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Perfectly imperfect

Siobhan Hiscott

Group managing editor

Owning – or running – a dental practice often comes with the unspoken expectation of needing to have all the answers.

Patients expect flawless service, the team looks to you for guidance, and financial realities demand results. It's easy to feel as though perfection is the only acceptable response. But here's the paradox: the pursuit of perfection risks stifling growth.

Mistakes are inevitable – in life, let alone the running of something as complex and pressured as a dental practice. A marketing campaign that falls flat, a misstep in handling a staffing issue, a policy that doesn't work as intended: in the moment, these may feel uncomfortable, even costly. Yet they are often the crucibles in which resilient, adaptive and truly thriving practices are forged.

In every issue of *Private Dentistry*, we feature successful practice owners who are steering their businesses forward – and what sets them apart is not their ability to avoid mistakes, but their willingness to confront them with honesty and curiosity.

As the leader, the way you respond to mistakes sets the tone for your team. If errors are met with blame or denial, staff shrink away from

initiative, fearful of being wrong. But if mistakes can be seen as opportunities to learn, they foster a culture of openness, innovation and collective accountability. That culture not only strengthens your team but also shines through in patient care.

Being 'perfectly imperfect' as a practice owner means modelling vulnerability. It means telling your team: 'We tried this, it didn't work, here's what we learned.'

It means showing patients that, while you might not always get it right the first time, you will always put their interests first. Paradoxically, admitting imperfection often builds greater trust than attempts to maintain a veneer of faultlessness ever could.

Rather than eliminating every error, leadership in dentistry is about creating an environment where missteps become stepping stones. In a profession that is increasingly competitive, the ability to adapt, experiment and yes, sometimes, fail is what keeps a practice alive and thriving.

Perfection is an illusion. Progress is real. And progress, more often than not, is born from the messy, valuable lessons of getting it wrong. The most successful practice owners know that mistakes aren't the end of the story – they're the beginning of a better one.



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JAS JANDOO

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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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Face masks release microplastics that may harm human health



Disposable face masks, such as surgical masks and filtering facepieces used in clinical dentistry, have been found to release harmful microplastics in a new study.

Researchers placed unused face masks in pure water for 24 hours and assessed the quantity of microplastics and chemicals left in the water. Even without wear or movement, the masks were found to release microplastic particles and chemical additives – suggesting they are present from the manufacturing process.

Filtering facepieces were shown to release three to four times more microplastics than standard surgical masks. Most of these particles were smaller than the width of a human hair and made of polypropylene, a common plastic used in mask production. Other plastics such as polyethylene, polyester, nylon and PVC were also detected.

The study's authors said that the microplastics and chemical additives could be harmful both to the environment and to human health. As plastics do not break down easily, they can accumulate in the environment and cause harm to ecosystems and wildlife. Once in the human body, the chemicals may disrupt hormones or have negative health effects.

In addition to microplastics, chemicals such as bisphenol B (BPB) were released by some types of mask. These substances are known to harm aquatic life and may affect people if they enter food or water systems. BPB is thought to interfere with hormonal signalling, reduce testosterone production and disrupt the reproductive system.

Study author Anna Bogush said: 'This study has underlined the urgent need to rethink how we produce, use and dispose of face masks. We can't ignore the environmental cost of single-use masks, especially when we know that the microplastics and chemicals they release can negatively affect both people and ecosystems.'

'As we move forward, it's vital that we raise awareness of these risks, support the development of more sustainable alternatives and make informed choices to protect our health and the environment.'

The study was led by the University of Coventry and published in *Environmental Pollution*.

Ban on energy drinks for under 16s proposed

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced proposals to ban the sale of high-caffeine (>150mg) energy drinks to children under the age of 16. This includes online and in shops, restaurants, cafes and vending machines. The proposals would not affect lower-caffeine soft drinks or tea and coffee. Part of its Plan for Change, the government said this proposal is based on evidence of the drinks' negative impacts on physical and mental health, sleep quality, and educational outcomes. It suggested the ban could 'prevent obesity in up to 40,000 children and deliver health benefits worth tens of millions of pounds'.

A consultation on the proposal was launched on 2 September and will run for 12 weeks to gather opinions from health experts, educators, retailers, manufacturers, local authorities and the public. DHSC figures show that 100,000 children consume at least one high-caffeine energy drink every day. One third of children aged 13 to 16 years and nearly a quarter of children aged 11 to 12 years consume one or more of these drinks each week. The British Dental Association (BDA) said the ban could have a significant positive impact on children's oral health. This is because energy drinks are often high in sugar, with even sugar-free versions typically highly acidic.

BDA chair Eddie Crouch said: 'Products that are habit forming, highly acidic and can contain over 20 teaspoons of sugar have no place on the menu for children. Our kids are growing up in a toxic food environment, and this boldness needs to be applied across the piece.'

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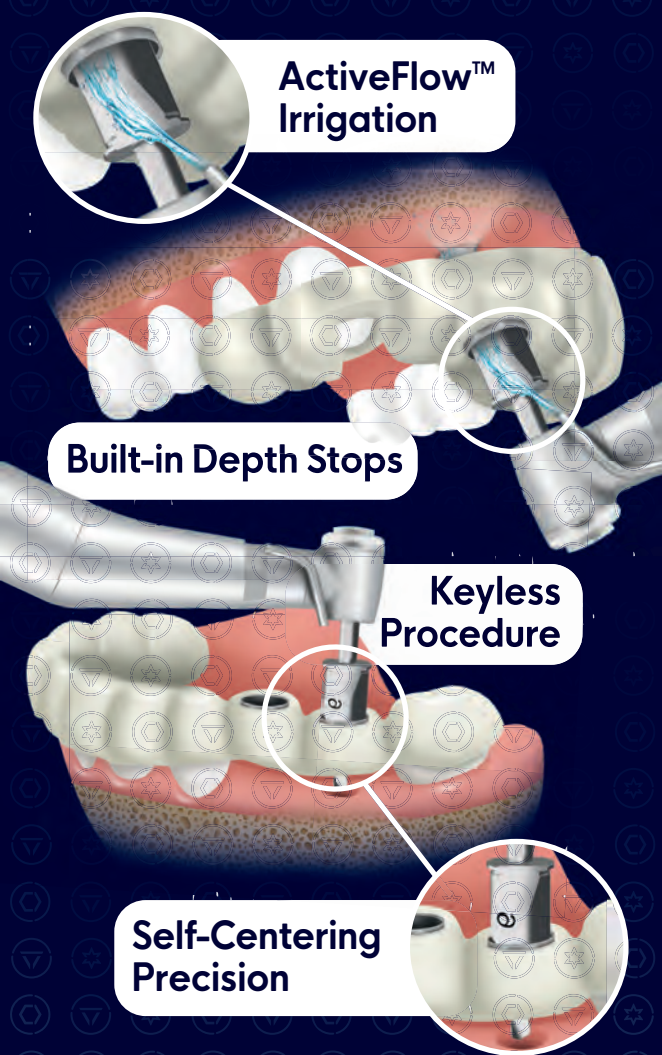
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Private Dentistry Awards: spotlight on shortlist and sponsors

Entry for this year's Private Dentistry Awards is officially closed, which means the waiting game for finalists has begun! The shortlist will be revealed in the next issue of *Private Dentistry*. In the meantime, we're shining a spotlight on the sponsors who have generously supported the 2025 Private Dentistry Awards. Without the backing of these companies, the awards wouldn't be what they are.

Big thanks to:

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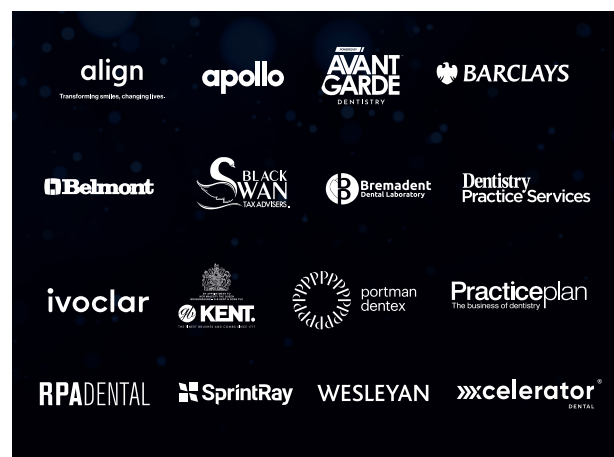
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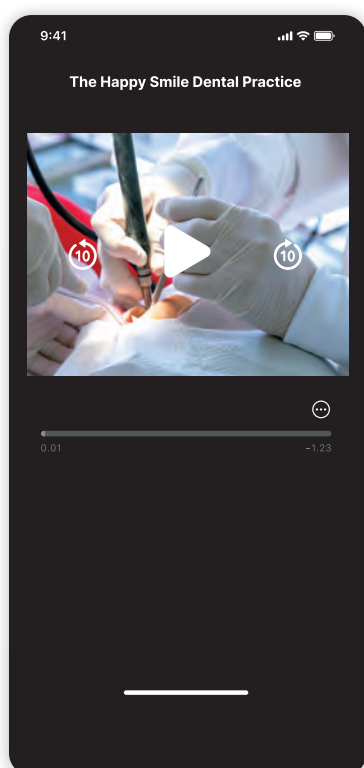
This year's Private Dentistry Awards takes place on the evening of Friday 21 November at the JW Marriott Grosvenor House London.

Located in the heart of Mayfair, with sweeping views of Hyde Park, the hotel is a Park Lane icon and has long been associated with royalty, international dignitaries and celebrities alike. The Private Dentistry Awards will be held in the Great Room, joining the likes of other prominent national events including the BAFTA's and Pride of Britain Awards.

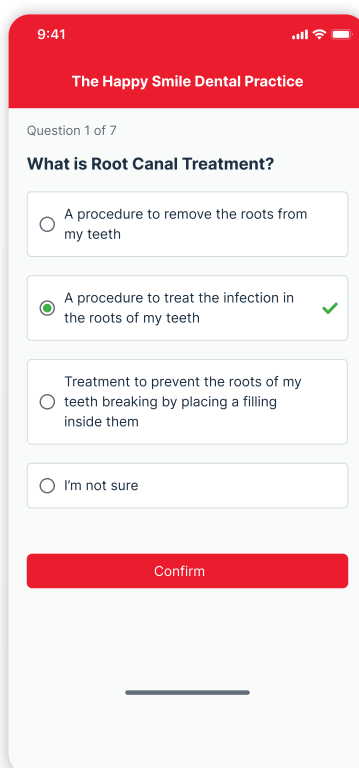
Keep your eyes peeled for this year's shortlist in the November/December edition of *Private Dentistry*!



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Dental market operating with ‘improved confidence’

Offers from first-time buyers and independent owners for private practices rose sharply between 2024 and the first half of 2025, increasing from 16% to 39%, according to the latest Dental Market Review by Christie & Co.

The report suggests ‘a resurgence of confidence’ in the UK dental market following a period of caution. It reads: ‘After a subdued period in 2023 and throughout most of 2024, driven by rising interest rates, inflationary pressures, and workforce challenges, corporate dental operators adopted a more cautious stance, focusing on internal optimisation and scaling back acquisition strategies. This shift led to a sharp decline in transaction volumes, with many groups prioritising organic growth.

‘However, the tide appears to be turning in 2025. The first half of this year saw a resurgence of confidence across the corporate landscape. Many operators are signalling a return to acquisitive growth, with renewed appetite for strategic expansion.

‘As economic conditions stabilise and internal operations mature, we’re seeing tangible signs of re-engagement.’

PRIVATE PRACTICE STABILITY

In 2024, 74% of Christie & Co’s completed deals were to independent operators (one to two sites), 11% to mid-sized and smaller groups (three to 29 sites), and 15% to corporates and larger groups (more than 30 sites).

Analysis points toward movement away from NHS dentistry and towards mixed and private practices. For example, between H1 2023 and H1 2025, corporate buyers increasingly targeted private dental practices. Small- and medium-sized groups leaned more toward private and mixed (private) acquisitions.

While independent and first-time buyers initially preferred NHS practices, they began pivoting toward private models by 2025. This shift, says Christie & Co, reflects changing buyer expectations, increased access to funding, and a response to the perceived stability and profitability of private dentistry amid NHS uncertainty.

STEADY LEVEL OF MARKET ACTIVITY

In 2024, 68% of all accepted offers were at or above the asking price, which included 49% that were over the asking price. Some 48% of offers not accepted were also at and above the asking price, which is most likely due to competitive interest and multiple offers being received on individual market opportunities.

Corporate and larger groups showed a significant uptick in interest for NHS and mixed NHS practices, with their share of offers climbing from 8% to 45% over the same period.

Mid-sized and smaller groups maintained a steady level of activity in the NHS and mixed NHS segment, contributing around 50% of offers. However, engagement with private practices grew from 22% to 32%.

Offers from first-time buyers and independent owners for private practices rose sharply between 2024 and the first half of 2025, increasing from 16% to 39%. Corporate and larger groups showed a significant uptick in interest for NHS and mixed NHS practices, with their share of offers climbing from 8% to 45% over the same period.

Read the full report at www.christie.com/sectors/dental-practices/dental-market-review-2025.

Findings from the report

According to the report:

- Overall, more people feel positive or neutral about the sector than negative. Among dental hygienists and therapists, 73% share this view – marking the highest proportion – while only 54% of other professionals in the sector feel the same
- Around 48% to 77% feel demand for NHS dentistry has increased, compared with 50% to 65% in 2024
- Two in five (40%) respondents feel that demand has increased for high-end elective treatments. In 2024, 40% of respondents also felt the same
- It was felt that the greatest area of growth is likely to come through general dentistry (28% to 30%), with specialist services (24% to 26%) just behind
- The majority (86%) of respondents feel that digital dentistry is at the forefront of future growth. Some 90% of those respondents in the private operational segment feel this is the case, 86% of those in the mixed segment and 63% of those in the NHS-focused segment.

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Weathering the storm

In the absence of leadership, we have anarchy – not just on the streets, but in your dental business, says **Chris Barrow**



CHRIS
BARROW

It used to be enough to hire good people, give them a goal, and keep the ship afloat. But not anymore.

These days, I'm speaking to principals and practice managers across the UK who are quietly (or not so quietly) despairing at the emotional fragility within their teams.

Talented clinicians, once solid and dependable, now buckling under the weight of daily pressures. Front-of-house staff losing their spark. Dental nurses stretched thin. Practice owners wondering when, or if, the resilience will return.

Some are asking:

- What's happened to people's work ethic?
- 'Why can't they just get on with it?'
- 'Do I really have to manage "feelings" now too?'

They're valid questions – and yet, here's the uncomfortable truth: in the absence of leadership, we have anarchy – not just on the streets, but in your dental business.

STORMING IN

What many practice owners haven't yet acknowledged is that the storm is not outside the practice, it's already in.

It's there in the news, in the cost of living worry, in the patient anxiety, and in the thousand invisible cuts of post-pandemic culture.

And your team members? They are looking to you not just for strategy, but also for emotional direction. They don't just want answers, they're also looking for reassurance.

They are looking, whether consciously or not, for a lighthouse.

The challenge, of course, is that many principals feel like they're the ones being dashed against the rocks.

It is hard to lead when you're tired.

Hard to inspire when you feel disillusioned.

Hard to keep believing when profit margins shrink and your own motivation wavers.

LIGHT UP

But leadership, in this new era, isn't about high-energy charisma. It's not about false positivity, or motivational quotes on the staffroom wall. It's not about fixing everything.

It's about holding the light. Quietly. Consistently. Especially when the visibility is poor.

That might look like:

- Showing up calm when others are flustered
- Offering clarity when others are confused
- Speaking simply and firmly when others are ranting.

It is the quiet resolve to say: 'We've got this', even if only one small part of you believes it that day. Because in that moment, your belief becomes theirs. And that's where the turnaround begins.

BE THE LIGHTHOUSE

I've been coaching in this profession long enough to know that cycles come and go.

That opportunists shout the loudest in a storm – but they never stay the course.

And that those who choose to lead with grace, not volume, will be the ones who rebuild stronger, better and more enduring practices.

So, if you're reading this as a principal, and wondering when your team will 'get it together', I invite you to ask instead: 'What version of me do they need to see right now?'

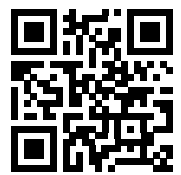
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The Row Dental

Slaine Ker shares the journey of opening a state-of-the-art dental clinic housed in a grade A listed Georgian townhouse in the centre of Edinburgh – and reveals the challenges of building a specialist referral dental practice

In February 2021, when my husband and I started searching for a property in Edinburgh to house our dream dental practice, our vision was on opening a beautiful cosmetic practice.

At the time, we were living in London, where I had spent the last 10 years developing my passion and skill set for cosmetic dentistry.

Our vision turned into reality almost two years later when we opened the doors to our first patients. The Row Dental was born! The 20 months of hard work navigating building contractors, lease negotiations, council planning (and the rest) had finally paid off.

The result is a state-of-the-art dental clinic housed in a grade A listed Georgian townhouse in the centre of Edinburgh.

A CHANGE OF PLAN

We wanted The Row to offer the latest cosmetic dentistry treatments – including Invisalign, tooth whitening, composite bonding and porcelain veneers.

Footfall exceeded all expectations, but we quickly realised that limiting ourselves to cosmetic treatments alone was a disservice to our patients, many of whom were seeking a comprehensive, one-stop solution for their dental care.

**THE 20 MONTHS
OF HARD WORK
NAVIGATING
BUILDING
CONTRACTORS,
LEASE
NEGOTIATIONS,
COUNCIL PLANNING
(AND THE REST) HAD
FINALLY PAID OFF**

In response, we began expanding our team. Within a year, we had brought together expertise in orthodontics, oral surgery, endodontics, dental implants, and, of course, general dentistry. Today, our team is almost complete.

A referral practice was never part of the original plan, but with the breadth of expertise now under one roof, it became a natural evolution – bringing with it fresh opportunities and new challenges.

THE CHALLENGES

Establishing a network of referring general dentists

Developing strong relationships with general dentists is crucial for a referral-based practice. Convincing them to refer their patients to our specialist services requires trust-building and effective communication.

Marketing and branding

Creating awareness about our services among both dental professionals and potential patients is essential.

For cosmetic dentistry, we are appealing to the masses (general public). For referrals, we are appealing to 100 to 200 general dental practitioners in Edinburgh and surrounding areas. Both activities require very different approaches.

Step inside...

THE PRACTICE
The Row Dental
31 Albany Street
Edinburgh
EH1 3QN

TELEPHONE
0131 210 0103

WEBSITE
therowdental.com

THE ROW
DENTAL



THE ROW

DENTAL

The ethos

The Row Dental's ethos is centred on patient-first care, combining clinical excellence with a warm and welcoming approach. The Row Dental believes dentistry should be as much about comfort and trust as it is about precision and results. The team is dedicated to continuous professional development, ensuring that every treatment reflects the latest innovations while maintaining the highest ethical standards. By tailoring care to each individual, the team strives to create long-term relationships built on confidence, compassion and outstanding outcomes – making every patient feel truly valued.



