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# New Name, Same Passion

By Jake Puhl

**Welcome to the first official edition of *Dental Group Practice Magazine!*** We rebranded *Efficiency in Group Practice Magazine* in our ongoing commitment to deliver important news, stories and education to your mailbox and inbox. While we're changing our name, we're not changing our passion. We feel this rebrand better encompasses the stories we are telling, and we're excited to roll out even more exciting changes in the months to come.



In this issue we tackle the challenge that many dentist entrepreneurs face – transitioning from the chair to CEO. In our cover story, Dr. Sulman Ahmed shares how he built a thriving dental group practice from the ground up, and how he grew as a leader in the process. Other stories in this issue include:

- > Dr. Samson Liu, who went from 0 to 27 practice locations in one year, provides some best practices for building a dental organization.
- > Dr. Joshua Renken examines the challenges – and opportunities – that come from running multiple dental offices at one time.
- > In their column “From Chair Time to CEO,” Drs. Ben Oppenheimer and Trey Tippit have a lot to say on the transition from clinician to executive.
- > We also cover topics like venture capital, revenue cycle management, increasing case acceptance, and share some highlights from our recent Summer Summit.

And, we debut a new DEO department. In the “Ultimate ‘Break Free From The Dental Chair’ Toolkit, The DEO has curated resources to help dentist entrepreneurs/leaders of emerging dental groups take the next step toward achieving their visions – to go from clinician to entrepreneur. To scale your dental group, you can’t be in the chair every day – you have to get out of your own way. The resources here can help you tackle the roadblocks preventing you from making the full transition to entrepreneur/leader.

If you haven’t signed up to receive the latest news and trends in group dentistry, head over to [dentalgrouppractice.com](https://dentalgrouppractice.com) and subscribe now!

Thanks for reading this issue of *Dental Group Practice!*

**Jake Puhl**

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# Keep Pushing Forward



By Emmet Scott,  
ADSO President

**With the summer almost over** and the country imagining a future beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, I'm excited about what the ADSO has accomplished in the past few months. The ADSO worked tirelessly to highlight the safe conditions within dental environments, as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration considered an Emergency Temporary Standard. We were ahead of this regulation to avoid more impediments so that dental professionals could continue to provide essential oral health care to patients. To advocate for increased access to care, our Government Affairs team has also been actively engaging with state representatives on timely topics, such as the teledentistry bill being considered in Texas, and connecting them with our members' dental clinics to discuss the future of dentistry. For example, portability – the ability to provide and access care – is an integral aspect of dentistry as we continue to expand our industry. The COVID-19 pandemic has been pivotal in pushing for increased access to health care, including dental, through permanently or temporarily allowing telehealth to occur. However, dental professionals across the country still face the issue of licensure portability.

According to the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute report, over 10,000 dentists have moved to other states for various

reasons. However, it's common for dentists to face hurdles while attaining a new dental practicing license. While this may not seem to immediately impact a person's access to dental care, many dental professionals and clinics, including the offices of our own members, provide free services to community members in need. DSOs are a large network of dental clinics, many spanning dozens of cities, and dentists with the license to practice in multiple states are able to provide their services to more communities. Licensure portability can support dentists across the country in providing more services and greater access to care.

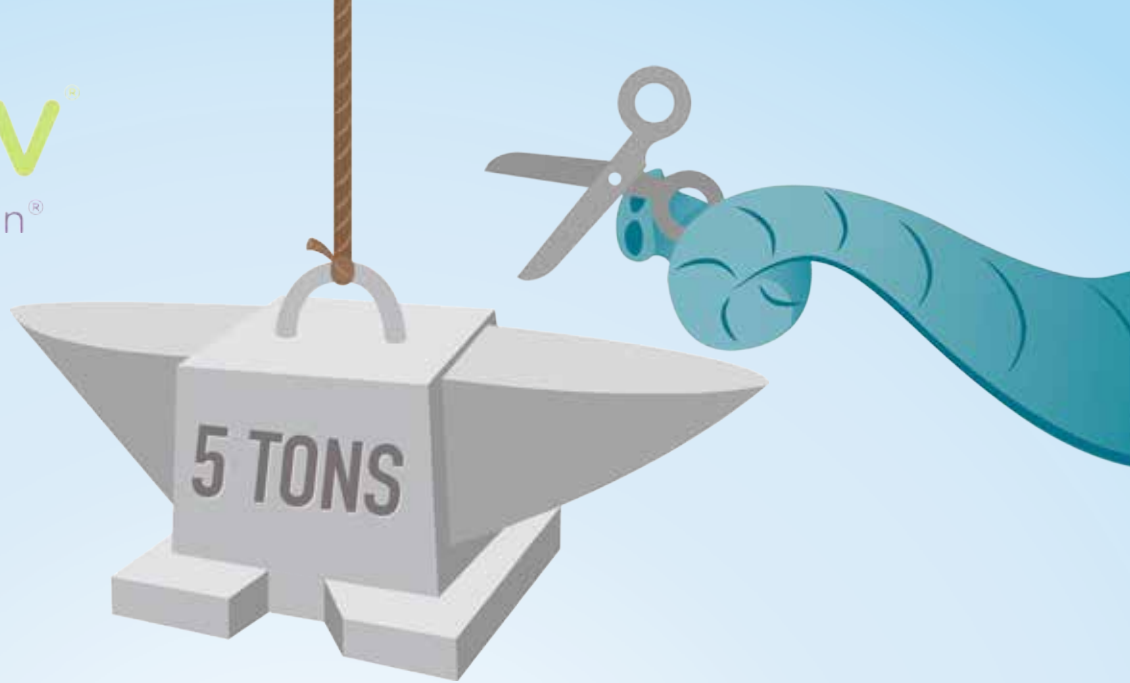


However, a pressing factor is how licensure portability impacts teledentistry. Currently, dentists can only practice in states they hold licenses for. By expanding licensure portability, dentists can provide in-person and virtual care across state lines,

increasing access to dental care for patients. While teledentistry and licensure portability are limited or difficult to manage in many states, the ADSO is working diligently to address these issues. During the critical periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have connected with key stakeholders, federal officials, and state legislators to expand the scope of dentistry and teledentistry across the country. Now, we are working in multiple states to bring state policymakers and representatives to our member clinics to highlight the important work dental professionals are doing to keep people healthy. The community-level engagements play a critical role in pushing dentistry forward, as health care continues to evolve to support business growth while providing patients with improved and valuable care.

