bender II Robot. This state-of-the-art robotic wire bender has revolutionised orthodontic wire bending, offering unparalleled precision, consistency, and efficiency.

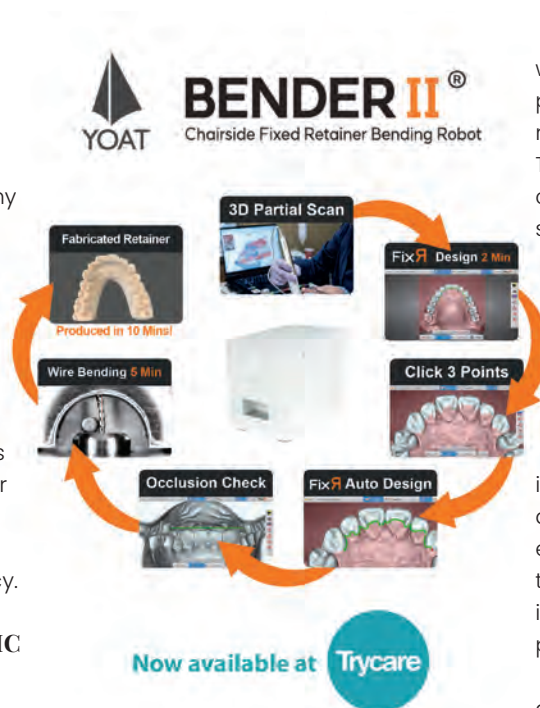
## TRANSFORMING ORTHODONTIC PRACTICES

The YOAT Wire Bender II Robot is an advanced robotic system designed specifically for bending fixed orthodontic retainers. Utilising cutting-edge technology, this robot automates the wire bending process, ensuring each wire is crafted to exact specifications with minimal manual intervention.

The robot is equipped with sophisticated software and mechanical components that allow it to produce highly accurate and consistent bends, tailored to the specific needs of each patient.

One of the standout features of the YOAT Wire Bender II Robot is its precision. The robot uses advanced algorithms and high-resolution sensors to measure and bend wires with remarkable accuracy. This level of precision ensures that each wire fits perfectly, 100% passive, reducing the need for adjustments and improving the overall effectiveness of orthodontic treatments.

Manual wire bending can result in slight variations from wire to wire,



*A super-efficient practice workflow providing a fixed lingual retainer in 10 minutes*

which can affect the consistency of orthodontic treatment. The YOAT Wire Bender II Robot eliminates this issue by automating the process, ensuring each wire is bent to the exact specifications every time. This consistency is crucial for achieving predictable and reliable treatment outcomes.

The automation provided by the YOAT Wire Bender II Robot significantly reduces the time required for wire bending. This efficiency allows orthodontic practices to increase their productivity, handle more patients, and ultimately improve their bottom line. A patient can be debonded and have a fixed retainer created in the same visit. Saving chairside time and appointments for the patient.

Every patient's dental anatomy is unique, and the YOAT Wire Bender II Robot excels in customisation. The robot can be programmed to bend

wires according to specific treatment plans, ensuring that each patient receives a personalised approach. This capability enhances the quality of care and contributes to better patient satisfaction.

## SEAMLESS INTEGRATION

The YOAT Wire Bender II Robot is designed with a user-friendly interface that makes it easy for orthodontic staff to operate. The intuitive software allows users to input specifications, adjust settings and monitor the bending process with ease. This accessibility ensures that the technology can be seamlessly integrated into any orthodontic practice.

Built with high-quality materials and robust engineering, the YOAT Wire Bender II Robot is designed to withstand the demands of a busy orthodontic practice. Its reliable performance ensures that it can handle continuous use without compromising on accuracy or efficiency.

The introduction of the YOAT Wire Bender II Robot is set to have a profound impact on orthodontic practices. By automating the wire bending process, orthodontists can focus more on patient care and less on manual tasks. The increased efficiency and consistency also contribute to improved treatment outcomes and higher patient satisfaction. Additionally, the robot's ability to produce precise and customised fixed retainers enhances the overall quality of orthodontic care.

*YOAT Wire Bender is available from Trycare. For more information, call John Lancaster on 07977 279 462 or email [orthodontics@trycare.co.uk](mailto:orthodontics@trycare.co.uk).*

## Caninus production site Zirkonzahn

Caninus is Zirkonzahn's most recent factory in the heart of the Dolomites, built to broaden the company's zirconia production.

Zirconia restorations last for a long time, often permanently, making quality crucial. Zirkonzahn's zirconia is manufactured with no compromises, using raw materials accurately selected from reliable suppliers.

The powder undergoes strict quality assurance, with much time dedicated to refining processes. Advanced pressing technologies achieve high homogeneity and optimal aesthetic and mechanical properties. Each batch is carefully checked after every step – controlling hardness, dimensions, density, milling, colour, translucency, and shrinkage factor.

Zirkonzahn's Prettau zirconia is for aesthetic restorations, from single crowns to monolithic full arches – the so-called Prettau Bridges – and includes different zirconia typologies: white blanks for further characterisation, pre-coloured, and with colour gradient for optimal aesthetics. Blanks come in heights from 5mm to 40mm and diameters Ø 95, Ø 98 with step, Ø 106mm, plus mini blanks for single crowns in rarely used colours. Prettau zirconia now includes the Dispersive line, with a natural colour gradient formed during manufacture, making manual colouring unnecessary.