The team

CO-FOUNDER & COSMETIC DENTIST
Dr Slaine Ker

CO-FOUNDER
Stuart Ker

SPECIALIST ORTHODONTIST
Dr Nirmal Shah

SPECIALIST ENDODONTIST
Dr Carol Tait

IMPLANT DENTIST
Dr Duncan Weir

ORAL SURGERY AND CONSCIOUS SEDATION
Dr Kaila Girvan

RESTORATIVE DENTIST
Dr Zoe Brown

COSMETIC DENTIST
Dr Jonathan Fitzpatrick

RESTORATIVE DENTIST
Dr John McAleavey

CONSULTANT ANAESTHETISTS
Dr Ally Ruthven and Dr Scott McNeill

DENTAL HYGIENIST
Annette Mackenzie

HEAD DENTAL NURSE
Jasmin McLaren

DENTAL NURSES
Patrycja Szmytkowska, Ellie Matthews and Lauren Neilson

TREATMENT COORDINATOR
Kat McComisky

FRONT OF HOUSE
Rebekah Tillbrook and Ana Moreno Merino



Patient education

Educating patients about the importance of seeking specialised dental care can be challenging.

Patients may be unfamiliar with the need for specialised services and may require additional information to make informed decisions about their treatment plan.

Ongoing training for the dental team is essential so we can deal with patient queries effectively.

Coordination of care

Coordinating care between general dentists and specialists can be complex.

Efficient communication systems, referral tracking, and clear protocols for collaboration are essential to ensure seamless patient care and building trust with general dentists.

Recruitment of skilled specialists

Attracting and retaining skilled specialists is critical. I am a firm believer that The Row Dental is only as good as the people working here. Specialists who are well-regarded in their field enhance the reputation of the practice.

However, recruiting such personnel takes time and patience, which can be disconcerting when you have patients waiting for specific treatments.

Investment in specialised equipment and training

Specialised dental procedures require advanced equipment. The initial investment in technology to open our doors was substantial. We hadn't factored in buying a CJ-Optik Flexion Twin White microscope or a Dexis OP 3D CBCT scanner in year one.



Luckily, my husband is an accountant and looks after the finances, so he shoulders the burden of balancing the books.

Patient experience

Ensuring a positive patient experience is obviously key. Many patients are visiting for the first time, so making them feel comfortable from the outset is important.

From the initial consultation to post-treatment care, maintaining high standards in patient care and satisfaction is essential for building a good reputation.

Every clinician is different, but as the team grows, creating consistency across our service offering requires increasing attention.

A team approach

Successfully addressing these challenges requires careful planning, effective communication, and a commitment to providing high-quality, specialised care. Something all the team at The Row Dental has thankfully bought into.

Building a strong reputation and establishing trust within the dental community and among patients takes time, but it is something we are all wholeheartedly committed to, as these elements are crucial for the growth of a specialist referral dental practice.

Who was involved?

Architect

Christine Leeman Architect

Interior and Surgery Design

EW Design

Contractors

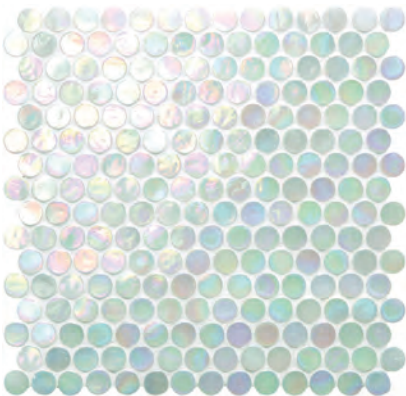
Prodrive Shopfitting

Web developers

The Fresh

Get the look

Looking to incorporate glass in your interior design? This month's *Private Dentistry* vision board offers a clear approach to help boost light and enhance space in the practice



1 Ribbed Glass Sideboard – Wood

Oriana B, £1,450

4 Glass Sink Silver Oval

Unique Sinks, £260

2 Three Tapered Glass Pendants

Cox & Cox, £325

5 White Lady Iridescent Round Glass Mosaic

Hyperion Tiles, £18.95

3 Homesense Glass Jug

Homesense, £7.99

6 Cannoli – Aged Brass & Textured Glass Wall Light

Lights & Lamps, £149



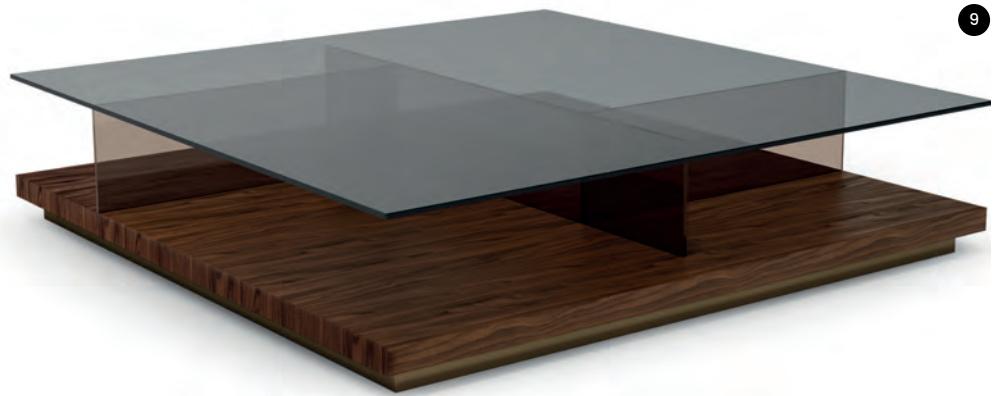
7



8



10



9



11



12

7 Blinne Mirror – Gold
Olivia's, £246

8 Ribbed Glass Dome
Cox & Cox, £85

9 Odisha Glass Centre Table
Caffe Latte, £POA

10 Hand-blown Bubble Glass Tumbler
Rex London, £6.95

11 Elwick Six Light Pendant – Textured Glass & Antique Brass
Laura Ashley Lighting and Mirrors, £360

12 Glass Ribbed Mug
B&M, £2

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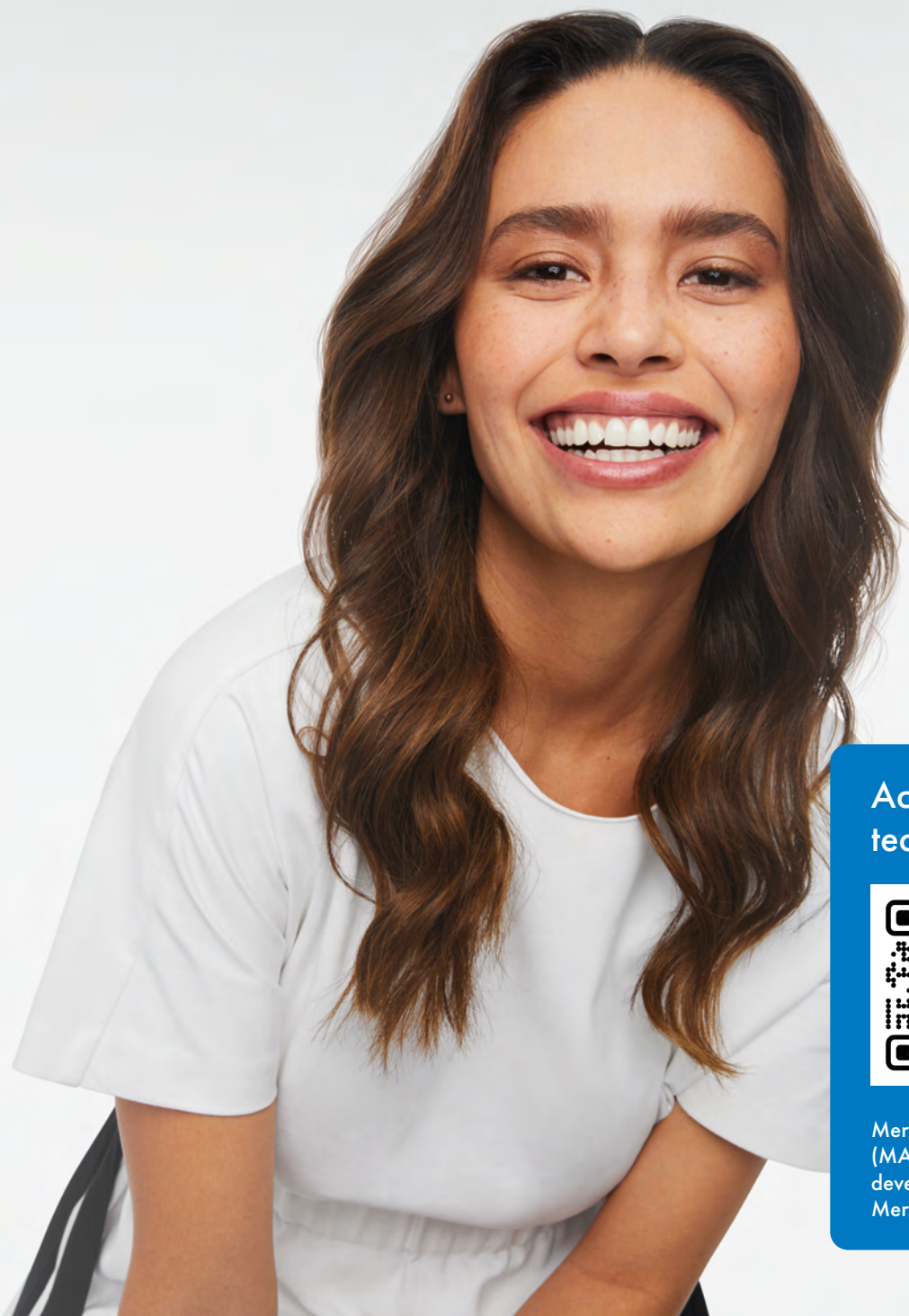
1. BOCOUTURE Summary of Product Characteristics. Merz Pharmaceuticals GmbH:
<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/600/smpc> (Last accessed August 2025).

M-BOC-UKI-0701 Date of Preparation: August 2025

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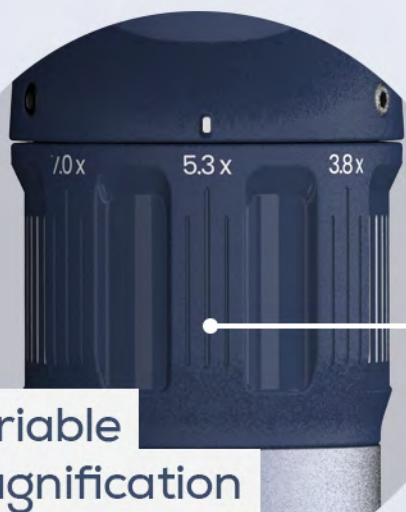
Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information for United Kingdom can be found at <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>. Reporting forms and information for Republic of Ireland can be found at <https://www.hpra.ie/homepage/about-us/report-an-issue>. Adverse events should also be reported to Merz Aesthetics UK Ltd by emailing UKdrugsafety@merz.com or calling +44 (0) 333 200 4143.

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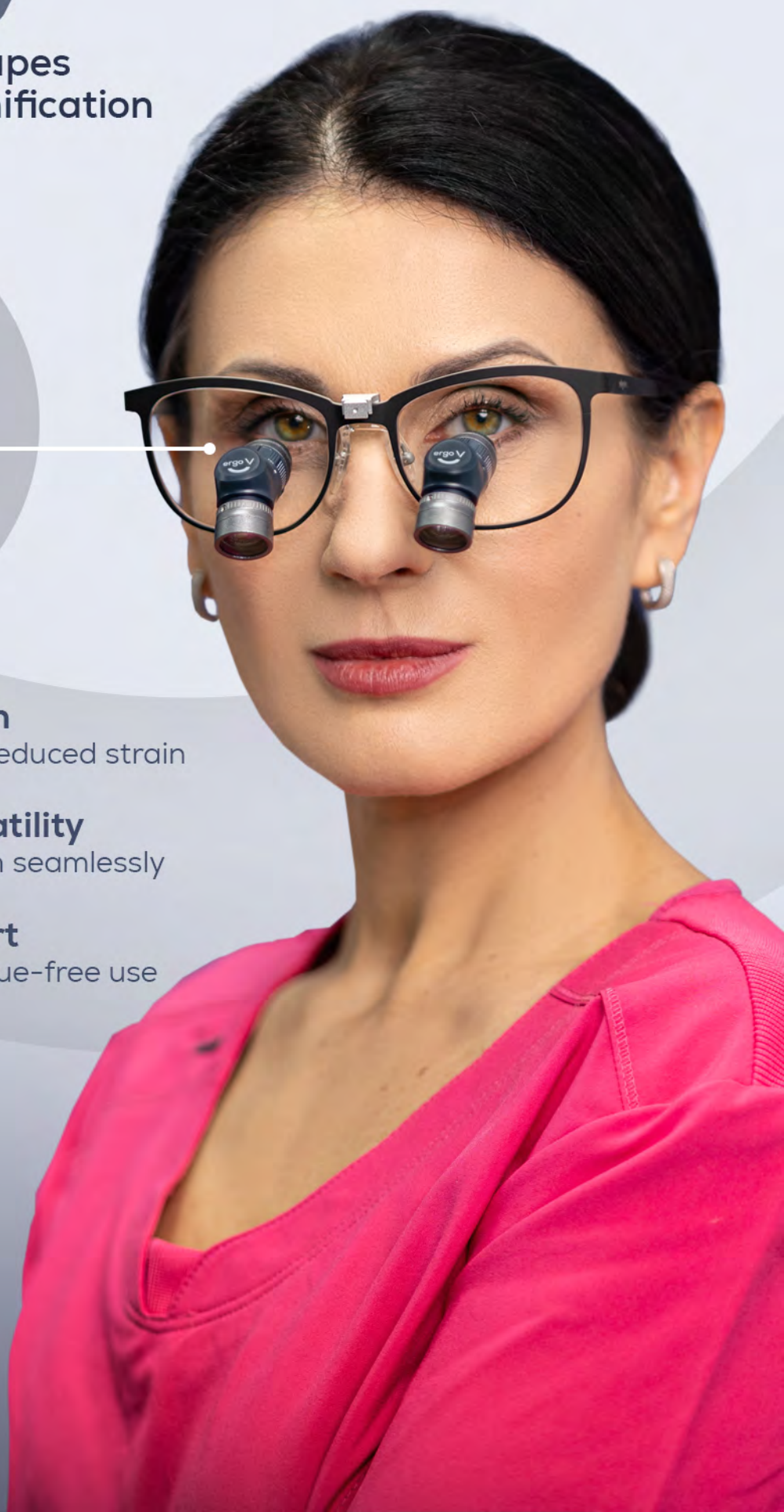
Switch magnification seamlessly



Maximum comfort

Lightweight for fatigue-free use

SCAN FOR FREE DEMO



Lessons in Instagram

Slaine Ker reveals how to use social media to build a client base

When I made the decision to open my own dental practice in a brand-new city – no patients, no reputation, no referrals – I knew clinical skill alone wouldn't be enough. I needed visibility. And in today's world, that means social media.

In dentistry, a digital presence is no longer optional, it's essential. Especially when you're starting from zero, as I was when we opened The Row Dental. More than ever, patients are turning to Instagram not just to scroll, but to research. They want to know who you are, what your work looks like, whether you're credible, and – most importantly – if they can trust you. It's their way of meeting you before ever stepping into your clinic.

INVESTING IN INSTAGRAM

In the early days, I dedicated significant time to Instagram. I understood the investment it required and put in the work – late nights editing content, responding to messages, brainstorming new ideas. I was fortunate to start early, before the platform became saturated and competitive. At the time, it felt like a bit of a leap, most clinicians weren't putting themselves out there yet. But I leaned into it, stayed consistent, and built a personal brand that helped generate early trust – even before we had a physical space.

By the time we announced the launch of The Row Dental in Edinburgh, I had built a following of around 20,000 people. Coming from a leading clinic in London, I knew I needed a way to gain traction in a new market – and social media gave us a solid starting point.

For clinicians looking to do the same, here's what I've learned.



Dr Slaine Ker

Slaine is co-founder of The Row Dental in Edinburgh.

Your content must be polished, purposeful and high quality. It should educate, engage or inspire – ideally all three. In truth, bad social media is worse than no social media. Poor lighting, inconsistent messaging, or a half-hearted feed can easily make a patient decide to look elsewhere. First impressions matter – and often, they happen online.

Equally important is authenticity. Social media works because of the connection it creates between clinicians and the patients we care for. And the only way to build that connection is to show up as yourself, consistently and sincerely. People don't want perfection, they want to feel a sense of who you are.

I was also intentional about using my platform to attract the kind of dentistry I wanted to focus on: cosmetic treatments, Invisalign, composite bonding, and porcelain veneers. By consistently showcasing this style of work, I was able to establish myself as a trusted voice in this space and build a portfolio of patients aligned with the work I'm most passionate about.

MAKING A CONNECTION

As the practice has grown, we've taken a more structured approach to social media. The Row Dental now has its own dedicated Instagram page, focused on the clinic's overall brand, team and ethos. I also maintain a separate page as a clinician, which continues to grow as my personal brand.

Both serve different purposes: one reflects the broader practice, while the other gives patients a more personal insight into me as a practitioner. This separation allows us to connect with our audience on multiple levels – both as a business and as individuals.

That said, social media isn't something you can approach casually. It takes time, planning, and resources. Think of it as a digital extension of your clinic – it must

Social media learnings

- Ensure content is polished, purposeful and high quality. It should educate, engage or inspire
- Be authentic. Build a connection by showing up as yourself, consistently and sincerely
- Use your platform intentionally. Attract the kind of dentistry you want to focus on by consistently showcasing this style of work
- Define your approach and remember it takes time, planning and resources
- Enlist the help of a dedicated team that understands your vision and is aligned with your messaging, tone, and brand identity
- Remember, social media is just one piece of a broader marketing strategy.

reflect your standards and brand. That's why I now work with a dedicated team who create, manage, and produce our content. As clinicians, we simply can't do it all ourselves – not without compromising the quality of care we deliver.

Of course, the key is finding people who understand your vision. Your team must be aligned with your messaging, tone, and brand identity. Authenticity can't be outsourced, it has to remain at the heart of everything you post.

It's important to remember, social media is just one piece of a much broader marketing strategy. It's a valuable tool, but not the only factor in building a thriving dental practice. At the end of the day, nothing replaces exceptional dentistry delivered in a professional, patient-centred environment. The best marketing is still a patient walking out the door with a life-changing result – and telling all their friends and family about it. No social media campaign can replicate that kind of word-of-mouth promotion, but it can absolutely help amplify it.



We blend innovative AI with human expertise to redefine dental marketing.

From automated lead qualification to AI-driven patient engagement, we're shaping the future of practice growth.

The Future of Practice Growth Starts Here

Embracing the future of marketing

David Nelkin explains how artificial intelligence is shaping the next generation of dental practice growth

Picture this: your next dental patient discovers your practice not through a traditional Google search for 'dentist near me', but through a 15-minute conversation with Google's AI assistant about their dental anxiety, treatment options and budget concerns. The AI doesn't just recommend your practice, it explains why you're perfect for their specific needs and even suggests the best time to call based on your appointment availability.

This isn't science fiction. This is starting to happen right now, and it represents the biggest transformation in digital marketing since Google Adwords launched 25 years ago.