Dental licensure and insurance portability are just some of the issues we will be discussing at ADSO's upcoming event, *Leading the Evolution of Dentistry*, later this fall. This exclusive event will take place after the ADA's SmileCon 2021 in Las Vegas to discuss the future of group dentistry and to advocate for the industry overall. The event is open to ADSO member senior executives, and I hope your organization is represented as we discuss the critical issues facing dentistry. Until next time, keep pushing the industry forward. ■

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# From Chair Time to CEO

Overcoming the hurdles of moving out of the chair.

By Drs. Ben Oppenheimer and Trey Tippit

**When your practice was small,** it was no problem to balance your clinical hours with your time spent running the business. But now that your practice has grown, that isn't so easy. You feel the pull to take that next step and move more fully into your role as entrepreneur and CEO.





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Moving out of the chair isn't easy and the transition can seem daunting. You know that plenty of others have made it just fine ... so what's the secret?

In the following article, we'll provide several insights on how to make it happen.

### **Replacing revenue streams**

At the top of the list of things to think about when moving out of the chair is what the impact will be to your business when you are no longer generating revenue. It's great to be producing a lot of your practice's revenue, but this change isn't a simple change-of-pace or a way to break up the monotony. You can't just leave the chair, pick up another activity and expect a one-to-one ratio on cash flow. And the wider the gap between you and your associates, the harder it can be to make that transition.

**Ben:** I'm a third-generation dentist and I've always had a little bit of an entrepreneurial nature to me as well. I knew I was going to do something. Initially, it was implants. It was implants in school, dental implants right out of school. My life was about dental implants, which in this case makes it really difficult to get out of the chair. When I started the transition, I was personally contributing over \$3 million in direct patient care revenue. And that's been a big struggle for me to push it back.

**Trey:** Like Ben, I'm a second-generation dentist and my mom was a dental hygienist. So I've been around it all my life. I've watched

it as I've grown and as a practice has grown.

I always knew I was going to leverage myself and I knew that if I was the biggest producer of everything, it was going to make any potential transition much more difficult. So I stayed within reason. Anytime I felt like I was producing too much, I delegated out to my associates.

### **Your brand**

When making the change, another thing to consider is your practice's brand.

The more your brand is built on an individual practitioner, the harder it can be on the practice if that individual stops offering the services that are drawing patients in.

## **One of the keys to moving out of the chair is to make sure that a visit to your practice is not about seeing you, it's about the confidence of knowing that no matter who the patient sees, they get the same high standard of care.**

**Ben:** I thought about this before starting my practice. Since my end goal was to expand my practice to include multiple associates and locations, I didn't want to pigeon-hole myself in some way. I didn't want to limit my business's growth to my productivity capacity.

**Trey:** My name being on the building was a big sticky spot for me. And it's still there. Because over time, at a certain point, a name can just

become a brand. It isn't always the end of the world.

My dad told me once that, "Everyone is replaceable in this practice." The big A-Ha! moment was realizing that that meant that I was replaceable too. My next thought was "Whoa, hold on, how important am I?" And I spent about six months floundering around wondering, "What's my purpose? Where do I fit in?"

One of the keys to moving out of the chair is to make sure that a visit to your practice is not about seeing you, it's about the confidence of knowing that no matter who the patient sees, they get the same high standard of care.

**Trey:** Patients were willing to see other people because we had trained

them and they were in our system. And so patients felt comfortable as long as they were in these walls. And knowing that, I stepped out.

**Ben:** What will move me out of the chair fully is finding someone else to just do the practice. It's not so much about making sure I break even on income; it more has to do with delivering the type of care and the quality and the efficiency – both for my team and patients.

## Staying “legit”

Being a dental practitioner is who you are. It’s how you define yourself and how others see you. Between school, CEs, and years of working day-in and day-out as a practicing clinician, you’ve put a lot of time and energy into becoming who you are.

Not only that, but getting to this point in your career means you are good at what you do and you have the years of evidence to back it up. And that can make it very hard to want to fully let go and move out of the chair.

**I’ve been out of the chair for around four years at this point in time. I go in and I still answer questions, I stay up on trends.**

That – often subconscious – fear of losing or changing your self-identity keeps a lot of people from moving forward. That personal struggle is compounded by the external concerns of retaining “legitimacy” in the eyes of your associates and losing touch with a constantly evolving industry.

**Trey:** If you step completely out, you’re never in front of your clinicians, that is going to be a big change and probably won’t go well.

I’ve been out of the chair for around four years at this point in time. I go in and I still answer questions, I stay up on trends. We retain

our associates for longer periods of time, so they end up teaching, which is a positive.

I recently made a comment to an associate that, “There’s a point at which you’re going to stop listening to me because I haven’t done it a long time. I’m rusty.”

And her response was to roll her eyes and let me know that, “You’re not going to fall out of it completely, because you’re still walking around here.”

If you have the love of your practitioners and treat them with love and respect and warmth and everything – if you do that, you stay with that relationship, they’ll still trust you and listen to you from a clinical standpoint, even though you’re not sitting down and doing it every day.

**Ben:** I think that that’s really what it’s all about – just making sure that you’re going to maintain those relationships.

What happened actually, recently, when you’re starting to go toward more of a corporation instead of a small business, and you’re running on an operating system like EOS or something, these doctors that knew you way back when are going to say, “You’re leaving me out, you’re not showing me the love. How do I get involved in this?”

And I say, “Well, how much time do you want to spend out of the chair doing executive level stuff and planning? What skill sets should we hire you for to be on the board of directors?” And so that’s a hard thing.

I think staying in front of them, though, is really important. And making sure that you’re helping them with questions. ■



**Dr. Trey Tippit,**

graduated from Baylor College of Dentistry in 2008 and began working in his family’s dental practice as an associate. He purchased the practice in 2011, and has since expanded the brand into 5 locations on the west side of Houston. He stepped out of clinical dentistry in 2016 and currently serves as CEO, dealing with the vision, growth, and direction of the company.