Another addition is ICE Plus, with excellent flexural strength (around 1,650MPa without HIP; 1,900MPa with HIP), ideal for metal-free, reduced structures. Using a special solder, a secondary zirconia structure can be bonded to the ICE Plus primary structure.

In addition to Caninus, Zirkonzahn owns four other production sites in South Tyrol near its headquarters.

+39 0474 066 660

[info@zirkonzahn.com](mailto:info@zirkonzahn.com)

[www.zirkonzahn.com](http://www.zirkonzahn.com)



**Zirkonzahn®**  
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## AI-powered dental imaging now available Planmeca

With built-in AI-powered features available as standard, Planmeca Romexis version 7 takes dental imaging up a notch.

The software includes AI-powered 3D imaging tools that provide an excellent visual representation of the case for patient education, and CBCT images and intraoral scans that automatically fit together with the help of AI.

Routine tasks are automated, which means less time spent on the computer and more time with patients.

Romexis 7 revolutionises implant planning with a fully automated workflow that provides plan proposals with minimal user input in as little as nine seconds. Implant guide design becomes easier and faster too. The area for the surgical guide is automatically identified and defined, generating a guide outline that users can easily refine.

Finally, a virtual assistant is available to answer questions and provide step-by-step instructions.

0800 5200 330



## New Quad Matrix System Garrison

The Quad Matrix System overcomes the limitations of traditional matrix systems, effectively addressing complex scenarios. Whether it's a single restoration or an entire quadrant of class IIs, the Quad system provides the solution with its design features:

- The asymmetrical driver-tip design of the Quad rings adapts the split-tip Quad wedge to both sides of the embrasure simultaneously and seals both cervical margins
- The split tip design of the Quad wedges easily adapts bands to both cervical margins in a back-to-back restoration for deeper seal and a more natural emergence profile.

The Quad Matrix System supports a wide range of clinical scenarios:

- Back-to-back restorations: simultaneously restore both sides of adjacent class IIs using two matrix bands, one Quad Wedge, and one Quad Ring
- Deeper caries: achieve a secure seal for subgingival restorations with Firm Bands and Quad Wedges enhanced by the driver-tip design of the ring
- Multi-tooth restorations: use Universal (blue) and Tall (orange) Quad Rings to create ideal contours and contacts.

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## IN THE HOT SEAT

Principal dentist **Alif Moosajee** on scary dreams, river rapids and Baskin-Robbins

**Q When and where was your last meal out?**

**A** We went to Claridge's Restaurant in Mayfair, London. We had the lobster Wellington, which is a whole lobster encased in pastry and served with a lobster bisque. I can wholeheartedly recommend it!

**Q Who would play you in the movie of your life?**

**A** It would have to be Vin Diesel or Dwayne Johnson.

**Q What's the best advice you've received?**

**A** If your dreams don't scare you then they are too small.

**Q What keeps you up at night?**

**A** Watching movies with my daughter.

**Q Describe your perfect holiday...**

**A** It would have to be the Atlantis, Dubai – spending all day on the rubber dinghy rapids.

**Q What song is guaranteed to make you want to dance?**

**A** I can't stay still when The Prodigy's Out of Space comes on!

**Q If you won the lottery, what would you do with the money?**

**A** I think I'd retire – but then I'd probably get bored and want to become a dentist again.

**Q What was the last gift you received?**

**A** The last gift I received was the Lego Marvel infinity gauntlet (from Avengers). It was a Father's Day present.

**I TRY TO EAT WELL, BUT ICE CREAM IS MY WEAK POINT. SPECIFICALLY, BASKIN-ROBBINS, WHICH I ALWAYS EAT WITH MY DAUGHTER ANNI**

**Q What's your all-time favourite book/movie?**

**A** I love the Harry Potter books by JK Rowling, so I'd pick those as my favourite book.

As for film, it has to be Thor: Ragnarok (directed by Taika Waititi).

**Q What's your guilty pleasure?**

**A** I try to eat well, but ice cream is my weak point. Specifically, Baskin-Robbins, which I always eat with my daughter Anni.

**Q How do you unwind?**

**A** I go to the gym.

**Q What was the last photo you took on your phone?**

**A** It was this one of my little doggy Harry.



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Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, the **European Federation of Periodontology S3 level clinical practice guidelines**, and a recent consensus report from global experts, convened by **Spanish Society of Periodontology and Osseointegration (SEPA)\***, support the adjunctive use of antiseptic mouth rinses.<sup>1-3</sup>

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**1.** Bosma, M.L., McGuire, J.A., DelSasso, A. et al. Efficacy of flossing and mouth rinsing regimens on plaque and gingivitis: a randomized clinical trial. BMC Oral Health 24, 178 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12903-024-03924-4> **2.** Figuero, E., S. Roldan, J. Serrano, M. Escribano, C. Martin and P. Preshaw (2020). "Efficacy of adjunctive therapy in patients with gingival inflammation. A systematic review and meta-analysis." J Clin Periodontol" **3.** EFP: Guidelines for effective prevention of periodontal diseases (2014). Available at: <https://www.efp.org/news-events/perio-workshop/past-workshops/perio-workshop-2014/>