Q4 2025 will see the most significant change to Google Ads in a quarter-century, as they fully integrate advertising into AI Mode – moving from keyword-based targeting to conversational, intent-driven advertising for more than 100 million users.

The key is ensuring AI enhances rather than replaces what makes your practice unique. While AI can dramatically improve how you connect with patients, maintaining authenticity in your content, photos, and videos remains your greatest competitive advantage – after all, that's still why patients choose you over competitors.



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.

THE EVOLUTION OF SEO IN THE AGE OF AI

The SEO landscape I wrote about earlier this year – where 60% of searches now end without a single click – is accelerating faster than most practices realise. Traditional SEO strategies built around keyword rankings and backlinks are being replaced by AI-driven algorithms that prioritise engagement, conversational content, and intent-based understanding.

This shift to conversational AI means your practice needs to think beyond individual keywords and start optimising for entire patient journeys. Search queries are getting longer as people have actual conversations with AI assistants rather than typing short keyword phrases.

At Xcelerator Dental, we're adapting our SEO strategies by structuring client content around natural patient questions rather than search terms, using conversational language that aligns with how people actually talk to AI assistants, and ensuring fresh, regularly updated content across multiple platforms – not just websites.

But here's where expertise matters: we're not just throwing AI tools at the problem. We're using our 12-plus years of dental marketing knowledge to ensure AI enhances our understanding of patient behaviour rather than replacing it.

When everyone starts using the same AI-generated content, practices risk losing what makes them authentic and unique.

HOW AI-DRIVEN ADS ARE CHANGING THE GAME

Google's shift to AI-powered advertising represents the most fundamental change since Adwords launched. For the first time in 25 years, they're changing how ads work by fully integrating them into AI Mode. This isn't just another update – it's a complete reimagining of digital advertising.

Here's what's actually changing: keyword targeting is dead. Instead of targeting ads based on individual search terms, Google's AI will analyse entire conversational contexts, digital footprints (Youtube views, past bookings, website behaviour), and rich intent data to determine who sees your ads.

Your practice could appear during a patient's extended AI conversation about dental anxiety or treatment options – moments that never existed before.

The new system will work like a personal assistant for users. Google's AI may potentially complete appointment bookings based on detected intent, with intent signals becoming 10 times more powerful than traditional keyword matching. This means ads will be served to people who are genuinely interested in dental treatment at the exact moment they're ready to take action.

For dental practices, this creates unprecedented opportunities. Your practice information, patient reviews, social media content, and website data all become part of how Google's AI decides whether to recommend you. This is why 'feed



hygiene’ – as Google has coined it – keeping all your online information current and comprehensive – has become critical.

We’re preparing our clients for this transformation by optimising their online presence across all touchpoints – not just paid ads but organic social media, reviews on multiple platforms, website content, and Google Business Profiles.

While Performance Max campaigns in dental can sometimes generate lower-quality leads, AI Max for Search represents an exciting evolution that could deliver much more targeted prospects.

The early data is compelling. Advertisers using these new AI-powered campaigns are seeing significant improvements in conversion rates and cost efficiency, particularly for campaigns that were still relying heavily on exact and phrase match keywords.

HOW AI IMPROVES PATIENT JOURNEYS AND PRACTICE GROWTH

This is where AI – when applied correctly – becomes genuinely transformational for dental practices. We’re using AI to enhance every stage of our ‘promote, convert, grow’ framework – from automated lead qualification that prioritises high-intent prospects to personalised nurturing sequences that guide patients through their treatment decision.

CRM systems now use predictive analytics to identify which leads are most likely to convert, automatically scheduling follow-ups at optimal times based on individual patient behaviour patterns.

AI-driven phone systems provide immediate responses to out-of-hours enquiries, capturing

lead information and setting expectations before your team even sees the enquiry.

But perhaps most importantly, AI will be able to be used to create hyper-personalised patient experiences. When someone enquires about Invisalign through your practice’s website, AI systems will analyse their digital footprint – the pages they visited, time spent on content, previous interactions – to customise their entire nurturing sequence.

This isn’t about being intrusive; it’s about being relevant and helpful at exactly the right moment.

POSITIONING YOUR PRACTICE FOR SUCCESS

The window for competitive advantage is open right now, but it won’t stay that way for long. Google is working closely with partners to fine-tune ad placements, and early adopters who master these systems before widespread adoption will gain significant advantages.

Here’s what you should be doing now:

- Audit your online presence. Ensure your practice information, photos, reviews, and content are current and comprehensive across all platforms
- Invest in authentic content. High-quality photos and videos of your actual practice and team remain competitive advantages in an AI world
- Optimise for conversations. Structure your website and social content around natural patient questions rather than just keywords
- Prepare for new ad formats. Consider how your practice story translates to conversational AI

rather than traditional search ads and start working on AI Max now

- Work with specialists. The complexity of implementing AI marketing effectively while focusing on patient care requires expert guidance.

ACHIEVE REMARKABLE GROWTH

Most importantly, don’t try to do this alone. The complexity of implementing AI marketing effectively while maintaining focus on patient care is exactly why practices partner with specialist agencies.

The transformation happening in digital marketing right now isn’t just about new technology – it’s about the fundamental shift in how patients discover, research, and choose dental practices. The practices that embrace this change, working with marketing partners who truly understand both AI capabilities and dental practice growth, will be the ones that thrive in this new landscape.

At Xcelerator Dental, we’ve seen how transformational this approach can be. We’ve helped practices achieve remarkable growth by combining AI-powered tools with our award-winning expertise in dental marketing. As we continue to redefine success in dental practice growth, our focus remains on removing barriers and fostering trust between practices and their marketing partners for lasting success in this rapidly evolving world.

The shift to AI-driven marketing isn’t coming – it’s here. The practices that understand and implement these changes now will have a significant advantage over those who wait. Your patients are already using AI to find dental care. Make sure they find you.

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Workflow

Enhancing
your workflows
through
innovation

Savvy financial strategies

Simon Freeman explains how sound financial planning can transform dental practices

For many dental professionals, finance brokers remain something of an unknown. Yet, in today's evolving healthcare landscape, working with the right broker can be transformative, not just for a practice's financial health, but also for its long-term strategic growth.

A finance broker acts as an intermediary between you and a wide panel of lenders. They take the time to understand your needs – whether you're looking to refit a surgery, acquire cutting-edge technology, expand your premises, or simply manage cash flow – and then source the most suitable finance options to help you achieve those goals.

However, there seems to be a knowledge gap in the sector. According to a recent Snowbird Finance survey, 57% of dentists said they were unfamiliar with the role of finance brokers, and only 10% used one regularly. With rising operating costs, growing demand for private care, and increasing pressure to invest in advanced equipment, this lack of awareness is holding back practice growth. Half of respondents said limited financial knowledge had directly impacted their ability to expand.

One concerning finding is that 22% of dental professionals plan to fund investments from their existing reserves. While this may feel like the simpler route, it can increase risk, deplete liquidity and reduce flexibility to respond to opportunities or challenges.

A skilled finance broker can offer a smarter route, identifying solutions that preserve working capital and reduce long-term financial strain.



Simon Freeman

Simon is managing director of Snowbird Finance, a leading UK finance broker specialising in healthcare and dental sectors.

WHY SECTOR KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

Dental practices face distinct financial challenges and opportunities that differ from those in other industries. This is where a specialist broker makes the difference.

From funding a new squat practice, securing finance for a new piece of equipment such as CBCT scanner or helping maintain cash flow balance through tax loans, a broker with dental expertise ensures your strategy aligns with both your clinical ambitions and financial capacity. They can also talk through the options and offer practical insights drawn from experience with other clients in similar situations.

MORE THAN JUST A LOAN

Working with a finance broker brings multiple benefits. First, access. Instead of applying to one lender, a broker will explore a panel of potential funders, saving time and significantly increasing your chances of finding the best fit. Experienced brokers know which lenders are most likely to support particular cases and can present your application in the best possible light.

Second, brokers negotiate on your behalf, often securing more favourable rates or terms than you might access directly. They'll also provide flexible structures to suit your cash flow, and help navigate the regulatory landscape, ensuring compliance with financial rules and FCA guidance.

WHAT MAKES A BROKER A TRUE PARTNER?

Beyond product knowledge, a good finance broker acts as an extension of your business. They should take the time to understand the full picture – your aspirations, pressures, and long-term goals. It's not just about

the cheapest rate; it's about finding a tailored solution that works over time and delivers real value.

Communication and transparency are key. Your broker should explain clearly what's being proposed, why it suits your needs, and the costs involved. They should also provide ongoing support throughout the project, not disappear after the paperwork is signed!

In our experience, the unexpected can (and does) happen during installations or practice developments; a committed broker helps resolve issues, not hand them back to you.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A BROKER

When selecting a broker, ask about their experience in dentistry. Sector understanding can speed the process of getting a 'yes' from a funder. Also enquire about how they will keep your private data and information safe. Finally, consider what else they might offer, such as helping you secure more business through patient finance.

Interestingly, only 21% of dentists see brokers as a strategic support partner, which I feel is a missed opportunity for many practitioners. The right broker goes far beyond arranging finance, they empower growth and success.

If you're looking to futureproof your practice, invest in technology, or improve patient affordability, however, partnering with a specialist broker might just be the smartest decision you haven't made yet.

I'll leave you with a small financial principle that we often say to our clients when it comes to their finances: 'Buy what appreciates. Finance what depreciates'.

Visit www.snowbirdfinance.co.uk for further information.

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New functionality within Dürr Dental's VistaSoft Monitor app allows users to effortlessly check a plate's quality by simply holding a mobile phone over the plate. The app provides a clear rating – from 'A' for excellent condition, to 'E' when it's time for a replacement, making it easy to maintain optimal imaging performance. Even those using 3rd party imaging software, instead of VistaSoft, can check the quality of their plates. Great images allow for accurate diagnostics.

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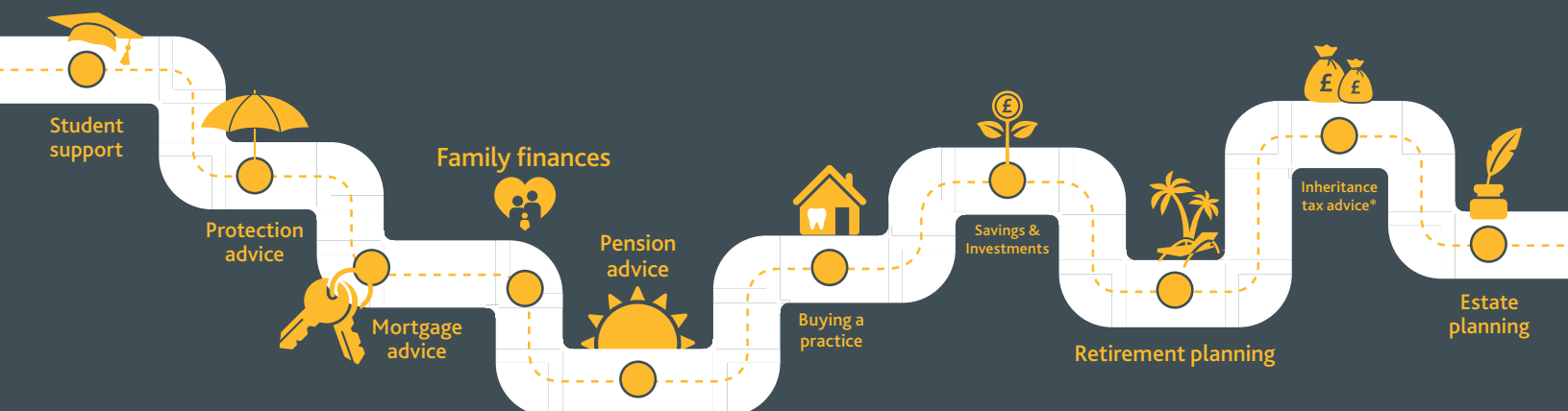
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Tailored financial advice

Aaron Prested explains how one size doesn't fit all when it comes to financial advice

Running a private dental practice is as much about business acumen as it is about clinical skill.

While most dentists are highly trained in providing patient care, the financial side of practice ownership can feel like an entirely different discipline. From managing fluctuating income streams to planning for staff costs, equipment investment, tax liabilities and long-term retirement goals, the financial fabric of your practice can quickly become complex.

Yet despite this, many practice owners fall into the trap of seeking off-the-shelf financial solutions. The danger with this one-size-fits-all approach is that it rarely accounts for the unique cut, shape and fit of your individual practice. Just as every patient needs a treatment plan tailored to their circumstances, every dental business requires financial advice that's crafted to fit its distinct needs.

EVERY PRACTICE HAS ITS OWN PATTERN

No two private practices are the same. Location, size, patient demographics, treatment mix, staffing structure, and growth ambitions all combine to create a financial picture that's unique. A high-end cosmetic practice in central London will have very different financial considerations compared to a mixed, family practice in a regional town.



Aaron Prested

Aaron 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.

A generic plan might provide a basic framework, but it won't consider the fine stitching that holds your business together. For example, how you pay yourself as an owner, or the extent of investment needed in new technology can dramatically alter the right financial approach.

THE DETAILS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Tailored advice is not about reinventing the wheel, it's about adjusting the fit so that it works for you. Small differences can make a big impact. For instance:

- Choosing the right business structure (sole trader, partnership, or limited company) can influence tax efficiency
- Ensuring that legal agreements aren't off-the-shelf and reflect the realities and future goals of your practice helps avoid disputes and nasty financial surprises
- Structuring income to avoid falling into tax traps, such as the lesser-known 60% tax trap for high earners, can significantly improve take-home income.

These aren't decisions you want to make on assumptions. A skilled financial adviser will measure carefully before cutting, making sure every element is right for your circumstances.

ADAPTING AS CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE

Tailored advice is also ongoing. Just as a suit may need adjustments over time, your financial plan should evolve with changes in your practice and personal life. Whether it's bringing in a new partner, expanding

premises, or planning an eventual sale, each milestone requires a reassessment.

External factors also play a role. Shifts in tax law and economic pressures such as rising interest rates can all alter the financial fabric you're working with. Having advice that's actively monitored and adjusted means you're not left wearing an outdated plan.

INVESTING IN THE RIGHT FIT

Some practice owners hesitate at the cost of financial advice, assuming that off-the-shelf solutions or DIY research will suffice. But, as any clinician knows, trying to apply a generic treatment to a specific case rarely leads to the best outcome. The same is true financially.

Well-tailored advice may require investment, but the value lies in long-term gains, such as reduced tax liabilities, stronger financial resilience, and a clearer path to achieving your personal and professional goals.

A key part of this is cash flow modelling, which is a way of projecting income and expenditure over time to highlight gaps, pressures and opportunities before they arise.

By stress-testing different scenarios, cash flow modelling ensures that the plan you're following isn't just well-fitted for today but can flex and adapt to whatever tomorrow brings.

Looking for dental specialist financial advice? Visit wesleyan.co.uk/dental or call 0808 149 9416. Charges may apply, but costs are agreed with you in advance.

Discussing charges for private treatment

Lesley Turner offers some advice to dentists struggling with communicating charges to patients

Discussing treatment charges can be something dentists find awkward. Talking about how much things cost is simply not part of the British culture, which means some people struggle with it. However, charging proper fees is the only way for a practice to survive. So, how do we make having the conversation about payment easier for ourselves?

A lot of this comes down to mindset. Private dental treatment offers numerous benefits for patients, including shorter waiting times, a wider range of services, and often higher quality care. These are just some of the elements that add value to the service.

When it comes to setting fees, a well-run practice will have worked out its overhead costs per surgery, per day (OCPSPD). This is the amount of money it costs to keep a surgery open whether there are patients in it or not. Being clear on this figure makes the task of setting fees much easier as they will be informed by your OCPSPD.

It's a good idea to be open with your staff about this figure as it helps to keep everyone's mind focused on costs. Front of house and admin staff who understand the OCPSPD are more likely to chase up late payers and ensure discounts are only applied where appropriate than a team

member who may not appreciate the effects non-payment has on the running of the practice.

SELF-SABOTAGE

It can also deter dentists from offering discounts impulsively. Sometimes, dentists are their own worst enemies when it comes to charging the correct fees. Some simply aren't comfortable charging hundreds (or thousands) of pounds for a course of treatment, even though the charge is fair, and so they discount the fee without the patient even asking!

As Ashley Latter says in his blog 'Discounting fees can be bad for your wealth', the consequences of impulsive discounting can be greater than you think. The example he gives is of a 10% discount making a dent in your profits of up to 28%.

If offering spur of the moment discounts is something done quite often, as his straw poll of course attendees implies is the case, that could result in tens of thousands of pounds of lost profits over the year.

However, knowledge is power so dentists who truly understand their own costs and overheads should find it easier to appreciate that their private charges reflect the real cost of treatment as opposed to NHS charges, which can mean a loss in many cases.

Knowing this can help increase your confidence in the equity of your fee



structure and lessen the discomfort of talking about money.

Once you have set realistic charges you are happy represent a fair deal for your business and your patients, here are some suggestions as to how to make the conversation about payment easier.

TRANSPARENT PRICING AND COMMUNICATION

One of the main concerns for patients considering private dental treatment is how much it will cost.

To address this, make sure you have transparent pricing. Clearly display your treatment costs on your website and in your practice.

Providing detailed explanations of what each treatment involves and why it is necessary can help private patients understand the value they are receiving.



Lesley Turner

Lesley has been a business development manager at Medenta for eight years. She has worked in dentistry for many years, including 10 years as a practice manager, during which time she won a Practice Manager of the Year award.

FLEXIBLE PAYMENT PLANS/ PATIENT FINANCE

Offering flexible payment options can make private dental care more accessible. Giving patients access to patient finance through providers, such as Medenta, can overcome the cost versus affordability dilemma for patients (and you!).

Spreading the cost of their treatment over several months means patients need only be concerned about affording the monthly fee not the overall cost of the treatment, especially if it's interest free.

It can also open up more extensive treatment plans than the patient may have at first considered.

MEMBERSHIP PLANS

As with patient finance, dental membership plans help patients spread the cost of maintaining their oral health.

As they have already budgeted for their routine examinations and hygiene appointments, they are also more likely to attend than pay as you go patients, resulting in better oral health. Should they need treatment,

you can choose to offer a discount as part of their membership.

As well as encouraging your patients to maintain their oral health the practice benefits from a regular and predictable monthly income.

INSURANCE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering with dental insurance providers can help patients manage the cost of private dental treatment.

By partnering with major insurance companies and making patients aware of the coverage options available to them you can help make private dental care more affordable and appealing.

PERFECT YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

With private dentistry, it's important to ensure your patient gets a sense of value. Providing an exceptional customer service can help to achieve this.

As long as your dentistry is competent then it will be how patients are made to feel when they visit the practice that will help to add a perception of value. Ensure all your team members are trained to

offer a welcoming and supportive environment.

Concentrate on making your patients feel valued. Happy patients tell their friends, family and colleagues so this can also lead to word-of-mouth referrals and repeat business, helping to sustain your practice financially.

ADDRESSING AFFORDABILITY CONCERNS

As a private dentist you can choose what fees you wish to charge. For patients who may struggle with the cost of private dental treatment, you could consider offering a sliding scale based on income or even choose to offer work pro bono. It's your business so you decide how things work.