**Dr. Benjamin D. Oppenheimer,**

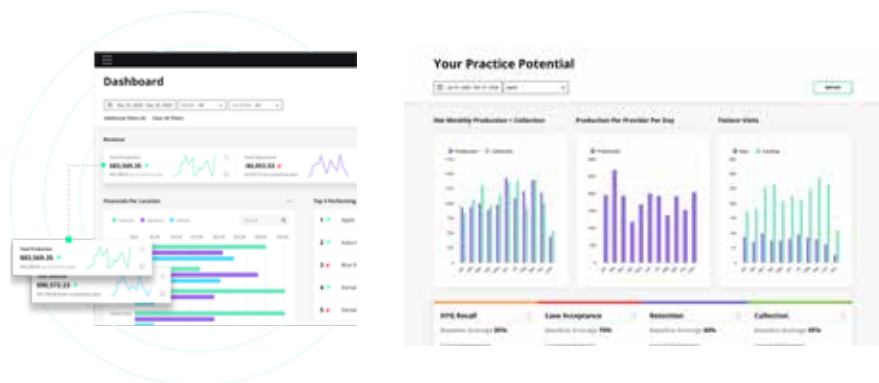
is a graduate of the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine. There, he received a Dean’s letter for Academic Excellence as well as the International Congress of Oral Implantologists award. He is now one of the leading experts in the world on Mini Dental Implants and a fellow of the ICOI. He has taught thousands of dentists to use minis and has served as a consultant to the IMTEC Corporation, the original manufacturer of the MDI product as well as Dental Tech Laboratories, Evolution Dental, Global Dental Sciences, Implant Direct and 3M ESPE. He currently is a key opinion leader for dental implants to Sterngold.

# A New Level of Scale

How dental analytics can help dental group practices take the next step in organizational growth.

**With a background in health care information technology,** Henry Schein One Chief Executive Officer Mike Baird has seen firsthand how analytics can improve patient care, outcomes and efficiencies.

“Just like businesses use data to drive every aspect of their efficiency and performance, health care is also moving toward an outcomes-based performance view.”



In the dental world, that means group practices now have the ability to consolidate all data to compare things like treatment and practice performance. “That’s a very exciting place for us to be right now,” Baird said. “Part of why we’re so excited about dental analytics is it not only helps group practices be more efficient, it ultimately helps patients get quality care.”

But what’s the best way to go about obtaining this data? There’s been a continual debate among group practices – buy vs. build.

Should they go the old route of ad hoc and build their own platform? Or, should they partner with a technology provider for the capabilities?

With the recent acquisition of software developer Jarvis Analytics, Henry Schein One is hoping to make the decision to partner on technology an easy one.

Dental practices have tremendous amounts of data stored in

can also help identify the impact positive changes may have on projected revenue, including hygiene recall, patient retention, case acceptance, and collection.

“Data mining is the new vehicle for accelerating dental business growth. Dental practices that know how to use dental analytics to analyze their data can see what has happened, what is happening, and make informed decisions about the changes they should make to improve performance,” said Baird. “The addition of Jarvis Analytics means dental teams will benefit by having a trusted partner with the size and expertise of Henry Schein One to enhance and support their dental analytics solutions. With these insights, practices owners and dental management teams can make better decisions to improve efficiency, increase revenue, and maintain clinical excellence.

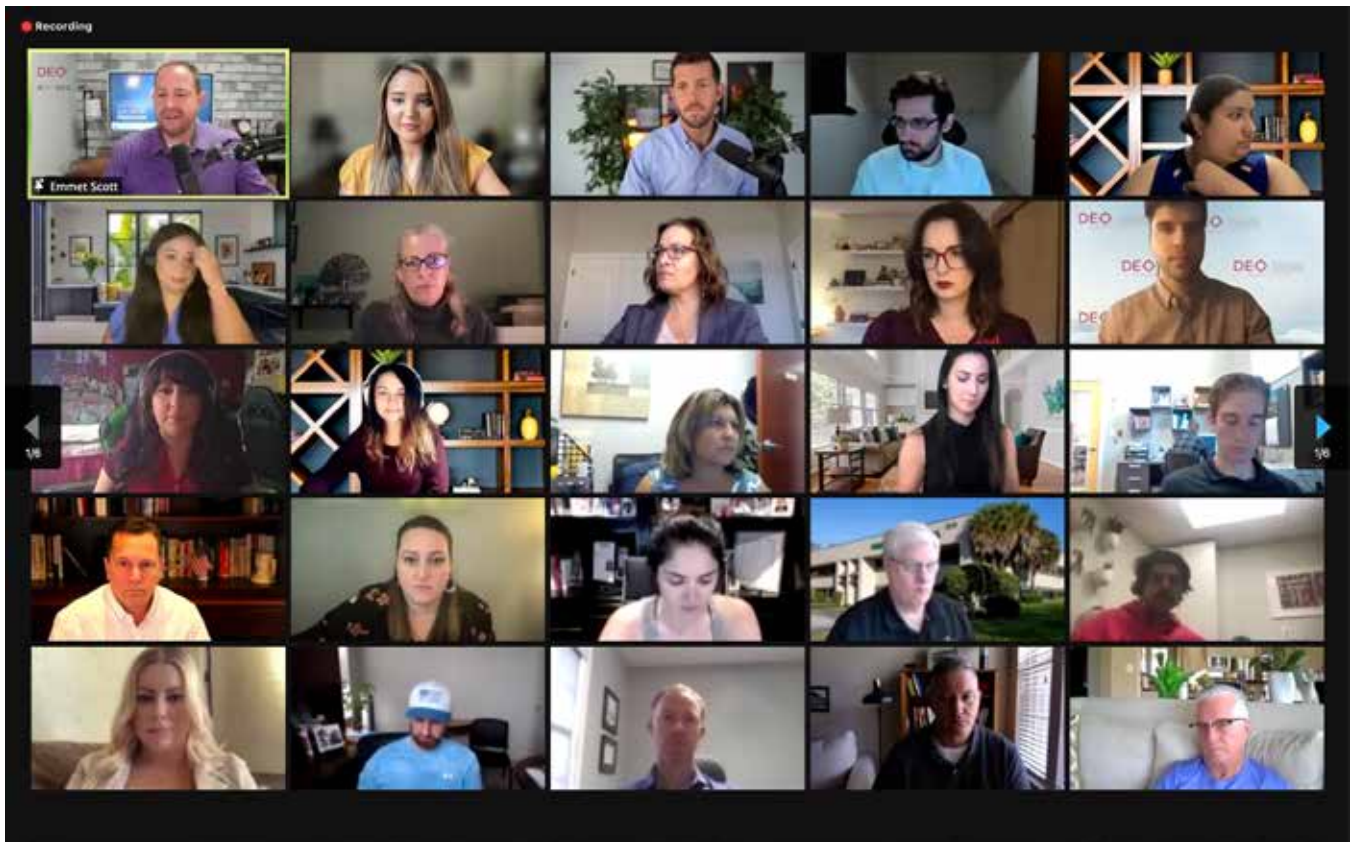
Dental analytics can provide group practices a big picture view of what’s happening. It lets them transform data in real-time from a myriad of sources to monitor the health of their locations and organization as a whole. “For DSOs in particular, real-time analytics are key to comparing single practices with others in their network or state,” Baird said. “It brings a level of scale to reporting that many practices haven’t seen before.”