Hopefully, by addressing these key areas, dental practices can better navigate the complexities of charging for private dental treatment and provide valuable services to their patients with a clear conscience.

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Maximising staff benefits

Donna Hall and Sarah Buxton explore making staff benefits work for dental practices

Attracting and retaining quality team members in today's dental world involves more than just offering a competitive salary. As

Donna Hall, regional support manager at Practice Plan, puts it: 'I'm seeing more of a wellbeing focus in practices. It's not just about keeping your current staff happy – it's key to recruiting the right people, too.'

In a conversation with employment law expert Sarah Buxton, Donna explored the landscape of staff benefits, why they matter and how to manage them effectively – legally and practically.

WHAT ARE STAFF BENEFITS?

According to Sarah, staff benefits fall into two distinct categories:

- Mandatory benefits, such as pensions, paid annual leave, statutory sick pay, and maternity/paternity leave – all of which are required by law
- Discretionary benefits, which are optional and offered at the employer's discretion. These can include things like private medical insurance, gym memberships, performance bonuses, and, commonly in dental settings, free dental treatment.

'I've seen practices offering everything from Christmas bonuses to personal training sessions,' Donna shared.

'It's about thinking outside the box and creating a positive culture.'



Donna Hall

Donna has been a regional support manager at Practice Plan for 11 years.



Sarah Buxton

Sarah specialises in acting exclusively for dentists, dental managers and dental practice owners in all aspects of HR and employment law and is a director at Buxton Coates Solicitors Ltd.

CLARITY IS KEY

Both Donna and Sarah stressed the importance of documenting benefits in writing. While many practices provide generous perks, not all are formally stated in contracts or policies, which can become a serious problem down the line.

'If it's not in writing, it's hard to say whether something is truly "discretionary",' Sarah explained. 'That can make it very difficult to remove or adjust benefits later on.'

Echoing this concern, Donna said: 'It's one of the most common things I see – benefits like free dental care being offered informally. It's all fine until there's a disagreement, or someone leaves mid-treatment.'

Free dental treatment is one of the most popular staff perks in practices, but it comes with legal and tax implications that are often overlooked.

As Sarah pointed out, it's technically a benefit in kind and should be declared for tax purposes.

Moreover, the lack of structure around this benefit often creates uncertainty when a team member is going through disciplinary action, resigning, or in the middle of treatment.

'I've even seen cases where someone claimed unfair dismissal and tried to include the cost of dental treatment over the next few years in their compensation,' Sarah shared. 'It gets messy.'

Instead of informal freebies, Donna recommends structured staff plans: 'We can help practices create affordable dental plans for their team – separate from patient plans but with clear terms. It gives everyone clarity and avoids future disputes.'

Sarah agrees, highlighting the ease of valuation and taxation: 'With a plan,

there's a fixed cost. That's much easier to manage from both a legal and accounting perspective.'

FAIRNESS ACROSS THE TEAM

Donna raised an important question: 'How do you ensure benefits are fair across the whole team – not just for full-time staff or clinical roles?'

Sarah responded that all employees – full-time, part-time, clinical, and non-clinical – should be treated equally. However, associates and self-employed contractors are a different matter. Offering them benefits could compromise their self-employed status, creating legal risk for the practice. 'I often explain it like this,' Sarah said. 'You wouldn't give a self-employed plumber free dental care. It's the same principle.'

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

When wrapping up, both Donna and Sarah emphasised that the goal isn't to discourage offering staff benefits – quite the opposite.

'Your team can be your best advertisement,' Donna noted. 'We just need to make sure benefits are structured clearly, so everyone knows where they stand.'

Whether it's outlining what happens to dental treatment during notice periods or formalising a staff plan, written policies protect both the employer and the team.

'We're here to help,' Donna concluded. 'If you're not sure how to structure your staff benefits or want to review what you already offer, get in touch.'

'It's about building a practice that works for everyone.'

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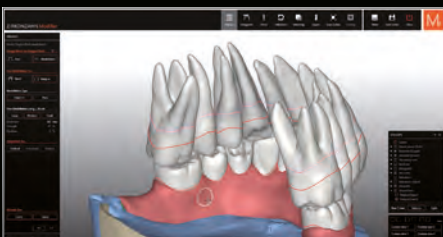


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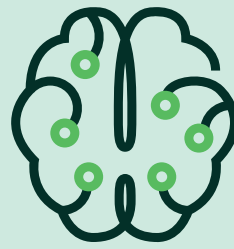
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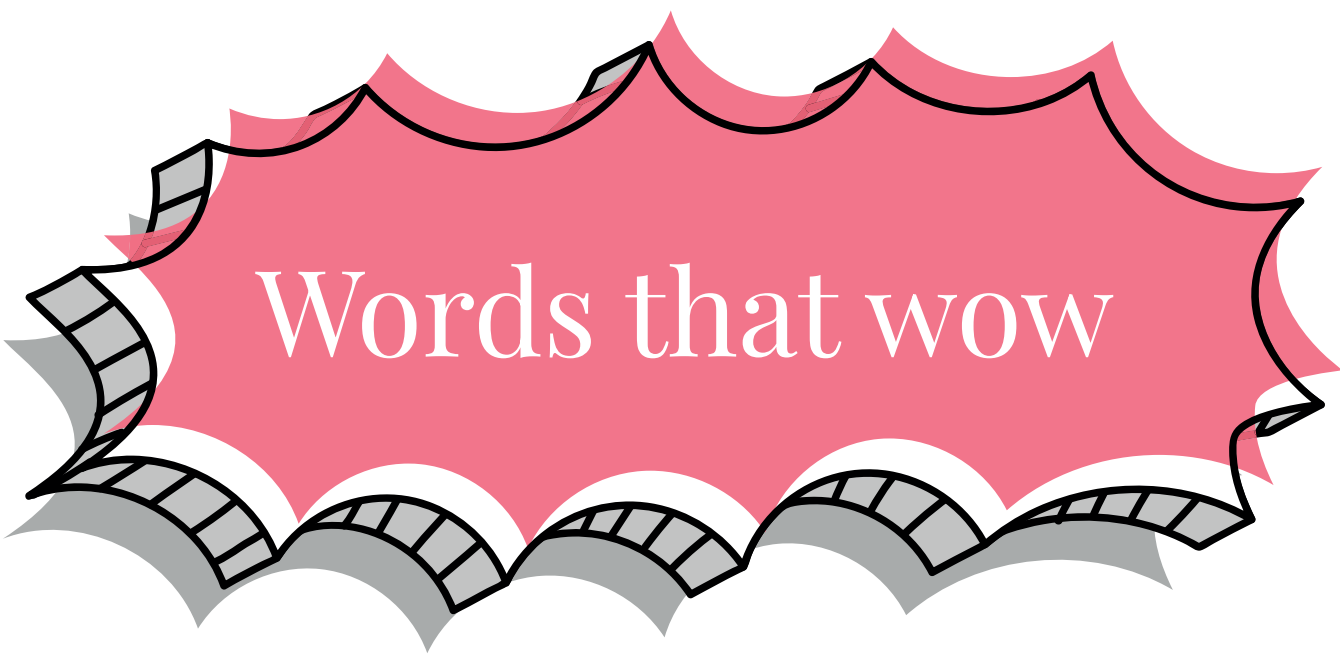
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Words that wow

Gareth Edwards and **Zak Kara** discuss how the ‘Smile Stories’ approach is changing the narrative to revolutionise patient communication

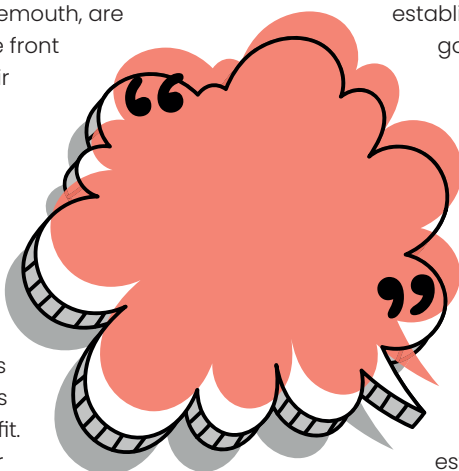
Outdated and impersonal language can hinder patient conversions in a healthcare setting that relies on effective communication. This can confuse patients who feel under-informed or too anxious to proceed, resulting in lost potential leads.

Communication often takes a backseat to clinical expertise. However, Zak Kara and Gareth Edwards, co-founders of Smile Stories, an award-winning private practice in Bournemouth, are placing language front and centre in their business. They’ve flipped the script to create a more ‘human’ experience in the dental chair, enhancing conversions so that both patients and the practice’s bottom line benefit.

Drawing on over a decade of experience, they noted that communication – especially with patients – was often neglected. These shortcomings in team interactions and patient engagement raised critical questions. Therefore, when it was time to launch

their own practice, they broke from the traditional mould to create something more personal – emphasising clear, compassionate communication at every stage of the patient journey.

Gareth explains: ‘Words matter. It isn’t semantics for semantics’ sake; it’s about changing the journey a client embarks on – from the moment they first hear about Smile Stories to when they rave about their experience to friends and family. We’re very focused on words and meticulous about them with our team – once that becomes established, there’s no going back.’



IN ALIGNMENT

Effective engagement is as crucial as possessing excellent clinical skills and is central to Smile Stories’ philosophy.

Gareth and Zak established key guiding principles that team members adhere to, even creating a ‘team thesaurus’ to ensure everyone is on the same page.

This considered approach to language is what they call the ‘Smile Stories’ way’, which ensures every

interaction, from the initial Google search to the final follow-up, is a positive and memorable experience.

This change cuts deep. They see Smile Stories as a movement shaking up the dental industry, bringing it out of the 1990s and into a more modern, client-focused era.

Zak says: ‘Our philosophy is straightforward: communication should reassure, educate, and empower. This involves eliminating jargon and rethinking traditional terminology. For example, we don’t have a waiting room; instead, we have a client lounge, ensuring that every conversation is intentional. It’s not just about what we say but also how we say it.’

‘When communication is executed well, it strengthens relationships, alleviates fear, and ultimately transforms the perception of dentistry. It is crucial to consider how we can communicate more effectively – when used properly, words can change everything.’

1 IT STARTS BEFORE THEY SEE YOU

Communication doesn’t begin in the dental chair; it starts much earlier. The conversation begins the moment someone hears about your clinic, searches for your name online, or discovers your Instagram.

At Smile Stories, we've created an experience that feels entirely different from your typical dentist visit. Let's be honest: dentistry has a reputation. It's stale. It's dreary. It's all white coats and stern receptionists. That's not who we are.

We ensure that every touchpoint conveys the same story – from how we write our website to the tone our reception team uses on the phone, from the clinic's scents to the music and vibe.

This consistency continues in the chair: how the dentist greets you, how the dental nurse engages in conversation, and how we conclude at the end. Communication isn't just one person's job; it's a team effort. Everything must align with the brand we've promised, with us all sharing the same narrative. That's what makes it feel cohesive.

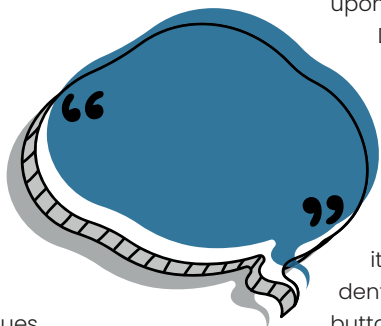
2 KNOW/LIKE/TRUST

There's a pyramid of trust in dentistry, and you can't skip a level. It's like trying to get married on a first date, which only works on reality TV (or does it?). In real life, people must progress through three stages before agreeing to treatment: they need to know you, like you, and trust you in that order:

- **Know:** being known is closely tied to your brand. It reflects your online presence and communicates who you are, what you stand for, and what you excel at. If they have never heard of you, they are unlikely to believe anything you say. Communication begins even before they step foot in your practice
- **Like:** this is about connection, speaking like a human being, being on their level, even having a laugh. It's about building proper relationships, not just delivering dental advice from a pedestal. Finally, there's trust. Once someone knows and likes you, trust becomes possible
- **Trust:** when that happens, they'll allow you to guide them toward what they truly desire, whether it's a better smile, increased confidence, or whatever their individual version of that might be.

3 RELATIONSHIPS, NOT TRANSACTIONS

There's a saying – I'm not sure who said it – but it's spot on: 'People buy people, not things.' And that's precisely what Smile Stories is built upon.



Dentistry has become somewhat commoditised. With major brand names like Invisalign being prominent, it can seem like a dentist merely clicks the buttons. However, for us, it's never about the product

but the person. We focus on building genuine relationships. This means offering advice upfront before anyone pays a penny. It includes free virtual consultations. It involves genuinely listening to people's goals – what's behind the request for composite bonding or Invisalign. They're not just seeking straighter teeth; they're pursuing confidence, comfort, or a reason to smile without reservation. So, instead of telling us what treatment they want, they express how they feel. We provide them with the solution that's right for them – it's as simple as

that. Building a relationship based on trust rather than transactions makes everything else easier. Clients are happier, communication flows more smoothly and complaints are nearly unheard of. By truly understanding people, they feel cared for, which is what good dentistry should be about.

4 IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT WHAT YOU SAY

Verbal communication is only part of the picture. Most communication involves not just the words you use, but also how you sit, move and sound. We always recommend sitting down when chatting with a client, ideally about half a foot lower than they are. This subtly shifts the dynamic, giving them a sense of control. You're not looming, you're not lecturing; you're collaborating. Tone matters. Speak with warmth, conviction and a hint of excitement in your voice. Enthusiasm is infectious; people sense it when you're genuinely excited about helping them. This fosters trust. It's also about confidence – not arrogance – just a calm assurance that you know what you're doing and have their best interests at heart.

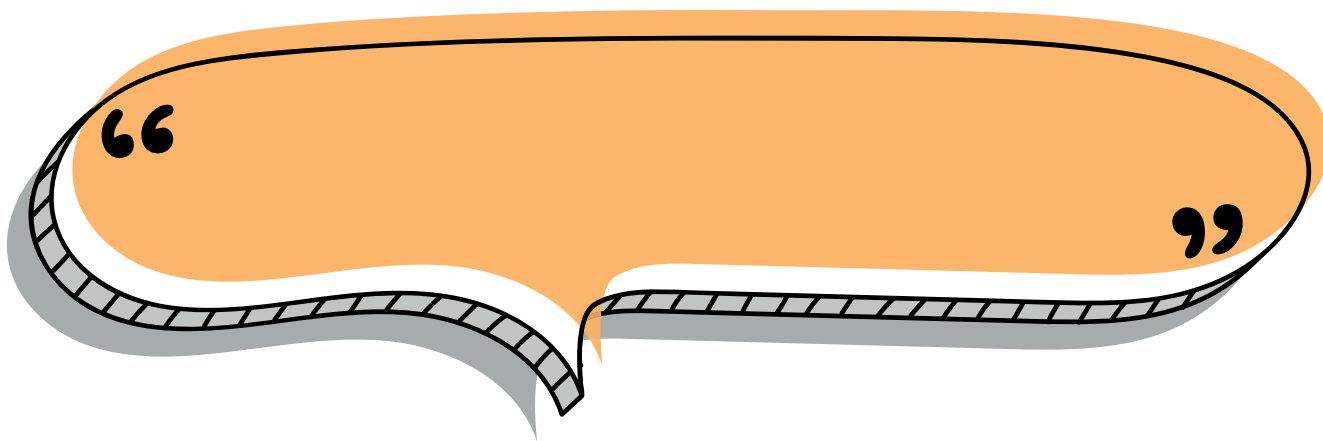
Don't overwhelm them with every possible treatment; that's not helpful.



Meet Gareth and Zak

Gareth Edwards and Zak Kara, co-founders of Smile Stories in Bournemouth, have created a clinic known for its relaxed and contemporary approach, emphasising that collaboration is more effective than competition.

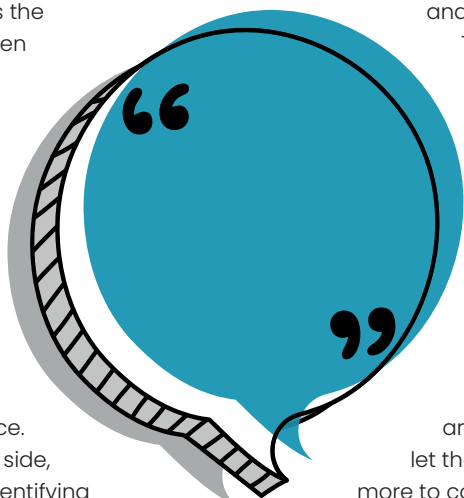
With more than a decade of dental experience, including international training and practice, they are committed to changing how patients perceive dental visits. Their goal is to make the experience feel like catching up with friends.



Instead, listen first – truly listen. Understand what they're trying to achieve, then guide them to the option that gets them closest to their goals – one option, not ten. Choose clarity over confusion every time.

5 WE ALWAYS ASK, NEVER TELL

For us, it's all about guiding clients to self-discover their own issues. When a client identifies a problem and truly owns it, they're far more likely to take action. It's the difference between telling someone they have decay and helping them realise it themselves. Take X-rays, for example. We display them on the screen and play a quick game of spot the difference. We examine one side, then the other, identifying where things don't quite align, usually a dark area where there shouldn't be one. I might say, 'Anything darker tends to be softer,' and then ask them what they think it is. Nine times out of 10, they'll say, 'Decay'. I know we're on the right path when they say it, not me. I ask: 'Do you want decay in your tooth?' It's always a no. 'Would you like me to show you how to fix it before it becomes like that tooth you had trouble with last year?' Now they're open. Now they're involved. We use whatever it takes – scans, photos and X-rays – to help clients understand what's going on. When they're part of the discovery process, they're more likely to trust the solution.



6 THE MIND NEEDS TIME TO CATCH UP WITH THE MOUTH

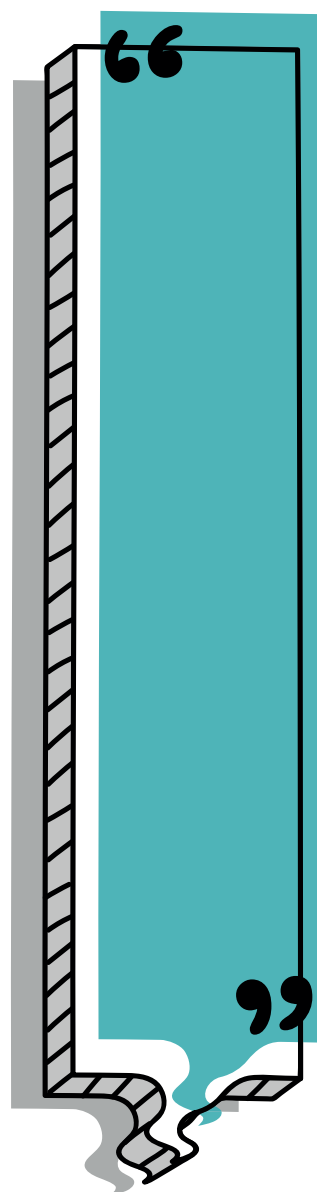
We don't believe in overwhelming clients with a flood of information all at once. Why? Many people who come to see us have been with their previous dentist for years, even decades. They're used to hearing: 'Everything looks fine', even when it's not. So, when we identify more complex issues, we recognise we face two challenges: disbelief and emotional shock.

That's where 'breadcrumbing' comes into play. Every new client receives a two-part consultation. The first part is gentle. We gather information, highlight a few areas to discuss and let them know there's more to consider. But we don't dive in immediately. We allow them to breathe and digest. Sometimes, they even grieve. Then, a week later, we sit down again. This time, we present the whole picture. Visually, clearly and calmly. We provide examples. We explain the implications.

And more often than not, they're ready. Ready to listen. Ready to act. Prepared to invest in themselves. Why allow for this pause? Because sometimes, the difference between 'no thanks' and 'let's do it' is just a little time and empathy.

Do you breadcrumb in your consultations?

Or are you trying to cram everything into one session?



Zak and Gareth's Smile Stories Academy offers communication and patient experience courses that provide dentists with a blueprint for confidently communicating, connecting and converting. Visit smilestoriesdentalacademy.com/signup for more information.



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Need a lawyer?

Adam Bernstein explains what to look for in a lawyer when the time comes for the practice to need legal advice

Every dental practice will, from time to time, need a lawyer. Whether it's to buy or take on leased premises, to draw up employment contracts, to defend an employment law claim made against them by an employee, to buy or sell a business, or to defend against a medical negligence claim, legal advice will be essential.

MODERN-DAY LAW FIRMS

Most law firms today offer a range of services to cater for various legal needs. Consequently, it's not surprising that most law firms tend to specialise in areas such as employment, commercial issues, property, IT, private client and so on rather than on a sector or industry basis.

However, that's not to say that there aren't law firms that specialise in dentistry and healthcare; those that do can assist with, for example, dental negligence claims and GDC proceedings and investigations that include fitness to practice cases and appeals against decisions.

Broadly, there are three types of lawyer:

- Solicitors
- Barristers
- Legal executives.

Solicitors

Solicitors are most likely to be spoken to first. They can provide expert legal advice and support. They deal with the paperwork and communication of your case or legal issue. They can also negotiate with the other side if you are having a dispute.



Adam Bernstein

Adam is director of Adam Bernstein Limited.

If the case ends up in court, your solicitor will find a barrister to work on your case.

Barristers

Barristers are generally hired by your solicitor on your behalf to work on your case. They tend to become involved in a case when it goes to court or to advise on a very specific area of law. They represent you before the judge by presenting arguments to support your case.

Legal executives

Legal executives are similar to a solicitor, but they are only qualified to practise certain areas of law, such as employment or conveyancing law. While legal executives are often very experienced, they're more likely to handle relatively straightforward legal issues and may direct you to a solicitor if your case is more complex.

HOW TO FIND A LAWYER

The scene set, there are several routes to follow when searching for a lawyer.

First off, nothing will ever beat a personal recommendation. Either through friends, family, colleagues or via networking, a personal recommendation is a great way to find a reliable lawyer.

Beyond that, other advisers, such as an accountant or financial adviser may have suitable contacts within the legal profession.

Alternatively, you can consult one of the two widely recognised 'professional bibles': The Legal 500 (legal500.com) and Chambers and Partners Directory (chambers.com). Both provide reviews of lawyers with listings of firms by region, their specialties, and the firm's own editorial about themselves. They also include a

breakdown of the lawyers' experience, fees, and the names and addresses of the partners.

There's also the Law Society's Find a Solicitor database at solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk that details some 200,000 legal professionals and their firms along with their established expertise in specific areas.

For specific help with a case brought against a dental practice, another option is to Google 'GDC lawyers'.

EXPERT ADVICE

The era of generalist is over, and today, every field demands expertise. Therefore, it makes sense to enquire about a prospective lawyer's experience in the area of law that help is needed with; evidence of this should be sought.

Check to see if the lawyer is known as an expert – ask how often they have handled issues that are relevant to the advice being sought.

While the web has made it easy for businesses and organisations to publicise themselves, it should be remembered that glossy brochures and city centre postcodes invariably translate into cost that has to be recovered through fees. In other words, to save on fees consider looking to out of town legal practices or even those that work remotely.

THE FIRST MEETING

The next step, if it looks like the right lawyer has been found, is for all stakeholders to meet, ideally on the home turf of the practice. Ask if this first meeting is chargeable.

At this meeting you may need to prove your identity so have proofs on hand. Consider the questions you wish to pose and make notes of what is said.

During this first meeting it's essential to discuss fees and the expectations of either side. If fees aren't mentioned by the lawyer, they should be brought up by you.

At this point budget should be outlined along with options to keep costs in check along with the hourly rates of the lawyer or lawyers involved with the work. Similarly, invoicing options should be discussed and agreed.

It's worth noting that the Solicitors Regulation Authority professional standards require solicitors to be price transparent with information that 'must be presented in a clear and easy to understand format'.

This means that the basis of charging must be explained, detail if VAT is included, and also highlight if disbursements are separately chargeable. The aim is to avoid nasty surprises.

At the same time as agreeing fees, the lawyer should be provided with all the relevant information they need to understand the practice and any potential issues.

IT'S ESSENTIAL TO DISCUSS FEES AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF EITHER SIDE

It's important to have the contact information of the preferred candidate. Ask if there will be just a single point of contact or if the relationship will revolve around a team of individuals. Best practice usually means a partner to manage the relationship with others brought in when appropriate.

Next, assuming all are happy to proceed, it's crucial to clearly outline each party's obligations and responsibilities. A letter of engagement from the lawyer will help and it should cover the expectations of all, the main contact for each party, budget limits, and the complaints procedure.

It should be said at this point that the Law Society requires the complaints procedure to be mentioned before the working relationship commences, as per Practice Rule 15.

Finding a lawyer: key advice

1. Match expertise to your needs. Always check a lawyer's experience in the specific area of law you require (eg dental negligence, employment). Don't settle for a generalist when a specialist is available
2. Research and recommendations matter. Start your search with personal recommendations, then cross-check using trusted resources such as The Legal 500, Chambers Directory, or the Law Society's Find a Solicitor database
3. Clarify fees early. At the first meeting, ask if it is chargeable and ensure that fee structures, VAT, and disbursements are clearly explained in writing to avoid surprises later
4. Set clear expectations. A letter of engagement should outline responsibilities, budget limits, contacts, and the complaints procedure before work begins. This ensures everyone understands their obligations
5. Stay organised with documentation. Make sure all practice staff diligently file legal documents, emails, and contracts (including reverse sides of contracts). Proper records can be critical if issues arise.

Once the relationship is up and running, all of your staff members should be reminded that documents – email and the like – are of utmost importance when it comes to the law. They should be reminded that they need to diligently file all relevant documents (letters, email, minutes of meetings and so on) properly. And when copying contracts, they must remember to copy the reverse side as terms are often printed there.

All the points above apply, albeit to a lesser extent, if the lawyer is only needed for a one-off task.

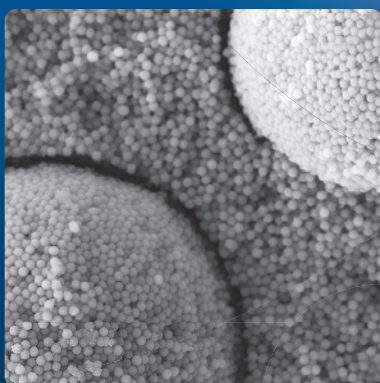
SUMMARY

Choosing a lawyer for a business is very much a personal choice combined with consideration for service and costs.

There are many lawyers out there offering their services and a little time spent checking the market could be well worth the effort.



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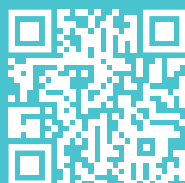
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Investing in your team

Faye Mear tackles team investment and explains why it's the key to a thriving private dental practice

When running a private dental practice, it's tempting to focus most of your attention (and budget) on things patients can see: the latest scanner, a swanky patient lounge, a slick website. These are all valuable, of course, but without an engaged, motivated and confident team alongside them, their impact will be limited.

Your team is the heartbeat of your practice. Investing in team members is one of the smartest moves you can make if you want to encourage patient loyalty, reduce staff turnover and grow your practice sustainably.

In today's market, patients have plenty of choice – and they are not afraid to use it! What makes them pick one practice over another often isn't the cost of your treatments or the fanciness of your equipment – it's the feeling they get when they walk through the door, and this is created by your people.

Every receptionist's welcome, every dental nurse's reassurance and every clinician's conversation add up to an experience that either builds trust and confidence in your practice – or erodes it.

Let's explore common pitfalls in team investment – and how to avoid them.



Faye Mear

Faye is client liaison at Corona Marketing, a dedicated dental marketing agency. She's passionate about helping dental professionals and practices grow, thrive and achieve success through better marketing and communication. For more information, email faye.mear@coronadc.co.uk.

1 HIGH STAFF TURNOVER

The problem

Recruitment in dentistry is tough. Experienced dental nurses, hygienists and associates are in high demand and recruiting and training new people is both costly and time-consuming. Not only that, high staff turnover will disrupt patient care and damage team morale that may make even more people leave.

The solution

Make your practice a place people want to stay! This means more than just offering a competitive rate of pay. Provide career pathways and opportunities for progression, support training and create a culture of trust.

Show genuine appreciation and offer 'valuable' perks. Remember, valuable doesn't only mean cold hard cash – it can equally be things that your team find useful and helpful to them and their lives, so consider flexible hours, dedicated car parking, subsidised treatments.

A regular, personal check in with all your team goes a long way and will encourage open communication.

Top tips

- Celebrate milestones and achievements with small gestures of recognition
- Run regular 'stay interviews' to understand what keeps your team happy (and what might tempt them away)
- Remember: people don't just leave a job, they also leave environments that don't support them.

2 TRAINING TREATED AS A BOX-TICKING EXERCISE

The problem

With CPD and compliance requirements to meet, training can often feel like a chore. If your team sees it only as an obligation, they won't engage and opportunities for growth will be lost.

The solution

Shift the focus from 'mandatory' to 'motivating'.

Encourage development in areas that genuinely excite and interest your team members. That could be extended duties for dental nurses, advanced perio training for hygienists or customer service skills for receptionists.

Informal knowledge-sharing sessions across 'departments', plus whole team training days in pertinent areas are great ways to keep people inspired, the whole team communicating and learning alive.

Top tips

- Offer training that benefits both the individual and the practice
- Encourage staff to bring back learnings from external courses and share them with the team
- Frame training to team members as an investment in their career not just a statutory requirement.

3 LOW CONFIDENCE IN TALKING TO PATIENTS

The problem

Some team members shy away from conversations about treatments or services because they don't feel

confident in the details. This leaves patients under-informed and puts extra pressure on other team members.

The solution

Equip your team with the tools and confidence to speak comfortably about treatments. Create non-clinical 'cheat sheets' that include FAQs and share patient-facing materials with everyone to ensure you're all on the same page.

Encourage staff to shadow clinicians during certain treatments to better understand the process as well as the patient benefits.

Top tips

- Hold short, regular knowledge-sharing sessions where clinicians explain treatments in non-clinical language
- Foster a solution-focused approach to issues so team members feel happy to talk openly and not be afraid to ask questions or report any difficulties honestly
- Encourage staff to follow and contribute to the practice's social media and patient newsletters so they stay engaged and up-to-date with your patient-facing messaging and promotions.

4 FOCUSING ON EQUIPMENT OVER PEOPLE

The problem

It's easy to be dazzled by new technology or a stylish refurb, but without a confident, engaged team behind it, these investments won't reach their potential. Patients are unlikely to appreciate the brilliance of the scanner you used on them, but they will remember how cared for your staff made them feel.

The solution

Balance your spending. By all means, invest in equipment and facilities, but dedicate equal attention to your people. Invest as generously in team-building sessions, training, wellbeing initiatives and socials to make your team themselves feel cared for, invested in the practice and able to deliver the best care and attention to your patients.

INVESTING IN YOUR TEAM ISN'T JUST A FEEL-GOOD EXERCISE – IT'S ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL BUSINESS STRATEGIES YOU CAN EMPLOY

Top tips

- For every major equipment investment, consider what budget you'll allocate to staff development in the same year
- Ask team members what support would help them most. It could be extra training, better communication, or it could be as simple as a regular team lunch to keep people feeling unified and engaged
- Remember: the best patient experience is delivered by people, not machines.

5 OVERLOOKING WELLBEING AND MORALE

The problem

Dentistry can be stressful. Tight schedules, anxious patients, regulatory pressures all take their toll. If staff wellbeing is neglected, burnout and disengagement follow.

The solution

Create a culture where wellbeing is prioritised. Regular check-ins, supportive management and small adjustments – like flexible hours or protected breaks – can make a big difference. Organising team socials and occasional away days will strengthen bonds outside the clinical setting. And remember, wellbeing isn't just fluffy – it has a real effect on the bottom line.

Top tips

- Use daily huddles to not only share information but also check in on mood and energy levels
- Don't underestimate the power of 'thank you' – appreciation makes a big impact
- Encourage staff to take their full breaks and to use their annual leave. Rested people will perform better.

6 A LACK OF CLEAR LEADERSHIP

The problem

Even with great staff, a practice without clear leadership can drift. Mixed messages, inconsistent standards and poor communication will create frustration, confusion and migration.

The solution

It's down to you! As the practice owner or principal dentist, your attitude sets the tone. Be visible, approachable and consistent. Openly share your vision for the practice and involve your team in shaping how you get there.

Develop leaders within your practice to assist you and share the load – support your practice manager, senior dental nurses and lead receptionists to take ownership for their 'departments'.

Top tips

- Hold regular whole practice meetings to keep everyone onboard and enfranchised
- Offer leadership training for those in senior roles
- Lead by example: the way you treat the team will ripple through your practice.

THE POWER OF INVESTMENT

Investing in your team isn't just a feel-good exercise – it's one of the most powerful business strategies you can employ. It reduces staff turnover, boosts patient retention and will create a place people will genuinely enjoy working and giving their best. When your team feels supported and valued, they will naturally give more.

Patients may choose you initially for your services, but they will stay because of your people. By making staff investment as much of a priority as technology or marketing, you'll build a practice that is resilient, respected and ready for the future.

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AI and communication

Liam McNaughton answers some of the biggest questions on the future of communication in dental practices – and how artificial intelligence is forecast to impact it

Q We are seeing artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly being used in dentistry – from diagnostics and treatment planning. How are you seeing it be used for communication?

A Dental practices are beginning to use AI to help with their marketing content and to improve their email and other messaging communications.

We also use AI to generate all music on hold messaging, and other phone system messages and content.

But most exciting so far is the ability to transcribe and analyse every inbound call for tone, content and intent, which, in turn, allows for reporting on call-handling by the reception or TCO staff.

Q What are the benefits of using AI in practice communications with patients?

A First of all, in terms of the phone call analysis, owners and managers no longer have to guess what their calls are about. Instead, they can get to grips with the content of each call – ie, whether Invisalign or implants were mentioned, or whether there was a complaint or a missed opportunity – almost instantaneously. It is, in my opinion, truly revolutionary.

What's more, AI can bring consistency of tone, content and

professionalism to all outbound content such as a social media post, a text or an email.

Practices could also benefit from deploying internal- or external-facing webchat agents.

The latest of these (called agentic agents) learn from knowledge bases and other content. So, they could answer internal queries from your staff (on topics such as HR or company policies), while also handling all new or existing patient enquiries on the practice website, simply based on the knowledge you feed the agent.

Previous generations of web bots were pretty dumb – as someone had to program in every possible question and answer topic. Meanwhile, new agentic agents simply learn from content you give them, and answer appropriately.

Q Do you see any drawbacks or areas of concern surrounding AI in practice communications?

A Not really – if done properly using cloud-based AI frameworks through the likes of Microsoft Azure or Copilot, your practice content is protected within your own 'tenant' and not shared with the wider world, nor the rest of the AI model.

While this is something that needs proper consideration and advice – for instance, data governance and security frameworks should be reviewed as part of an AI implementation – it does not need to be a roadblock to adoption.

The business should also consider consent and transparency, but there's no need to overcomplicate this. For example, in our business we have simply added 'transcription and AI' to our 'all calls are recorded' messaging.

Q Where do you see the future heading for AI in practices?

A AI deployment in clinical diagnostics is already happening, and its use in patient comms may already be under way. In addition to these, I think AI will be deployed in patient education and treatment planning, with explanations and visualisations potentially being AI-generated.

In terms of call handling, we are already looking at piloting technology using AI voice agents that could enable inbound calls to handle making, changing and cancelling appointments with no human intervention at all. This could be a reality later this year.

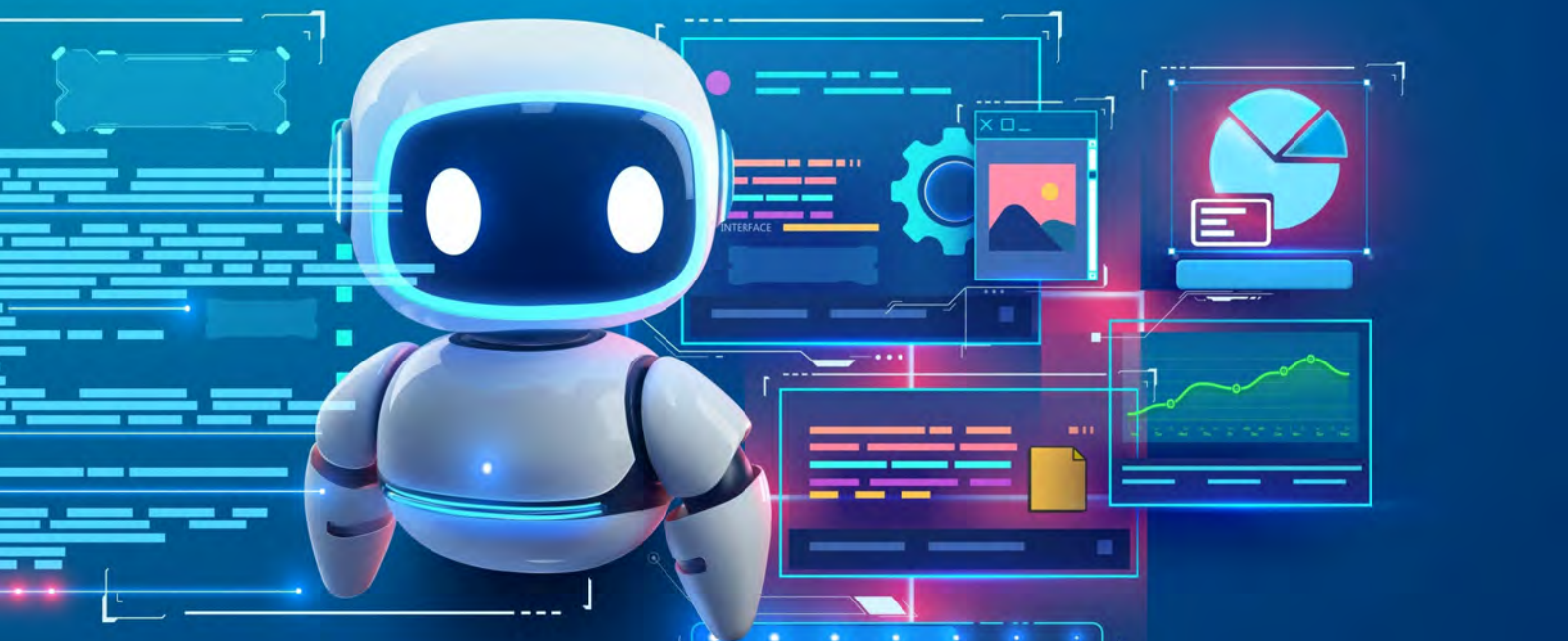
AI could also help with CQC type compliance checks and document preparation, demand and trend analysis, and (with its powerful Excel and data handling features) practice management and reporting. Within practice management software itself, I'd be surprised not to see hands-free note clinical note capture, summarised patient history, and AI-integration right inside the software.