For more information, visit [www.henryscheinone.com](http://www.henryscheinone.com). ■



# Dental Group Growth Through You, Team and Business

Leadership, team, culture, and marketing the main topics of the recent 2021 DEO Virtual Summer Summit : BY LAURA BOWLES



It was an amazing time of connections and sharing ideas with over 400 attendees at The 2021 DEO Virtual Summer Summit, “Dental Group Growth Through You, Team and Business” on June 11-12. It’s the premier annual event, where the best in group dentistry, budding dental-entrepreneurs, and DSO leaders gather and gain actionable intel. The Summit included four panels, six ask-the-expert sessions,

three peer topic discussions, seven speakers and more!

## **Gary Vaynerchuk: “Everything is marketing”**

The Summit kicked off with gut-punching inspiration and motivation from the one and only serial entrepreneur, Gary Vaynerchuk, CEO of VaynerMedia. Speaking to dentist entrepreneurs for the first time, he challenged everyone to truly think

outside the box and not let fear get in the way. Here’s just some of what Gary shared with attendees: “Don’t just play defense. Social media is word of mouth on steroids. Hire fast, fire faster, promote fastest! Give, give, give, and karma will kick in. Humility is the key to scale. Everything is marketing; there is nothing else.” His session was a great launching pad for the rest of the value-packed Summit!

## Concrete strategies for growth

Industry speaker breakouts offered a lot of concrete strategies for growth. Jodi Evans, Founder of Revolutionary Tribes, went deep in “Leveling up Your Team” and offered lots of powerful approaches like the Alignment Triangle. Dr. Yahya Mansour, Co-Founder, and Chief Dental Officer, Rodeo Dental & Orthodontics (32+ locations) gave attendees lots of amazing ideas for optimizing company culture. Discussing the winning mix of accountability and KPIs, Dee Fischer, CEO of Fischer Professional Group, was equally inspiring.

Attendees also appreciated the panel “Key Metrics for Evaluating Acquisitions” with Kevin Rogus, Vice President, Mergers & Acquisitions at Smile Brands Inc. (450+ locations), and Rondi Michaux, Director of Corporate Development at 42 North Dental (81+ locations). Rondi and Kevin reminded attendees to slow down, and keep in mind partnerships aren’t just with the doctor, but also with the staff, patients, and community.

The three different dentist-entrepreneurs panels offered some of the best content of The Summit. Real nuts and bolts intel was shared on systems, revenue cycle management, centralization, and more, not to mention leadership and vision philosophies. Dr. Victor J.R. Grazina, Owner / Orthodontist, Bach Grazina Orthodontics (two locations); Dr. Justin Pearson, Owner, City Center Dental Group (two locations); Dr. Whitney Weiner, Founder, and CEO, Whole Dental Wellness (three

locations); Dr. Toussaint Crawford, DDS Owner, Fenton Family Dental (three locations); Elliot Zibel, CEO, Select Dental Management (eight locations); and Dr. Beau Beecher, Founder and CEO, Kimball and Beecher Family Dentistry (six locations) shared their growth journeys with authenticity.

Josh Gwinn, CEO of Hero Practices (75+ locations) presented “Leading Through Growth and Change with Culture,” discussing how he has spearheaded Hero’s amazing culture. He shared how they address rumors, how to always keep in mind that patients are the true bosses, and more.

## A pattern emerges

Through The Summit presentations and discussions a pattern emerged, focused on leadership, people, team, culture, core values, and marketing.

Emmet Scott, CEO of Community Dental Partners (90+ locations), and Jake Puhl, CEO of The DEO, discussed how The DEO’s proprietary Dental Organization Growth Model™ can help dentist-entrepreneurs achieve their visions and scale. They reviewed the macro and micro issues to scale, how crucial it is to surround yourself with an abundance-minded network of people, how the industry is changing and maturing, why clarity is



**The “Ask The Expert” sessions featuring The Summit’s generous sponsors offered tools, technology, and services to level up for growth. There were many concrete takeaways on tech, systems, AI, DSO law, HR, air quality, systems, finance, and more.**

key for the entrepreneur mindset, and more.

### Radical Candor

Another challenging and inspirational presentation was by Kim Scott, co-founder of Radical Candor, LLC. Attendees found her incredibly impactful. Illustrating the “Radical Candor” framework, Kim shared many popular quips including: “Love your colleagues; but love is not all you need; challenge directly, also. Radical Candor should not be like a root canal, it should be like brushing and flossing. Eliminate ‘don’t take it personally’ from your vocabulary. Ask team members: ‘What do you want to tell me but don’t feel like you can?’” Attendees took away valuable information to reassess their leadership and communication with their teams.

The “Ask The Expert” sessions featuring The Summit’s generous sponsors offered tools, technology, and services to level up for growth. There were many concrete takeaways on tech, systems, AI, DSO law, HR, air quality, systems, finance, and more.

### Examining good brands

The Summit capped off the day with industry titan Bob Fontana, CEO, and Founder of Aspen Dental Management Inc. He discussed Aspen’s organic growth, their patient-centered model’s intersection between consumerism and retail, and much more. Sharing Aspen’s most current numbers – nearly 900 locations, 43 states, 16,000 new patient inquiries a day, and 2,700 clinicians – he emphasized the importance of strong connections

between patients, providers, team, and culture for growth.

Here’s some of what Bob said that really stood out to attendees: “If you want better healthcare, you have to do what’s best for the patient ... and the provider. Lead with passionate discontent. Go look at good brands and what they do. Let them inspire you. Fail fast and don’t take yourself too seriously.”