I would imagine AI will also eventually help with clinical decisions, especially in complex



Liam McNaughton

Liam founded Dental IT, a specialist MSP serving dental practices across the UK in 2006. A true IT generalist, he brings broad and deep expertise across networking, cybersecurity, cloud services and phone systems.



Top tips for using AI in patient communications

1. Run every outbound patient email and SMS past the AI – however short or long – with a practice-agreed prompt. This ensures that the tone and content is consistent with your brand
2. Run every template, Word document and patient communication through AI to improve and standardise your communications
3. In our view, you should avoid adopting any new phone systems that don't include AI out-of-the-box, or signing up for long contracts either... AI is coming, and if you get locked into five- or seven-year contracts that don't have these kind of features, you are going to miss out
4. Look at Microsoft Copilot (its AI system is built into most Microsoft apps) to bring fast and simple integration right into all your documents, Excel files, emails etc – the entire Microsoft Office ecosystem has Copilot-AI integration
5. Think laterally! Once you get the hang of it, you can find that AI supports you in more ways than you can possibly imagine right now. From my perspective, every aspect of business can be enhanced with AI, if you understand how it can be integrated.

cases, by analysing history, imaging, similar cases etc. In this way, it could provide possible alternative paths, and/or offer up risks and 'red flags'. Alerts related to medical history or drug interactions seem like another clear usage for AI. Finally, its multilingual capabilities could also yield benefits for patient communications.

I fully expect that AI could entirely change the landscape of practice management software. The software of the future could easily be an 'agentic' app – this is one that collapses the entire software interface into agent communication.

So yes, there would be a 'patient chart', but this would only be for visualisation and verification after you've already charted the data with the agent.

In other words, the AI does all the heavy lifting (actually populating the database, creating a draft treatment plan, finding appointment slots, handling the billing and booking), with dentists and front of house only verifying and tweaking as necessary.

Q Do you feel it will end up replacing the receptionist role in practices?

A I would say that the receptionist role will be more specialist, as is the case with many roles impacted by AI adoption.

Although simple and fairly predictable enquiries and engagements will be successfully handled by AI agents, more complex enquiries and support will still require

escalation to a real person – and most AI-agent systems are able to recognise and handle this kind of handover already.

Q Would you say embracing new technology, such as AI, is easy and straightforward for practices?

A Any change can be challenging for any business. What's important here is that the change is managed effectively, sold appropriately to internal staff and stakeholders, and that its adoption is monitored on an ongoing basis.

But no, it is not a difficult process, and it is not too expensive. Copilot, for example, is about £20 a month per agent, and you can get call analysis at a similar price point.

Q What advice would you offer to practices looking to incorporate this in their practices?

A As with adopting any new technology, always do your research, get demos, and understand the benefits as much as you can before committing.

Q Is there anything else you'd like to add?

A Yes! No AI was used in the making of these replies!

Aside from that, I'd encourage business owners and managers to embrace AI, as it offers huge productivity and business enhancement opportunities – and the tools to realise them are already at our fingertips.

Leading with courage

Sarika Shah reveals the missing piece in dental leadership and shares six forms of courage for every dental leader to adopt

Leadership in dentistry often centres around clinical outcomes, operational efficiency and business metrics. But one leadership trait I believe is equally – if not more – important is courage.

I'm not talking about heroic, dramatic bravery. I mean the quieter, often invisible courage that shows up in the everyday decisions we make as practice owners, clinicians, managers, and human beings. The kind of courage that shapes our values, our teams, and the culture we're creating, moment by moment.

As a practice principal and founder of Flourish as a Female – In Dentistry, I've seen that the most impactful

leaders in our profession aren't always the loudest or the most experienced – they're the ones willing to do the right thing, even when it's hard.

I want to share six forms of courage that I believe every dental leader should understand and practise.

1 MORAL COURAGE: DOING WHAT'S RIGHT, NOT WHAT'S EASY

Ever had a patient demand a treatment that's not clinically justified, or an associate pressured to meet targets that conflict with their values? Moral courage means making decisions based on principles – even when it costs you. Whether it's declining a questionable business partnership, choosing honesty with a patient, or backing a team member who's in the right, this kind of leadership builds long-term trust.

Tip: get clear on your top three professional values. What do they look

like in action? Write them down and share them with your team. When values are visible, courageous choices become clearer.

2 SOCIAL COURAGE: SPEAKING UP WHEN IT'S EASIER TO STAY SILENT

In practice life, we often face micro-moments where we could say something – but don't. A dismissive comment in a team meeting. An inappropriate joke. A passive-aggressive message.

Social courage is the willingness to step in, challenge the tone, and protect the culture – even if it means making things temporarily uncomfortable.

Tip: when you feel the instinct to speak up, name it with care: 'This might not be the popular opinion, but...' Or: 'I want to flag something I feel isn't sitting right.' It gets easier with practice.



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.

**THE MOST COURAGEOUS
LEADERS I KNOW ARE ALSO
THE MOST HUMAN**



3 EMOTIONAL COURAGE: STAYING PRESENT IN DISCOMFORT

As leaders, we often feel we need to stay composed and in control. But the truth is, we're human – and so are our teams. Emotional courage is about staying grounded when things feel hard. It's about naming feelings (your own or others') rather than brushing them off with 'it's fine' or 'just move on'.

Tip: if a difficult moment arises – a complaint, a team disappointment – say something like: 'This is tough, and I'm feeling it too.' Vulnerability done with intention fosters trust and connection.

4 INTELLECTUAL COURAGE: BEING WILLING TO BE WRONG

In dentistry, we're often the experts. Patients look to us for certainty. But in leadership, it's dangerous to assume we always have the right answer.

Intellectual courage means questioning your own assumptions, welcoming feedback, and inviting dissent – even if it challenges your authority.

Tip: in your next team meeting, ask: 'Is there something I might be missing?' Or 'Can anyone see this differently?' When you model learning, others feel safe to share and grow.

5 CREATIVE COURAGE: TRYING SOMETHING NEW, KNOWING IT MIGHT FAIL

The dental profession isn't known for risk-taking. We're taught to be thorough, evidence-based, and cautious. But innovation – whether clinical, operational, or cultural – requires experimentation.

Creative courage is about putting forward new ideas, piloting changes, and allowing space for failure.

Tip: want to change how you do team meetings? Or try out a new patient communication system? Frame it as an experiment: 'Let's try this for 30 days.' That permission to play reduces fear and invites contribution.

6 PHYSICAL COURAGE: SHOWING UP WHEN IT MATTERS

There's a physicality to leadership in dentistry that often goes unspoken.

We push through illness, stay late, or run on empty – especially if we're also managing parenting, business, and life. But true physical courage sometimes means asking for help, protecting your energy, or being present when others need you most.

Tip: if a team member is going through something tough, be with them. Sit in the staff room. Attend the meeting in person. Don't lead from a distance – lead with presence. It builds deep loyalty and trust.

ACTS OF COURAGE

Courage isn't about grand gestures or fearlessness. It's a muscle – one that's built through small, consistent acts that align with your values.

In a profession where patients expect certainty and teams look to us for guidance, it's tempting to hide behind professionalism, performance or perfection. But the truth is: the most courageous leaders I know are also the most human.

So, ask yourself honestly: are you leading with courage – or with comfort? And what's one small act of courage you could choose today?

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‘Knock their socks off’

Barry Oulton explains how to craft exceptional dental experiences in the practice to wow patients and turn them into advocates



In modern dentistry, technical skill is essential, but it's no longer enough. The patient journey has evolved beyond procedures and outcomes; it's about connection, trust, and emotional resonance.

Patients come to us not for the sake of straight teeth or a dental implant, but for the confidence, comfort, or life-enhancing impact they believe those treatments will bring. This shift challenges us to rethink how we communicate, influence, and ultimately serve our patients.

As practitioners, our mindset and approach can transform ordinary care into an extraordinary experience.

THE COMMUNICATION GAP

Despite our best intentions, communication often breaks down. We assume our message is clear, but patients may hear something entirely different.

This disconnect stems from the fact that each individual views the world through a unique lens shaped by personality, experiences and emotions. Miscommunication isn't just frustrating, it can also erode trust and

affect patient compliance.

To bridge this gap, start by recognising that patients don't think the way you do. Tailoring your communication to their preferences – whether visual, auditory or kinaesthetic – can make a world of difference.

Asking clarifying questions, actively listening and adapting your delivery style demonstrates empathy and fosters understanding.

THE TRIAD OF EMOTIONAL STATES

Every patient interaction is influenced by three key factors: physiology, focus and language. Together, these elements create a 'recipe' for emotional states, both positive and negative:

- **Physiology:** posture and movement directly impact mood. Slumped shoulders and shallow breathing reflect stress or sadness, while upright posture and deep breaths promote confidence and calmness. Encourage your team to practise small resets between patients, such as stretches or power poses, to maintain positive energy
- **Focus:** what we choose to pay attention to shapes our emotions. For instance, focusing on a patient's frustration can lead to defensiveness, while focusing on their courage to seek care fosters empathy

Practical steps to implement change

1. **Invest in team training:** regular workshops on communication and emotional intelligence can equip your team with the tools to connect deeply with patients. Role-playing exercises can help staff practise responding to different personality types and emotional states
2. **Redefine the patient journey:** map out each touchpoint in your patient's experience, from the first phone call to post-treatment care. Identify opportunities to personalise interactions and exceed expectations
3. **Foster a positive culture:** create a practice culture where team members support one another in maintaining a positive mindset. Simple rituals, like gratitude exercises or sharing success stories, can reinforce this culture
4. **Evaluate your messaging:** review how treatment options are presented. Are you focusing on features or benefits? Shift your language to highlight emotional outcomes, such as confidence, freedom, or improved quality of life
5. **Seek feedback:** actively solicit patient feedback to understand their emotional drivers and refine your approach. This not only improves care but also demonstrates your commitment to continuous improvement.



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).

- **Language:** the words we use, both internally and externally, carry immense power. Phrases like 'I'll try' introduce doubt, while 'I will' builds confidence. Train yourself and your team to use empowering language that aligns with a positive mindset.

REFRAMING VALUE OVER PRICE

One of the biggest hurdles in patient care is the conversation around cost. Dentists often project their own beliefs about affordability onto patients, inadvertently underselling valuable treatments. This mindset stems from viewing price as a barrier rather than an opportunity to showcase value.

Patients don't make decisions based solely on logic; they act on emotion. When presenting treatment options, focus on what the outcome means to them personally. For some, it's the confidence to smile freely; for others, it's the ability to enjoy a meal without discomfort. Shift the conversation from cost to the life-changing impact of the treatment. This reframing helps patients see the value you provide and builds trust in your recommendations.

EMPATHY VERSUS INFLUENCE

Empathy is a cornerstone of patient care, but it's not enough to simply 'put yourself in their shoes'.

True influence comes from meeting patients where they are emotionally and guiding them to a better state. For instance, a nervous patient doesn't just need reassurance; they need a shift in focus. A light-hearted question about their favourite holiday or a positive memory can help them relax and approach decisions with clarity.

By consciously influencing patients' emotional states, you empower them to make choices that align with their best interests – free from fear or doubt.

THE ROLE OF MINDSET

Your mindset as a practitioner shapes not only your interactions but also the culture of your practice. A belief that patients won't invest in quality care or that fees are 'too high' can unconsciously seep into every conversation, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Conversely, adopting a mindset of abundance and focusing on delivering exceptional value can transform patient perceptions and outcomes.

Encourage your team to embrace a shared vision: to 'knock patients' socks off' with every interaction. Whether it's a warm welcome at reception or a thoughtful follow-up call, these small moments of excellence create loyal, lifelong patients.

CONCLUSION

At its core, dentistry is a people-centric profession. While clinical excellence lays the foundation, it's the emotional connection that turns patients into advocates.

By mastering the art of communication, adopting an empowering mindset, and focusing on delivering exceptional experiences, you can elevate your practice and create lasting impact in the lives of your patients.

The question is: what will you do today to knock their socks off?



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Powering up

Rana Al-Falaki reveals the secret currency of success in dentistry

You've probably heard the law of physics: 'Energy cannot be created or destroyed – only changed from one form to another.'

What most people don't realise is that every encounter you have with yourself and others is an energy exchange, and will either boost you or drain you.

In dentistry, we feel this every day. You power through back-to-back patients, admin, regulatory demands and team issues, and by the end of the day the last thing you want to do is talk to anyone. Your family might want your attention, your team might still have a question, or a patient might call with an emergency. Yet you feel drained, flat, and in need of a recharge before starting again. It's not that you don't care – it's that you've run out of energy.

THE SOLUTION

Many dentists assume the answer lies in more sleep or working fewer days and taking longer holidays. But you can sleep eight hours and still wake up exhausted. You can clear your diary, only to feel just as overwhelmed. That's because the key to performance isn't managing time – it's managing energy.

The evidence is clear. Studies show that:

- Mental fatigue can cut accuracy by half and slow reaction time as much as alcohol
- Leaders who manage energy



Rana Al-Falaki

Rana is an internationally acclaimed leader in dental wellbeing and leadership. As founder of NAIL-IT in Dentistry, she works with dentists to achieve optimal performance. A multi-award-winning periodontist, coach, author, speaker, she blends over 25 years' experience with the NAIL-IT system to transform lives. Visit www.nailitdentistry.com for more details.

effectively see profitability rise by nearly a quarter (23%)

- 72% of dental professionals report neck, shoulder, or head pain, with 58% experiencing frequent headaches.

It's no wonder so many professionals end their day depleted – and why so many underestimate how much energy impacts not just wellbeing, but accuracy, decisions, and profitability.

AN ENERGY SHIFT

When we first met Dr GN, a practice principal and titanium member of NAIL-IT in Dentistry, his practice looked healthy on paper, but he felt he had little capacity to take on any more – despite the desire for continued learning and improvement.

He found himself reactive with his staff, even if only inwardly, withdrawn at home, and dreading Mondays. In his words: 'I felt like I was running on fumes. By the end of the day, I wanted to shut the door on everyone – patients, team, even my family. I thought if I just took time off or got more sleep, it would fix itself. But it didn't.'

The shift came when he realised it wasn't about time – it was about energy.

We introduced him to 'IMERSE', which highlights six key influencers of energy. Part of the NAIL-IT leadership model, IMERSE stands for:

- Identity
- Mental
- Emotional
- Real (physical)
- Social
- Environmental.

Each of these can either lift you up or drain you. By scanning through them and making small adjustments, you can change how you feel, lead and perform.

ENERGETIC INFLUENCERS: THE IMERSE SYSTEM

I: identity

Your energy is shaped by the beliefs, values, and judgements that define you. Limiting beliefs like 'I must do it all myself' or 'I'm not good enough' are heavy drains. Empowering beliefs like 'I'm learning to delegate' or 'I bring value in multiple ways' lift energy and confidence.

- Energy drainer: self-criticism, perfectionism, rigid thinking
- Energy booster: self-compassion, growth mindset, aligning actions with values.

Dr GN's shift: he realised his belief that 'I need to be in control of everything' was holding him back. Reframing it as 'delegation empowers my team' lifted a weight off his shoulders – and theirs.

M: mental

The mind is powerful. A cluttered mind filled with overthinking, catastrophising or endless to-do lists saps energy. A focused mind creates flow and clarity.

- Energy drainer: rumination, constant worry, trying to hold everything in your head
- Energy booster: thought-dumping, reframing negative self-talk, setting priorities.

Dr GN's shift: he began a simple nightly 'thought dump' – jotting down tasks and worries before bed. This reduced mental clutter and allowed him to rest more deeply.

E: emotional

Emotions are contagious – both to others and to ourselves. Bottling frustration or letting anxiety spiral drains you. Regulating emotions and expressing them constructively

Energetic influencers: IMERSE

- Identity: beliefs and values that shape energy
- Mental: thoughts that clutter or clarify
- Emotional: feelings that drain or regulate
- Real (physical): fuel, rest body needs
- Social: people who boost or drain
- Environmental: spaces that help or hinder.

boosts decision making, productivity, relationships, and health.

- Energy drainer: suppressing emotions, reacting impulsively, spiralling into anger or worry
- Energy booster: emotional regulation strategies including using the RULER (recognising, understanding, labelling, expressing, regulating emotions) and the PRIME models, along with micro-habits such as breathwork, reframes, postural changes.

Dr GN's shift: before team huddles, he paused to reset rather than bringing in his stress. The result? Calmer and more creative conversations.

R: real (physical)

Your body is the engine of your energy. Tiredness, dehydration, poor nutrition, and lack of movement, being in pain, all drain fuel. Attending to physical needs instantly changes how you perform.

- Energy drainer: skipping meals, relying on caffeine or sugar, ignoring breaks, poor posture
- Energy booster: hydrating, fuelling properly, moving regularly, resting strategically, not ignoring pain assuming it will pass.

Dr GN's shift: instead of living on coffee, he committed to proper lunch breaks and micro-pauses during clinics. He also treated himself to a weekly massage. He noticed fewer afternoon slumps very shortly afterwards.

S: social

Who you spend time with matters. Some people leave you buzzing with ideas and confidence. Others leave you drained. Relationships are one of the biggest hidden energy factors.

- Energy drainer: spending excess time with negative, demanding, or unsupportive people
- Energy booster: surrounding yourself with supportive peers, mentors, or energising colleagues.

Dr GN's shift: he intentionally carved out more time with supportive colleagues and limited contact with those who drained him. He avoided gossip and talk of worry, and made sure he joined our group training and well as individual mentoring sessions that boosted him up. His mood and motivation noticeably improved.

E: environmental

Your surroundings play a bigger role than most realise. Noise, clutter, harsh lighting and uncomfortable temperatures all tax your system. A supportive environment fuels focus.

- Energy drainer: chaotic spaces, poor lighting, constant interruptions
- Energy booster: clear, organised, calm spaces with supportive tools and conditions.

Dr GN's shift: he reorganised his office, decluttering his workspace and turned off the background noise of the radio in the surgery. The effect was subtle but powerful: he described it as 'finally breathing easier in my own practice'.

A HAPPY ENDING

None of these shifts were dramatic. But together, they transformed how he felt and performed on a daily basis.

'For the first time in years, I had energy left at the end of the day,' Dr GN said. 'I was calmer, more patient, and I wasn't dreading Mondays. My team noticed it before I did – they said I was a different person.'

The tangible outcomes followed. He regained the energy to get back to the gym. He finally launched a course he had been wanting to teach. His relationships with both his family and his team improved as his patience returned. And the practice itself benefitted – a more energised leader created a more motivated team, and profits rose with them.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE

Energy is the true currency of performance. You can't create more time, but you can change how you show up in it. Next time you feel drained, run through IMERSE. Ask yourself:

- Which belief can I reframe?
- What thought can I clear?
- How can I regulate this emotion?
- What does my body need?
- Who around me is fuelling or draining me?
- Is my environment helping or hindering?

Small shifts in each area compound into powerful results.

Energy is the universal currency, used in every exchange in dentistry. Optimise that – and you don't just survive your day... you elevate your performance, your wellbeing and your practice.

Defining success

What does success look like to you, ask **Mervyn Druian** and **Bernita Shelley**

Success is a subjective concept and can mean different things to different people. However, it generally refers to achieving a desired goal or outcome. It can be measured by accomplishments, personal growth or fulfilment in various areas – such as career, relationships, health or personal development.

As success is unique to everyone, it is important to define what it means to you. To gain a clear understanding, take some time to reflect on your values, passions, and long-term goals.

Once you have a clear definition, you can get specific and measurable goals, which can be broken down into smaller, actionable steps that you can take to move closer to your desired outcome.

It is vital to regularly evaluate your progress and make adjustments along the way. Celebrate your achievements, learn from any setbacks and keep pushing yourself to grow and improve.

Remember that success is a journey, and it may evolve over time. Stay true to yourself, stay focused on your goals and believe in your ability to achieve what you define as success.

BARE NECESSITIES

Let's explore what we believe to be the necessities for achieving success:

- The price of perfection is prohibitive. The idea is great, but often the stress and heartache may not be worth it. It may hinder progress or create unnecessary pressure. It is important to find a balance between striving for

excellence and understanding that perfection is not always necessary. Focus on personal and professional growth instead. Learn from your mistakes and embrace the process

- Be pragmatic and realistic in your approach to problem-solving and decision-making. Take practical steps that are likely to achieve your desired outcomes. By considering the implications and consequences of different options, pragmatism helps us make informed choices and find effective solutions. It encourages flexibility, adaptability, and a willingness to adjust your strategies based on real-world feedback
- Have fun! When you enjoy what you do, it brings a positive energy and enthusiasm to your work. It can increase your motivation, creativity and productivity. When you're having fun, you are more likely to be engaged and committed to your tasks, which can lead to higher levels of success
- Loss is just a four-letter word. Profitability is often the key indicator of success. It is important to strive for financial success and make sound decisions that lead to profitability. But remember that success isn't solely defined by monetary gain. It can encompass various aspects, such as personal growth, fulfilment and positive impact. Remember, be inspired and be an inspiration. As for the four-letter word of loss, ensure that you take calculated risks for growth, but know that these can come with potential setbacks
- Make it win-win. If one person loses then it isn't a great result. When it comes to success, aiming for a win-win situation is a fantastic approach. It means finding solutions and strategies that benefit all parties involved. Instead of a zero-sum game where someone has to lose for someone else to win, a win-win mindset that focuses on creating mutual success and fostering

positive relationships is a much better approach. By seeking win-win outcomes, you can build strong partnerships, promote collaboration and ultimately achieve greater success together

- Prioritise honesty and integrity to build trust with your patients, partners, contractors, colleagues, peers and team. This trust forms the foundation of strong and long-lasting relationships, which are essential for sustained success. Being transparent, ethical, and true to your values not only helps you attract and retain loyal patients, but also earns you a positive reputation within the profession. Ultimately, honesty and integrity contribute to your overall success by fostering credibility, reliability and a positive work environment
- Contribute to the greater good. When you focus not only on your own achievements, but also on making a positive impact on others and the world around you, it can bring a deeper sense of purpose and satisfaction. By considering the greater good, you can create a legacy of success that goes beyond personal and professional achievements.

CELEBRATE

Celebrating success is an important part of the journey. It is essential to take the time to acknowledge and appreciate your achievements, both big and small.

Celebrating success not only boosts your morale and motivation, but also helps you build a positive mindset and sense of accomplishment.

Look for every opportunity to celebrate – and keep the positive vibes flowing!

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.



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.



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*.

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Empathy in practice

Mark Topley explains why caring is good for business and how learning that 'all behaviour is communication' transformed his approach to leadership

I'll be honest – I used to think empathy in business was a nice-to-have. Something for HR courses and team-building days, but not really relevant to the day-to-day reality of running a practice. Then I became a father to three adopted children who'd all experienced trauma to varying degrees, and everything changed.

When you're parenting children who've been hurt, you quickly learn that traditional discipline doesn't work. Shouting at a traumatised child for acting out doesn't change their behaviour – it just confirms their belief that the world is unsafe. What does work is understanding that all behaviour is communication. That tantrum isn't defiance – it's a child saying: 'I'm scared and I don't know how to tell you.'

That revelation didn't just change my parenting. It revolutionised how I think about leadership.

THE LIGHTBULB MOMENT

Every 'difficult' team member I'd encountered suddenly made sense. The dental nurse who couldn't seem to get anything right wasn't incompetent – she was communicating something. The receptionist who became defensive about patient complaints wasn't being awkward – she was trying to tell us something important.

The question wasn't: 'How do I get them to stop being difficult?' It was: 'What are they trying to communicate, and how do I help them feel safe enough to say it directly?'

FROM PROBLEM EMPLOYEE TO STAR PERFORMER

Let me share a story that perfectly illustrates this shift. I worked with a practice where a dental nurse was on the verge of being dismissed. She couldn't follow protocols, made repeated mistakes and everyone was exasperated. The principal was ready to cut their losses.

Instead, we got curious. Rather than assuming she was careless or unsuitable, the principal started asking different questions. Instead of: 'Why can't you get this right?' we asked: 'What's making this challenging for you?' and rather than: 'Why didn't you follow the protocol?' we asked: 'What would help you remember the steps more easily?'

What emerged was fascinating. She had short-term memory issues that made it difficult to hold multiple instructions in her head at once, especially during busy periods. She was also terrified of making mistakes, which created a cycle of anxiety that made mistakes more likely – the more she worried about getting things wrong, the more likely she was to forget important steps.

The solution? A simple checklist system that broke down complex procedures into manageable steps, and regular reassurance that asking for clarification was encouraged, not a sign of failure. Within weeks, she transformed into one of their most reliable team members.

The principal didn't lower standards – they maintained authority while showing empathy. She felt heard and respected, and she knew exactly what was expected.

THE EMPATHY-AUTHORITY BALANCE

This is where most leaders get it wrong. They think empathy means being soft, letting standards slip, or avoiding difficult conversations. That's not empathy – that's avoidance.

Real empathy in leadership means combining understanding with clear expectations. It's saying: 'I can see this is challenging for you, and I want to help you succeed. Here's exactly what success looks like, and here's how we're going to get you there.'

Without authority, empathy becomes ineffective kindness. With authority but without empathy, you get compliance at best – never genuine engagement.

THE BUSINESS CASE IS BULLETPROOF

Here's where the sceptics usually push back: 'This all sounds lovely, but how can I get people to do what I want if I let them get away with stuff?'

They're missing the point entirely. Unless someone feels seen, heard, and respected, you'll never get their full engagement. You might get temporary compliance, but that's all.

The numbers don't lie. According to



Mark Topley

Mark is the founder of 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.



Gallup, teams that feel valued and understood see tangible gains:

- Up to 18% higher productivity
- 78% less absenteeism
- 51% lower turnover.

Why? Because empathy fuels engagement. When people feel heard and supported, they show up with more energy, commitment and care. In dental practices, that empathy-driven engagement translates into higher staff morale, fewer sick days, better patient experiences, and significant savings on recruitment and retention.

Think about it: how much time do you currently spend recruiting, fixing problems caused by disengaged staff, or dealing with patient complaints? What's that worth to your practice? Now imagine cutting that by half.

PRACTICAL EMPATHY IN ACTION

Getting curious isn't complicated, but it does require practice. The key is building a gap between stimulus and response. When someone's behaviour frustrates you, pause. Train yourself to ask questions before making assumptions.

Instead of: 'Why are you always late?' try: 'What's making it difficult to get here on time?'

Instead of: 'Why didn't you follow the protocol?' try: 'What would help you remember all the steps?'

Notice the difference? 'What' questions seek understanding. 'Why' questions often feel like attacks, even when that's not your intention.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Here's the beautiful thing about empathy in dental practices – it's contagious. When team members feel heard and understood, they naturally extend that same courtesy to patients. When a patient feels truly listened to rather than processed, they're more likely to accept treatment plans, refer friends, and leave positive reviews.

So, it's not soft. It's strategic.

We are emotional, relational beings, not transactional machines. We only truly engage when we feel safe, seen, and clear about what's expected of us. Create that environment, and you won't just have employees – you'll have advocates, problem-solvers, and

people who genuinely care about your practice's success.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Empathy isn't about being everyone's friend or avoiding difficult conversations. It's about understanding that behind every frustrating behaviour is a person trying to communicate something important. Get curious about what that is, combine your understanding with clear expectations, and watch your practice transform.

The most successful dental practices aren't just technically excellent – they're emotionally intelligent. They understand that caring isn't weakness; it's the foundation of sustainable business success. Because when your team feels valued, your patients feel valued too. And valued patients become loyal patients who trust you with their family's care and sing your praises to anyone who'll listen. That's not just good leadership. That's good business.

To learn practical tools for empathetic leadership that drives results, visit great-boss.com

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Jas Jandoo



Andrea Ubhi speaks to **Jas Jandoo** about her decision to step back from a hospital surgical career and take on practice ownership – sharing her sacrifices, fears, and the leadership styles that have shaped her journey

In this refreshingly open conversation, Dr Jas Jandoo – founder of Durham Dental Implant Suite – shares how walking away from a hospital career led to building a purpose-led implant practice from scratch – and the leadership lessons she learned the hard way.

You said you were never meant to lead. Can you tell us more?

I was never meant to lead... it wasn't part of my plan.

Get to know Jas

Dr Jas Jandoo is the founder of Durham Dental Implant Suite and has been placing and restoring implants since 2011. After qualifying from the University of Manchester in 2008, she completed her MSc in dental implantology in 2014, also at Manchester.

Jas has built a reputation for her advanced bone augmentation work and full arch implant solutions, using the same-day teeth and All-on-4 approach. She created Durham Dental Implant Suite to act as a dedicated hub for implant excellence in the north east.

Outside the clinic, Jas is a mother of two, an avid textile enthusiast, and a keen traveller, spending a week on full arch residency in Brazil and most recently returning from surgical training in Croatia.

I was born into dentistry and grew up knowing I wanted to do anything but follow my mother into this career! But, as with so many children of a family business, I got drafted in to help during one summer holiday when we were short-staffed. My eyes were opened, my resistance softened, and I grew to love this vocation.

I told myself I'd do dentistry for all the benefits I'd been sold – flexible working hours, an attractive salary, the ability to have a family – but I'd never want to own my own practice. I'd seen my parents do that, and it just looked like too much hard work.

When did your focus shift to oral surgery?

During dental school, I started a surgery rotation and completely fell for maxillofacial surgery. I watched an all-day oncology case and stayed in theatre well after I was timetabled to be, watching the anastomosis of a radial forearm free flap being plumbed into the recipient site. The consultant saw my complete awe, granted me a look down the microscope – and I was hooked.

Did you intend to pursue a surgical career long-term?

Absolutely. I was committed to training as a maxfax surgeon, but the training pathway was closed before I could start, and it became mandatory to do both dentistry and medicine.

So, I qualified, completed foundation training, and went straight into hospital as a maxfax SHO. It was exhilarating and terrifying all at once.

I was totally out of my depth, but those challenges gave me a perspective that still serves me today.

What made you walk away from maxfax?

After one stint of nights, I hit a crossroads. The nights were long and lonely. When I looked around the morning huddles, none of the consultants were female. The female specialist registrars were single and childfree.

I had just met my now-husband and couldn't face dragging him through me becoming a student again – earning next to nothing and juggling junior doctor life with home life. I wanted to get married, settle down, and someday start a family.

I left my SHO post with six months to go. Once I knew I couldn't have it all, I wanted none of it.

What came next for you?

I got married, moved to the north east, and threw myself into general practice. I pursued implant dentistry as the closest I could get to surgery.

To grow my implant career, I became a peripatetic implant clinician, working across seven different clinics in the north east and Greater Manchester.



DURHAM DENTAL IMPLANT SUITE



I took courses, shadowed specialists – all while trying to master home life as a wife and mother of two young children.

Was that sustainable?

Something had to give. I worried I'd turn up to the wrong clinic or forget to order implants. But I was wrong – we can scale our mental capacity, multitask, adapt. I streamlined everything. Each clinic had systems to track cases and lab work. I thought I'd drop the ball clinically – but I missed the ball at home.

My daughter became increasingly anxious when I left. My husband struggled. I was catching up on admin in my spare time. The family I left a career dream for was being neglected in the pursuit of another.

How did you and your husband navigate this turning point?

We sat down and talked seriously. He had supported everything – the courses, the travel, the time away. But his resolve was wearing thin.

He suggested I open my own practice.

'Why work for everyone else for an associate percentage?' he said. 'Why not have the whole cake?'

I explained that owning a practice wasn't a piece of cake – it could take years before we saw any upside. I painted the bleakest picture. But it still didn't solve the real problem: my work-life balance.

So, what changed your mind?

I wasn't willing to give up implants. I didn't want to travel anymore. That's when the 'why' for owning my own practice was born – not for money or status, but to put down roots. To stay in one place.

What were the first steps you took to set up your own practice?

I couldn't risk buying an existing practice – the cost was astronomical, and I didn't want to inherit a team resistant to change. So, I started looking for a squat.

After a false start with a listed building, I found a tired-looking industrial unit on the edge of town. It had parking, two

floors, and a manageable price. We put all our savings into purchasing it to secure a loan. We began the refurb in April 2022 and opened 12 weeks later.

What was it like starting out?

Durham Dental Implant Suite started life as a three-woman band: me and two trusted dental nurses I'd worked with before. They came with me on the strength of a vision. I was terrified I'd let them down.

We did everything – clinical work, leaflet dropping, toilet cleaning, Tiktok dances.

We celebrated our first implant with Champagne at work. I involved my team in every decision. We were learning on the job – together.

When did you begin to see yourself as a leader?

True leadership came later. I spoke to my team as friends, was transparent about break-even costs, and tried to be collaborative. But I didn't realise we weren't all in the same boat.



ONCE I KNEW I COULDN'T HAVE IT ALL, I WANTED NONE OF IT



I couldn't understand why they didn't see the sacrifices I was making. I was overstretched. Morale was low.

What helped you break through that phase?

I recognised I was spread too thin. I needed help. I started bringing in associates. Some were great, but others weren't the right fit. I was too quick to hire. Now I'm slow to hire and quick to fire.

I now hire based on shared values, not just experience. I've found the 'startings' of a wonderful team. I've never been a KPI-driven clinician. I want my associates to feel job satisfaction and for patient care to drive everything.

Have you had to evolve your leadership style?

Absolutely. As dynamics changed, tensions surfaced. I got caught in the crossfire. I couldn't be 'one of the team' anymore. That leadership style no longer served me.

I brought in a business consultant for six months to mediate, refocus, and align the team. It was turbulent. Some people left, but those who stayed came out stronger.

Where is your leadership now?

My leadership style has come full circle from 'we're all in this together' to 'do as I say' and now back again. We're still in it together, but everyone has accountability. We meet regularly, have shared goals, and bonus schemes based on success.

Now I'm all types of leader – friend, boss, mediator, strategist. I lead with conviction in the vision I've had from day one. I lead by example, not hierarchy – and in the belief that we're building something better, together.

REAL, GROUNDED AND UNCOMPROMISING

Jas's story is a powerful reminder that leadership doesn't always start with a title – sometimes it begins with a decision to stop running, plant roots, and build something better.

Throughout her reflections on stepping back from a surgical path, navigating motherhood, burnout, and the steep learning curve of ownership, Jas is real, grounded, and uncompromising in her honesty. She names the sacrifices, the fears, and the moments many of us would rather gloss over – and in doing so, shows us what leading with integrity really looks like.

I'm honoured to share her story as part of this space for raw, reflective insights from the people shaping our profession from the inside out.

As we continue to platform voices from the edge, let's keep telling the truth about what it really takes to lead: conviction, clarity, and the courage to build the kind of practice you'd want to belong to.



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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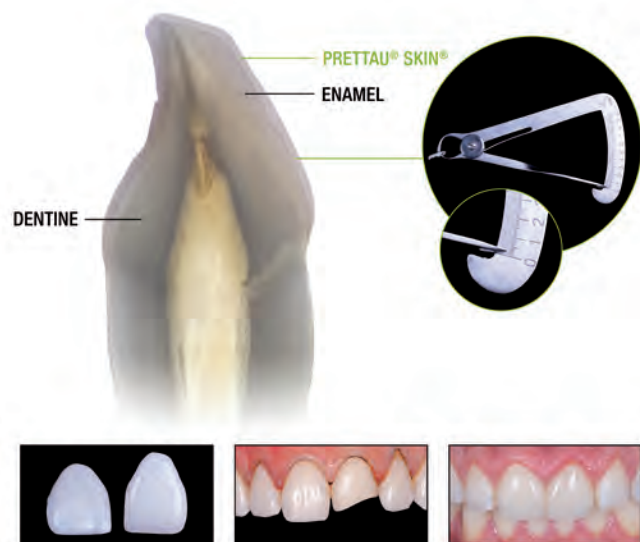
The course will be held on 30-31 October 2025 by a qualified dentist and allows a maximum of six participants.

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Become *better,* not *bitter*

When others upend your happiness and success, ‘leave it to the universe to dish out karma’ advises **Devinia Lavan-Iswaran**. Here, she explains how taking ownership of her destiny and paying it forward stops her from looking back

Words: Julie Bissett

Life is full of challenges, but it is how we rise above them that defines us. However, you get the distinct feeling that Devinia Lavan-Iswaran – known as ‘Coco’ – is keen to kick back on that premise. There is little indication of the abominable domestic abuse and horrific marriage breakdown she endured, except for the oftentimes fleeting inclusion of it in her lectures and on episodes of the Dental Leaders podcast and, more recently, on The Dental Woman’s podcast, where, as a guest, she spoke extensively on the ordeal.

At the time of the abuse and subsequent arrest of her husband and father of her kids, Devinia was shocked to find herself in such a scenario. Her life made miserable by her ex-husband, she found strength knowing she had an overnight bag she’d secretly stored at her practice for the moment she might have to flee.

‘Domestic abuse was always portrayed on TV as happening in deprived communities,’ she says. ‘I couldn’t see past how I could simply leave. What about our toothbrushes – and the kids’ school uniforms? It was only when social services advised me to pack a case and store it at work that I knew I could do it.’

And, it was, she recalls, only thanks to her ‘village’ – family and friends who stuck by her – that she had managed to survive this rollercoaster ride of a relationship thus far.

She views the experience somewhat pragmatically, and emphatically refuses to allow past traumas to define her.

‘We should never be defined by the history of failures, hardships, generational traumas and so on,’ she says. ‘The shame is not ours to bear. You alone are in charge of your happiness and destiny. It does not have to be dictated by someone or something negative.’