**Sharing Aspen’s most current numbers – nearly 900 locations, 43 states, 16,000 new patient inquiries a day, and 2,700 clinicians – he emphasized the importance of strong connections between patients, providers, team, and culture for growth.**

The reviews are in – attendees left feeling armed and inspired to achieve their visions!

### The 2021 DEO Fall Summit

Did you miss The Summer Summit? Well, don’t miss The LIVE 2021 DEO Fall Summit: “Doubling Dental”, November 11-13 in Orlando. At The Fall Summit, plan to double your learnings! Attendees can plan to learn how to DOUBLE the profit, revenue, locations, and overall growth; learn how to DOUBLE patient reach through teledentistry, mobile dentistry, and more; learn how to DOUBLE patient leads by ramping up and adopting

innovative marketing; and much, much more!

Plus attendees can CHOOSE to either: Attend LIVE in Orlando, FL OR attend virtually!

Here are the slated speakers so far: Geoff Ligibel, President and CEO at 42 North Dental (formerly Gentle Dental Partners) (75+ Locations); Dr. AJ Acierno, CEO and Founder at DecisionOne Dental (32+ locations); Vince

Dilley, Founder and CEO of Platinum Dental Services (22+ Locations); Joselyn (Josey) Sewell, Certified EOS Implementer®, and Founder, JoyFULL People; Dr. Michael Riccobene, DDS: Founder and CEO, Riccobene Associates (36+ locations); Justin Jory: Founder and CEO, Light Wave Dental (48+ locations); Ken Kaufman, CFO of Community Dental Partners (90+ locations) and Nathan Chitty, CFO and Director of Business Development, Operation Dental.

To reserve your spot, use the code DGP for \$100 off registration. Plus get free replays for a limited time. See you in Orlando! Grab your ticket here: <https://deodentalgroup.com/summit-fall>. ■





# Building A Dental Organization

How we went from 0 to 27 locations in one year : BY DR. SAMSON LIU, MAGD, MBA, MSF

**In 2018, I went from owning 0 dental practices to owning 27 locations** by the end of my first full year. My first practice was a scratch start with 0 patients. Even after years of working for a major DSO, I still had very little idea of how to own a business or how to build a group. However, in my opinion, the definition of an entrepreneur is he/she must be prepared to take significant risks and come up with innovative solutions to complicated problems. What I lacked in practical understanding of starting a company, I made up for with passion, determination, and the willingness to make mistakes.

Without the right preparation and experience, that kind of exponential growth in such a short amount of time can be overwhelming and unsustainable. While I was certainly out of my element, I used my years of experience to create a dental brand that would stick out from the

competition and provide value for my doctors and patients.

### The start of SOHDental

After 18 years of helping to build out the legacy of Heartland Dental, I realized that I wanted to build a legacy of my own. I started SOHDental in 2018 to create a new culture which benefits the patient via unique, customer-focused treatments and techniques.

I was fortunate to have three of my best people with me initially to help build out my vision for SOHDental. With my background in operations and the day-to-day of being a practicing dentist, I needed a support system to establish a foundation for the company.

**For me, it was never about size. I am much more concerned with how SOHDental can help other dentists cement their legacies and provide better care for their patients, an evergreen culture. Therefore, I wanted to avoid a name for my company that tied us to geography or even to my own name, because I believe that ultimately the company should be about others, not about ourselves.**

Starting out, I had no idea what we were going to do. We had never done something like this before. I certainly did not know how to build a business from the ground up, or even buy practices to build out the organization. This was an entirely new undertaking for me and my team. In

those early days, it was easy to wonder if we might have made a mistake.

Yet I found some inspiration in an unexpected place. During a visit to Cuba, I met with a couple of entrepreneurs who were looking to overcome challenges with their ideas. One wanted to start an internet company in a country that, at the time, did not even have widespread internet access! The other wanted to become a fashion designer in a country that does not even have a significant design industry! How can they make these ideas work? With a desire to learn and the passion to get things done.

I realized that if this was ever going to work, I needed to keep trying different approaches until I found one that fit my vision. If we

don't know how to do something, we are going to figure it out. If we can't figure it out on our own, we need to hire someone that can. One of our earliest challenges was securing the capital so that we could begin purchasing practices. We started learning by doing,

networking with bankers and practice brokers alike, actively figuring out both how to buy practices while buying them at the same time! It wasn't easy being the new kid on the block and trying to show everyone that we were serious buyers.

We learned firsthand that the best way to secure funding for our vision was to define as clearly as possible our vision and passion, then articulate it as eloquently as we can to help others understand the business. It turns out that making a major lasting impression on others goes a long way in generating necessary funding, quality referrals and leads. Once everyone knew that we were serious about our business and our vision, they were much more open to working with us.

In the beginning, we started affiliating with practices at an accelerated pace intentionally for three reasons:

1. To outrun our negative cashflow due to building out a support platform
2. To learn our economic engine which would be growth by affiliation
3. To take advantage of the favorable tax climate for businesses at the time.

I made some unwise purchasing decisions at first, but I learned from my mistakes and utilized a few consultants who could help me make better decisions.

We made it work by being careful with our budget and making sure to hire the right people to support our organization, whether we were looking for doctors, hygienists, or people

for the front office. We planned our hiring based on where we planned our affiliations to give the offices the support they needed. Our goal initially was to affiliate with 15-20 offices every year if our budget allows and it is a good match. Most important, there must always be a purpose to our growth; we don't want to grow just for the sake of getting bigger.

## **We learned firsthand that the best way to secure funding for our vision was to define as clearly as possible our vision and passion, then articulate it as eloquently as we can to help others understand the business.**

Our aim is to provide assistance to our supported doctors by taking over their non-clinical challenges. We offer services like payroll, supply purchasing, equipment procurement and maintenance, recruiting, accounting, marketing and IT support. At SOHDental, we are committed to providing the best possible culture for doctors to thrive and grow in their own practices.

### **Cultivating a healthy doctor culture**

For me, it was never about size. I am much more concerned with how SOHDental can help other dentists cement their legacies and provide better care for their patients, an evergreen culture. Therefore, I wanted to avoid a name for my company that tied us to geography or even to my own name, because I believe that ultimately the company should be about others, not about ourselves. In fact, SOH stands for Simon, Oliver, and Henry, the first three initials of my three sons, to reflect our outlook into as far as the next generation. The company name SOHDental is to reflect our investment into the legacies of the doctors that we serve.

I always wanted to make SOHDental a long-term focus, relational company for doctors. I wanted to create a space where engaging and retaining doctors means maintaining an experience that would allow them to flourish and grow. I wanted to match doctors to practices, not the other way around. By avoiding a transactional

approach and being short-term focused, I believe we have created a unique experience for doctors to thrive in the position that they are meant to be in.

Establishing a foundation of good doctor culture is at the heart of what makes an organization like SOHDental work. If the doctor culture is negative in any way, the overall company culture will suffer. We have worked to provide special training opportunities for our doctors that equip them with the latest tools and techniques they need to succeed at patient care and running their practice. Providing mentorship opportunities for doctors is another great way to ensure that they are receiving the support they need to continue to provide better care to the most important part of the equation: the patient.

Building a business like this requires planning, budgeting, and patience. I would not be where I am without the formative years at Heartland Dental. Making careful business decisions about what we purchase and who we partner with is the best way to succeed in building a lasting, evergreen dental organization. ■



**SOHDENTAL**

#### **Dr. Samson Liu**

is the founder and CEO of SOHDental LLC, a clinician owned, innovative and people focused dental partnership organization unique in the industry. Started in 2018, by the end of 2020, SOHDental supports over 35 practices in 8 states.

Prior to SOHDental he was a Senior Dental Executive with 18 years experience in leading clinical and support services at Heartland Dental from 13 to 800 locations, a ~\$1.3 billion Dental Support Organization (DSO).



# Stick to What You Know

Grow your practice based on your expertise and reap the rewards : BY DR. JERRY LANIER

**We've all heard the saying, "stick to what you know." It's true.** Your niche will make you rich.

I started Kids Dental Kare in New Orleans in 1994 and eventually grew it to 14 locations and a headquarters in California before selling it to Western Dental through an investment bank transaction in 2017. It was a leading provider of pediatric dental services to the Medicaid population, and as a U.S. public health service dentist, my goals are still aligned today with what they were many years ago while serving the St. Thomas housing development, one of the oldest housing projects in New Orleans at the time.



Coming from a poor background, I think everyone deserves health-care. However, any move closer to universal care can be concerning for entrepreneurs. But I think we can crack the code.

California must be aided by better access to affordable dental care for the state's underserved children, while still incentivizing dentists and lowering their risks of failure. My current platform – Turn

Key Dental Offices or TKO Properties – focuses on this issue because I believe that as goes California, so goes the nation. We aim to provide experience and expertise, along with a plan based on a business franchise format, to use technology to outperform other small business concepts.

My platform is based simply on “the way we do it here.” You must document your platform and make sure each office runs the same way.

It takes time to build it but it's necessary to have predictability in your business. It creates a standard operating procedure.

I've grown de novo offices throughout my career because it's easier to know how I wanted them to look, how I wanted them designed and how I wanted to standardize staff training. Enterprise systems that are required for seamless communication across your platform aren't cheap. It's often smarter to begin with a strategically located de novo office using standalone software and then grow several practices specifically designed for certain markets.

Less debt and full ownership look good when you are exiting your business. At the end of the day, it's all about EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) and understanding a business' ability to generate cash flow for its owners and a company's operating performance. Potential buyers are always looking at cash flow. At the time of sale to Western Dental, Kids Dental Kare had 25 associate dentists, close to 150 employees and was generating \$20 million per year in revenue.

But before making a similar exit from your dental business, you must make sure some major topics are addressed.

The excitement in the room at DSO meetings is like it is for most

things – glamour rules, even ahead of fortune. The more practices or employees you have, the more excited the audience is in following your plan. But as a businessman, I know it's not about what you make but rather about what you take. If you can't take anything from the table, then you don't have a good exit strategy, and a good one takes at least a year to develop.

You must spend some money on a good plan of action for exit. I installed investment bankers to assist in the sale of Kids Dental Kare, but many doctors won't spend the necessary amount on these experts. However, they're worth their weight in gold. My final sale price was for twice as much as my original financial goal

and Kids Dental Kare was 100% sold to Western Dental.

Often, doctors are their own biggest obstacles. There is a price to pay. Either pay it now or pay it later, but it will be paid. Your time is money and you're losing money stuck in the slow lane. Seek to remove your obstacles. Find workarounds. Hack the best and the brightest. Learn to serve more people for less. Employ experts. Pay for the best and set your expectations based on that.

Finally, don't worry about the business after you have sold it. Most likely, the buyers are looking at different metrics or operating at a different level. And if you are concerned about the standard of care for your patients, then start another practice. ■



**Jerry Lanier, DDS, EMBA,**

is the founder and previous owner of Kids Dental Kare, a leading provider of pediatric dental services to the Medicaid population through its 14 locations. After selling his business through an investment bank transaction to Western Dental, Dr. Lanier now mentors entrepreneur dentists through his website EntrepreneurDentist.com and his book, *The Entrepreneur Dentist – How to Exit Your Dental Business Rich*.



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# Multiple Locations, One Vision

The challenges – and opportunities – that come from running multiple dental offices at one time. : BY DR. JOSHUA RENKEN

**When I started my dental practice almost 20 years ago, the landscape of the dental industry was vastly different.** The model at the time dictated that I either start my own practice or partner with someone as they reach retirement age, with the goal of eventually acquiring their practice. Since there were not a lot of dentists looking to retire in Chicago, I moved to Springfield, Illinois, to start a de novo office. After about four or five exhausting years, I realized that I could only work myself so hard. I also disliked working without the collaboration and connection with dentist colleagues.

I hit a point where I realized that the world is not going to work with the solo practice model in the future. The industry was starting to shift, and patients were beginning to change their perspective as well. Their expectations and experiences with other companies were changing, in health-care and the rest of the world.

As I started to notice this evolution in the industry, I took a pause and tried to think of a new approach from what I had previously expected coming out of school. I wanted to create a model that offers some of the best of the private kind of model that was special in the way that we connected with people. We were looking for a middle ground that would be the best of the larger organizations, as well as the best of something that's smaller and more personal.