‘You can restart your life at any point, even in your 70s and 80s. Yes, you can hit rock bottom – God forbid, not more than once, but it happens. You can be sitting on a merry-go-round with a controller, an abuser, a drug user, an alcoholic, someone who has extramarital affairs, or a combination of those. You could even be that very person. Let go, walk away, reset boundaries and forge a new path on your terms.’

DEEPER THAN ROCK BOTTOM

Deciding to quit a marriage broken by abusive behaviour was tough, she admits. But the journey and healing were surprisingly more challenging.

‘You may relapse and be convinced to return, and

Photo credit: Lemon Santos



Devinia Lavan-Iswaran

Devinia graduated from Bart's and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry in 1995. She has a special interest in cosmetic dentistry and non-surgical facial aesthetics. Practising privately in Holborn and Canary Wharf, she holds diplomas in clear aligner therapy (2019) and aligner mastery (2023), is passionate about continuous learning and mentorship. She is a clinical adviser and mentor for the Invisalign Go course and an educator on the Clear Aligner Therapy diploma and also works as a life coach.

you will be called all sorts of names because you dared not take it anymore. I'm not going to sugar-coat it. The truth does not always get seen, believed or heard. You will be so broken at this point that you will speak your truth, but guess what? Your opponent has swagger and confidence. As a narcissist, they will call in the 'flying monkeys'.

'I was browbeaten, sitting in a place I called deeper than rock bottom, trying to keep my head above water that I had to fight for so much, including the truth. But, in those moments, it's about who tells the more believable story. I came in from a position of frailty. So much more was lost. How do you get on with life? You might fall in love with someone's potential, but they may ultimately disappoint you. Stay strong and do not welcome the undesirable. Not everyone is meant to stay. Some will offer you a gift or a lesson before moving on.'

Forging a route out of her despair was all about finding the 'right therapists to help me heal'.

She advises: 'Find the right coaches to redirect your path and make you accountable for living a better life. Use the experience as leverage to help others. Leave it to the universe to dish out karma. Become better, not bitter. Never let the hard falls harden your heart and steal your soul away.'

REDISCOVERY

The experience has evidently shaped her. Recently embarking on a course to become a divorce and separation coach suggests an innate need to give back, as she draws on the personal trauma that readily lends itself to what's required for the role.

Despite this horrific chapter, there remains a visceral joy in life and her chosen profession. A cosmetic dentist, Devinia practises at Malmin Dental in London, is a mentor, clinical adviser, educator, and lectures widely on Invisalign. She trained as a Zumba instructor during lockdown and is a passionate gym goer. Her Instagram bio reads: 'Queen & Boss Lady, Motivational Speaker and Zumba Instructor.'

This multifaceted profile hints at a positive, can-do approach, and her account showcases a joie de vivre. Her strengths are her ability to embrace all aspects of her life, reclaiming and realising her dreams, and investing in herself. Devinia has spoken widely about rediscovering the confident, fearless girl she once was. But was there a key turning point that made her realise she needed to reconnect with that part of herself?

'At the Reignite (now Brilliant Beyond Belief) life coaching retreat, Dr Mahmood Mawjee encouraged me to shut my eyes and remember the fearless nine-year-old child with hopes and dreams. It was a compelling exercise as I saw her vision before me. I cried for weeks after seeing her. I made a promise to myself (and her), and whenever I think or speak of that, it makes me emotional as it takes me back to that moment, which was pivotal in helping me break through to live my potential.'

BOSSING IT

Maintaining resilience and moving forward can be challenging, especially on difficult days when you don't feel your best. The environment in which dentistry operates can be particularly unhelpful.

Devinia explains: 'The rug can get pulled from under you any time, many times. Dentists can lead very isolated lives. Our struggles can be overwhelming. It's OK to fail and fall, but how you pick yourself up counts. Have people around you who you can talk to and those who will lift you and propel you forward. It's OK to cry. I know I must release, relieve the stress, and be self-soothed.

'I power pose and call upon my inner superhero. She is called Phoenix Rising. She is fearless and indefatigable and will rise to the challenge. I also have a mantra I repeat to myself. In these moments, I say: "Dress up. Show up. Invisible crown on my head, slick of lipstick, stilettos on my feet. Own it. Boss it".'

But she acknowledges that she has not achieved this alone and is vocal in her gratitude to the aforementioned 'village' and others who support her.

'While I'm a big believer in seeking therapy to get through challenging times, I also have a core inner circle to whom I am answerable. My life coaches and personal trainer are in this group. They don't go easy on me and are there to push me on and not let my past or struggles drag me down. They strive for me to live my best life and spur me on to realise my dreams.

'My advice to others would be to build your village, but also have that core of a handful who are there to push you. This will not necessarily be your mum, dad or husband. They could be mega successful, hustling, change makers, entrepreneurs and extreme coaches. Hang out with them, invest in them. They are the ones to help you make those dreams a reality. They make the difference between unrealised and realised potential.'

HONING IN ON HAPPINESS

When it comes to her professional pursuits, she's crafted her treatment offerings around what brings her joy rather than focusing on procedures that don't resonate.

She has a special interest in cosmetic dentistry, including composite bonding, Invisalign, veneers, tooth whitening, and non-surgical facial aesthetics. She practises privately in Holborn and Canary Wharf and holds a diploma in clear aligner therapy.

'Dentistry is one of those careers where you can decide which strings to add to your bow,' she says. 'I knew I did not want to be a jack-of-all-trades. I wanted to hone in on certain procedures and fine-tune them so I could best serve my patients with those, and I have a world of support within the practice group to refer to, specialists to give my patients the best of the rest.

In this way, I practise what brings me joy. I follow my Ikigai. Work doesn't feel like work when you enjoy what you do and patients sense that.'

She describes happiness as infectious and believes patients are drawn to professionals who genuinely love their work.

'The best of life's experiences score highly on our five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. So, when a patient comes into our practices, what score would they give to what they see (décor, cleanliness, uniforms etc), what they hear (spoken voice, music etc), the smell (of the waiting room, your surgery, of your staff and you),

Tips for a better way of living

- Build and continually remodel your village and inner circle
- Be kind. You don't know what lies behind those veneers. The pun is intentional. You may see a gilded life, but behind the closed doors of their castle walls may lie the contents of Pandora's box
- 80% is still an A. Let's not beat ourselves up about not being or doing 100%. Live the 80:20 life. You don't have to be fully committed to your diet, health plan, gym routine etc; it's not sustainable. Indulge in going rogue on that 20%
- You can (almost) have it all. The path will not be easy, so be prepared for it to be somewhat unconventional
- Pay it forward. You will encounter someone who cannot afford your services but needs a boost in life. Offer your help at no cost and encourage them to do a good deed for someone they meet when they are in a better position to assist. Use your brightly shining candle to light the flame of another, and the whole world will surely glow with goodness.



the taste (prophy paste, mouthwash), and touch (hugs, handshakes, the feel of the paper you give them)?

To this, we also buy into happiness. How you feel is in your aura. Happiness sells. Patients say it's palpable. Imagine seeing a dentist to get your filling done and coming away feeling like you not only got your filling done but also are on a higher energy level than the one you walked in with. It's not easy keeping up that level of energy. I am all for pushing the idea that our clinical lives are not just about seeing our patients, CPD, CQC, DLP, and the GDC. Mental health training must lie at the core of what we do.'

STRENGTH TRAINING

Outside of surgery and family life, her gym is another indispensable source of strength.

'Exercise and dancing release endorphins. I plug into music on my way to work and "dance" like nobody is watching. I dance in the surgery and get the staff to join in. It binds the team. Building and maintaining muscle mass and increasing bone density are essential to protect me from falls and fractures.

We need to invest in our health just as we invest financially for our futures. Whatever investment we make now will come back with interest in our future.

I used to do a lot of cardio as a trained Zumba and Strong Nation instructor. I now focus on strength and conditioning training. I'm at an age where weight sticks. Doing a workout takes a lot of motivation before or after a hard day's work. I am determined to put out a message of encouragement on social media to other clinicians, over-50-year-olds, women, and mums: we must work out.

Whether at home or the gym, time is never an excuse. I make time – it's non-negotiable. We need to find ways to hack our happiness, and by doing so, we take care of our mental wellbeing. We cannot effectively fulfil our role as clinicians without a sound mind.'

WHERE THE HEART IS

When we catch up on a video call, she is 'back home' in Singapore, where she was brought up, aside from time spent in England at boarding school. She's there to celebrate the launch of a documentary and exhibition project managed by her mum, Indra Lavan Iswaran. A 'creative genius, celebrated chef and award-winning author', mum has insisted that Devinia be present – far more important for her four children to attend this event than to celebrate her 75th birthday a few weeks before.

Her father is Dr S Lavan Iswaran, a well-respected, much-loved obstetrician and gynaecologist, whose 90th birthday was a milestone also cherished by the whole family who descended on Singapore in January.

It's 8am BST and 3pm in Singapore. Devinia kindly takes time out of her trip to chat, which we do at length because she has so much to share with an irrepressible zest for life. But suddenly her mother is waiting, as the family is heading out. Even from this distance, it is easy to see how happy she is to be among some key players from her 'village'. Happily, home is now definitely where her heart is.

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month – an international campaign to raise awareness. For domestic abuse training, research and resources, visit safelives.org.uk.

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 Bender II® 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 Bender II® 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, which can affect the consistency of



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

orthodontic treatment. The Bender II® 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 Bender II® significantly reduces the time required for wire bending. What used to take minutes or even hours can now be accomplished in a fraction of the time. 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 Bender II® 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 Bender II® 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 Bender II® 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 Bender II® is set to have a profound impact. 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.

The YOAT Bender II® is on offer for £14,500, which includes the enhanced software for Minor Tooth Movement, worth £1,000. One-year machine warranty and free software updates.

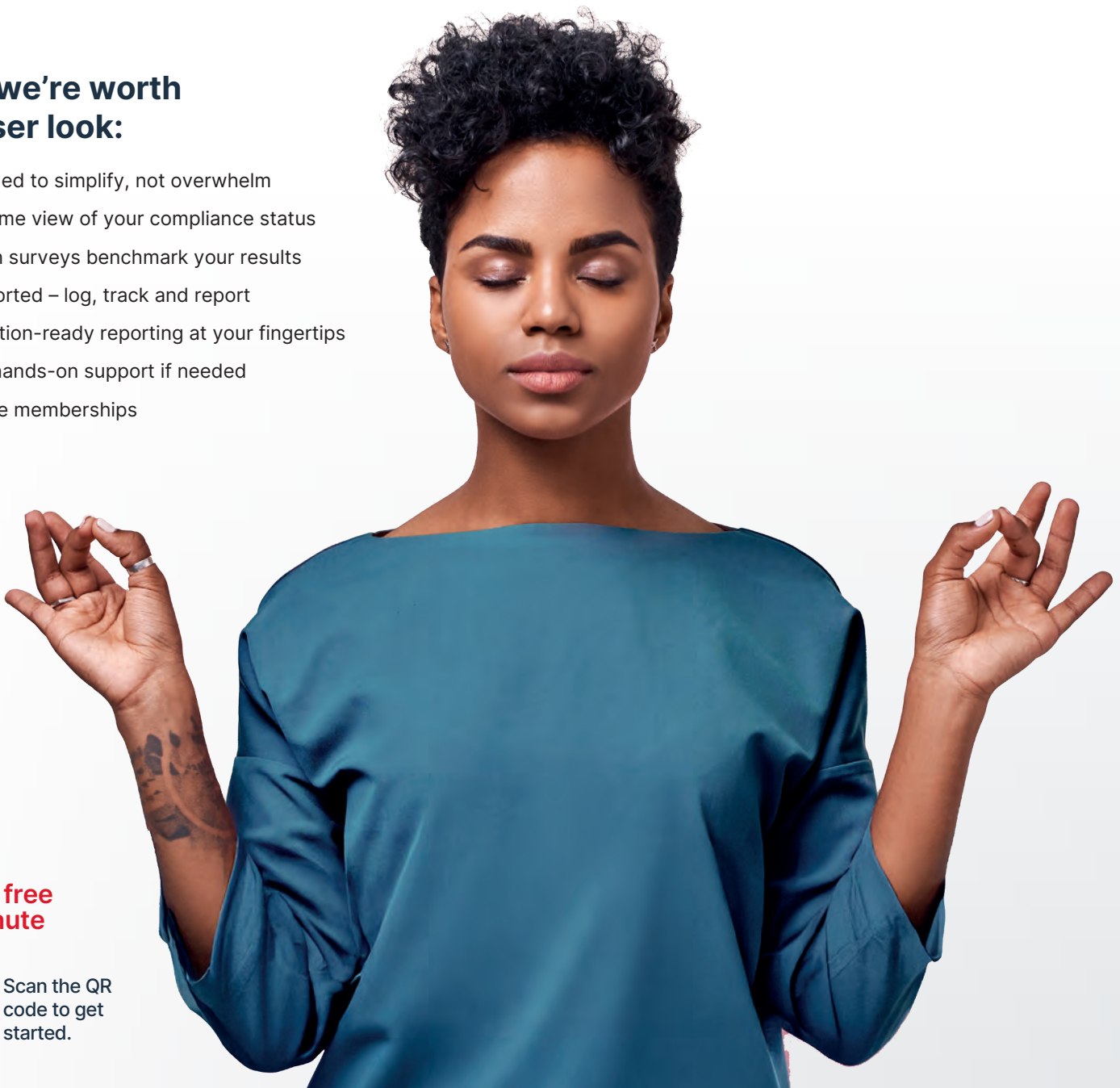
The Bender II® is a capital equipment purchase and may be offset against your annual tax bill in the first year, depending on personal circumstances.

Available from Trycare. For more information, call John Lancaster on 07977 279 462 or email orthodontics@trycare.co.uk

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Advancing implant dentistry

Discover more about the MSc in Dental Implant Reconstructive Surgery at
Brighton and Sussex Medical School

The field of implant dentistry continues to evolve rapidly, with patients increasingly expecting clinicians to provide predictable, aesthetic and functional outcomes. For general dental practitioners and specialists alike, keeping pace with these advances requires structured, hands-on training delivered in a supportive and academically rigorous environment.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Dental Implant Reconstructive Surgery at Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) is one such opportunity – a pioneering programme that combines world-class teaching with real clinical immersion.

A NOVEL, FLEXIBLE APPROACH

Unlike traditional academic courses that prioritise theory over practice, the BSMS Diploma has been designed around the realities of modern clinical dentistry. Delivered over two years with three modules a year (15 days spread over a year) the programme blends convenience with intensity, allowing busy clinicians to upskill without stepping away from practice.

Delegates benefit from exposure to live surgery components, cadaveric training, and state-of-the-art simulation facilities at the Dental Simulation Centre in Queen Victoria Hospital along with Weybridge and Crawley. Clinical teaching also takes place in surgeries around Kent, Surrey and Sussex, ensuring that learning is always anchored in real-world scenarios.

What sets the course apart is its commitment to individualised surgical training. Delegates progress through competency-based assessments using tools such as Directly Observed Procedural Skills (DOPS) and Work-Based



Assessments (WBAs). This means that those who demonstrate proficiency can progress to more advanced techniques, accelerating both skill development and clinical confidence.

WORLD-CLASS FACULTY AND SUPPORT

The faculty is a standout feature of the programme. Teaching is delivered by some of the most experienced and respected implant surgeons and restorative specialists in the UK, including current and past presidents of the Association of Dental Implantology (ADI) and internationally recognised key opinion leaders.

This breadth of expertise is complemented by strong industry partnerships. Delegates gain first-hand exposure to the latest systems, materials, and workflows from leading implant companies, ensuring their knowledge remains at the cutting edge of clinical practice.

COMPREHENSIVE CONTENT

Across the programme, delegates are guided through every stage of implant dentistry, from patient assessment and treatment planning to surgical execution and long-term restorative success. Modules include:

- Principles of surgery and implant placement
- Occlusion and restorative perspectives

- Bone preservation, grafting, and soft tissue techniques
- Management of partially dentate and edentulous patients
- Emerging digital and surgical techniques
- Practice management and setting up a successful implant service.

Assignments focus on clinical case presentations and reflective essays, designed to encourage critical thinking and practical application.

DESIGNED FOR FLEXIBILITY AND GROWTH

The programme is unique in offering modular flexibility. Clinicians can enrol in credit-bearing modules independently, allowing them to 'trial' elements of the programme before committing to the full course. This modular approach ensures the course can adapt to the individual learning needs of each delegate, whether they are seeking to refine a specific skill or build towards comprehensive expertise in implant dentistry.

WHY CHOOSE BSMS?

For clinicians looking to expand their scope of practice, elevate patient care, and align their skills with the highest standards in implant dentistry, the Diploma in Dental Implant Reconstructive Surgery at BSMS offers the ideal balance of academic rigour, hands-on training, and mentoring support.

Applications are now open for the next cohort. With limited places available, clinicians are encouraged to apply early to secure their place to train alongside some of the UK's leading implant dentists.

Visit www.bsms.ac.uk/dental to apply.

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On the other hand, Denture Gingiva Basic Mono Pink is a gingiva-coloured resin with improved material properties in terms of flexural strength and fracture resistance, specifically conceived for the production of denture bases. The resin blanks are also available in Ø 125mm for the manufacture of up to two denture bases in just one milling process.

The gingival area of the restorations can be then characterised individually with Gingiva-Composites. Their colour spectrum is based on the company's ICE Ceramics Tissue shades from light to dark: through the temporary, dentists and patients can get an immediate aesthetic impression of the final restoration.

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IN THE HOT SEAT

Anushika Brogan, founder and CEO Damira Dental Studios, shares her love of shopping, music and staying active

Q When and where was your last meal out?

A On holiday in Crete – Beach Club Scorpio.

My last meal out in the UK was at one of my favourites, Ivy Asia.

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

A British born Bollywood actress Katrina Kaif.

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

A My father-in-law gave the best advice: 'If you know you are right and someone is arguing with you, why do you need to argue your point? You know you are right, you don't need to prove yourself to anyone else.'

This has given me so much peace in my life.

Q What was the last gift you gave/received?

A I bought my son's girlfriend a cute holiday ring she liked.

Q How do you unwind?

A I run to unwind. I find it such a good stress relief!

IF YOU KNOW YOU ARE RIGHT AND SOMEONE IS ARGUING WITH YOU, WHY DO YOU NEED TO ARGUE YOUR POINT? YOU DON'T NEED TO PROVE YOURSELF TO ANYONE ELSE

Q Describe your perfect holiday...

A I get bored easily, so my ideal holiday would have some activity associated with it. I like skiing, mountain biking, running or hiking – but always followed by great food and wine, of course.

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

A I love crime drama books; my favourite authors are Coleen Hoover, Frieda McFadden and Kerry Fisher. When it comes to films, my favourite is *Notting Hill*.

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

A I would say 80s, 90s pop music, or Bhangra, but anything will get me up. You can always find me on the dance floor if there is music playing.

Q What keeps you up at night?

A If I feel like I have upset people, it bothers me until it's fixed.

Q What's your guilty pleasure?

A Shopping – be it for clothes, shoes, bags, practices... I love it all!

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

A I would pay off the mortgages of my close network of people around me.

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

A It was this one of my daughter Mia in Crete loving her milkshake!





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