## Opening multiple offices

There are plenty of challenges that come from running multiple dental offices at one time, but they increase significantly when you have offices in multiple states. I'm currently



operating four dental offices in two states while launching two more de novo practices. We started two offices in Springfield, Illinois, and now we are now growing to four offices in the metropolitan area of Austin, Texas. After moving to Austin for an incredible inclusive school opportunity for my oldest child, we wanted to see how we could diversify and expand what we have already built into something that could reach a broader range of people.

As our offices continue to grow, we continue to test and diversify our

model. All of our locations have been de novo offices in an area that had a specific demographic and a specific need. Over the years, we are starting to notice patterns and across the various markets we serve. Accordingly, we are using that knowledge to continue refining our site selection process. We are learning who we can best serve and how. When you look at how the system works and how your model is built out, it must make sense for the audience that your team is going to serve. We ask questions like: Who is in this given area? How can we position ourselves to be a regular part of their life in a convenient way? Does our model have the ability to create a healthier community from this location?

## Developing a second brand as we grow

In an effort to welcome patients into a long-term care situation, we started to develop the idea of having two distinct brands based on the tenure of the dental associates. As we grew we noticed the main loss of patient relationships was related to network participation. Though we were trying to secure a healthy revenue stream, it seemed inefficient to accept a loss of relationships to this churn. On the other hand, our more experienced doctors wanted their reimbursement level to be consistent with their increased level of advanced care delivery.

We are privileged to serve a wide variety of people and demographics at all four of our locations. With Renken Dental, we have a high-end, built-out practice that is very profitable. At Schön Dental, our tagline is “health is beautiful.” With Schön, we serve people who are primarily concerned with in-network insurance coverage. We have offices in Austin where in one community we are surrounded by young professional families, and the other is in a retirement community. By surrounding ourselves with a diverse group of clients, we hoped to provide dental services to a broader range of people.

Eventually, I went from not accepting any PPOs to welcoming certain types of PPO contracts. I didn’t always love discounting my fees only to a certain level with certain types of PPO plans, so I decided to open the competition. We opened an office where we would have the very same kind of infrastructure and a lot of the same internal systems, but would accept a broader range of PPO insurances. Schön Dental provides a place for newer doctors who might be more comfortable compromising their per patient revenue for an opportunity to get into a solid organization and grow professionally.

### **Operating multiple locations at one time**

One of the first obstacles I encountered with operating multiple offices was maintaining a consistent branding across all locations. First and foremost, I wanted to ensure that the care provided by the doctors was on a consistent level throughout the organization. We equip our doctors with

the tools and resources they need to provide better care and make the patient more comfortable.

The patient experience isn’t just based on their facetime with the doctors. We also take measures to ensure that all our staff is trained to provide a consistent experience at all our locations. We want our patients to have the same great experience, no matter which doctor, assistant, or hygienist they are seeing that day. Providing top-notch patient care is our number one priority, whether you are visiting Renken Dental or Schön Dental.

Consistency is such a huge part of our branding, but it takes a lot of work to ensure that every location provides a consistent patient experience. We maintain that consistency by establishing a solid infrastructure for patient care and providing opportunities for ongoing team development. We ensure that our doctors are constantly being challenged and trained on the newest methods and innovations in patient care.

### **Aligning priorities**

Even with all the success that Renken and Schön have had over the years, these practices would be nothing without the hardworking team that represent them. At the end of the day, all that matters is the consistency of the patient care. You can concoct a new entrepreneurial or multiple-practice plan, but it will not matter if you cannot serve your patients and your team. When you can focus your priorities on the people that are working to provide better care for your patients, you will have succeeded. ■



#### **Dr. Joshua Renken,**

a central Illinois native, attended Eastern Illinois University and then the University of Illinois at Chicago where he received his DDS degree. Following associate work in Chicago, Dr. Renken moved to Springfield and opened his first practice, Renken Dentistry, in 2003. In 2018, Dr. Renken and his family moved to the Austin Texas area to continue growing the Renken Dentistry group. Since arriving in Texas, Dr. Renken has opened an office in Leander, Texas in the Crystal Falls community where he lives as well as an office in Georgetown, Texas next to Randall’s in the Sun City Community.

His commitment to continued professional growth has awarded him fellowships from both the White Cap Institute as well as the International Congress of Oral Implantologists.

Renken Dentistry has been voted best dentist in Springfield among The State Journal-Register’s readers in 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.



# From Dentist to CEO

How Dr. Sulman Ahmed built a thriving dental group practice from the ground up.

By Pete Mercer

**For Dr. Sulman Ahmed, the dental industry is in dire need of change.** As the founder and CEO of DECA Dental Group, Dr. Ahmed has spent the last 12+ years attempting to make those changes himself. DECA Dental Group, led by Ideal Dental today, oversees more than 100 locations across multiple states.



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When Dr. Ahmed started his career as a dentist, he noticed an alarming trend that is prevalent in the dental industry: a patient experiences a dental emergency, but the front desk schedules their appointment in the future instead of taking care of them now. “Most dentists will tell you that patients come first; ‘it’s all about the patients,’” he said. “It’s great to hear that but as I started practicing as a dentist, I found it far from the truth. Most dentists work Monday through Thursday. We know dental emergencies do not only happen on Monday through Thursday. They can happen on a Friday or a Saturday too.”

Dr. Ahmed’s journey from dentist to CEO was challenging and full of difficult decisions. Part of his path was defining exactly what was missing from the dental industry and where he could fill that void. Technology and innovations will continue to improve the methods of patient care, but who is going to improve the actual care of the patient? By focusing his approach to dentistry on the safety and satisfaction of his patients, Dr. Ahmed designed a disruptive approach to the dental industry that is continuing to make waves today.

### **Disrupting the dental industry**

Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Dr. Ahmed emigrated to the United States when he was 19 years old. After graduating from Tufts School of Dental Medicine in Boston, he opened his first dental office in 2008, where he began his career-defining journey of creating a DSO

focused primarily on the patient experience. “I wanted to turn the industry around and do something very different. I wanted to create the Starbucks of dentistry.”

Dr. Ahmed found that the most significant element missing in the modern dentist-patient relationship was loyalty. If a practice is unable or unwilling to offer services on the weekend, patients will find a practice that will. He points to companies like Starbucks, which has developed a loyal customer base by emphasizing the connection with their customers as much as their coffee. But how can dental practices offer a Starbucks experience? By evolving with consumer trends.

## **Due to a constantly evolving industry, simply offering a wide range of services is not going to cut it anymore.**

“I looked at the Walgreens model, and I thought about it. It is a pharmacy model, but it serves milk and bread, and you can go in seven days a week,” he said. “There is also a drive-through that makes it easier. I believe with today’s consumers that we are really in the retail business.” While a retail approach might seem like a far-fetched idea for the dental industry, it really comes down to convenience and taking care of the needs of the patient. This Silicon Valley-style of disruption is the next evolutionary step for dental practices to stay competitive in a changing market.

It takes a lot of work to be competitive these days. Dr. Ahmed

explained that his initial efforts to stand out from the competition would not be as effective now. “When I came out of school, we would do postcards or mailouts that told people about your office. It would say stuff like ‘we do Invisalign, root canals, or extractions’... Today’s consumer expects that you do all of that stuff,” he said. Due to a constantly evolving industry, simply offering a wide range of services is not going to cut it anymore.

Dr. Ahmed’s idea started with providing more convenient and accessible dental services for his patients. As he saw it, “if people really came first, something had to change.” That line of thinking is the

fundamental backbone of DECA’s core values and patient care model. It all started with providing accessibility and convenience and has morphed into a new way of operating a dental practice. Not only is DECA changing patient care, but it’s also ensuring that doctors get adequate training, and only the best materials are put in the patient’s mouth with multiple specialists working under one roof.

At DECA Dental Group, Dr. Ahmed’s team is “committed to changing the world one smile at a time.” DECA supports its practices by taking on all the operational aspects associated with each dental

office, enabling the doctors to focus on the No. 1 goal: providing better quality patient care. With innovative clinical systems, DECA empowers its dental associates with the tools and skills to improve productivity, efficiency, and guest satisfaction.



### Finding the ingredients for success

As any business owner can attest, building a business from scratch is hard work. Even with proper resources, it's never easy to start a venture from the ground up. Dr. Ahmed set out to start a dental practice in 2008 in the midst of the Great Recession. Not only was he challenged with establishing the proper business fundamentals, but Dr. Ahmed also had to grapple with the financial fall out of the country at the time. Dentistry seemed safe until people started losing their PPO insurance. Even when he did

not take a single paycheck in 2009, Dr. Ahmed was able to work through a humble beginning and get to the other side – stronger as a result.

One of the main ingredients for success, especially in the beginning, was the willingness to do whatever

it took to get through another day. Success would come eventually, but the hard work came first. In a piece for *Chief Executive* called “Attracting Top Talent for an Entrepreneurial Industry,” Dr. Ahmed wrote, “A big reason entrepreneurs fail at opening businesses is they are not able to juggle everything that comes with opening and running a business. You have to wear all the hats – especially at first. Not only are you the CEO, but you are also the CFO, CMO, and COO. Performing these responsibilities well is critical to success.”

Because of the hard work of Dr. Ahmed and his team, DECA Dental

Group now has more than 100 locations and counting. While Dr. Ahmed's vision of what the dental industry could be is a huge part of the company's success, making smarter business decisions early in the process led to business longevity down the road. Today, DECA is well on its way to creating one of the largest dental brands driven by a de novo model that accelerates growth through hand-picked strategic partnerships and acquisitions that align with the company's culture; to strengthen it rather than dilute it.

Dr. Ahmed's natural talent for identifying and cultivating leadership and growth has allowed him to develop leaders for DECA Dental Group from the top down. His eye for implementing effective leadership has helped him to create a winning company culture and earned him several accolades along the way. Dr. Ahmed placed as a finalist for the 2016 EY Entrepreneur of the Year and won the 2017 EY Entrepreneur of the Year.

DECA Dental Group has been recognized as one of *Inc. Magazine's* Top 5000 fastest growing companies several years in a row, as well as one of the top companies in the Dallas-Fort Worth region by *The Dallas Business Journal*. Additionally, Dr. Ahmed has built strong partnerships with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and became the exclusive provider of free dental services to thousands of kids with the Kidd's Kids Organization and Pat & Emmitt Smith Charities.

### Building a company culture

A big part of what makes DECA stand out in the marketplace is the

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established system of operational values and well-known company culture. Hiring doctors who care about the patient's needs first drives a loyal community. DECA's culture of care exists because Dr. Ahmed has created an engaging and fulfilling work environment for his associates. "The people we attract are in the business to be better leaders and believe there's a bigger purpose," he said. "We are not simply a dental office just doing dentistry. We are really taking care of people."

As with so many other companies, establishing a healthy company culture was one of the first challenges Dr. Ahmed faced. "The first hurdle was building a culture that spoke for itself where our doctors decide to take a Wednesday, a Friday, or a Monday off to come in on Saturdays. It's a short day, and I feel like we're helping a lot of people out because they have nowhere else to go."

Dr. Ahmed understands the value of great company culture. "Humility is huge for us," he said. "There are no egos. You have to leave that at the door." Dentistry is just like any other industry. When you give your employees a reason to be excited about coming into work, staying productive, and delivering results, that company culture will attract like-minded individuals to your brand. Happy dentists always produce better dentistry, which results in happy patients.

Creating a culture is a trickle-down process that always starts at the top. "Integrity is also hugely important, whether you're a dentist or on the business side of things,"

Dr. Ahmed explains. "Practicing good dentistry is not going to cut it anymore – good dentistry is expected from your patients. The company culture is the differentiator between you and your competition. It comes down to your mission, vision, and values to define your company culture."

### **Pursuing a vision**

In addition to a winning culture, the success of a business relies on the strength of vision. A company's vision, mission, and core values are so intertwined in discovering who you are and what you want your business to be. DECA's vision is so clear and such a huge part of their identity that Dr. Ahmed mentions that one of the most frequent questions he gets is asking about defining a company's vision.

## **Dr. Ahmed explains he's just as concerned about paving the way for the next generation of dentistry as he is to open more dental practices.**

Dr. Ahmed's answer to that question? "It wouldn't be fair. It's your vision." Even if your vision is not perfect at the moment, Dr. Ahmed says that it must be "very true to who you are." The only way to truly define a vision for any business venture is to determine exactly what the company will stand for and what solutions it will provide for consumers.

Because his mission is to "change the world one smile at a time," Dr. Ahmed's vision was to provide better training for doctors and utilize

better materials for patient care. But that was not always necessarily what DECA Dental Group was about. "It's like asking someone in first grade what they want to be when they grow up. And then in fourth grade, and then in seventh grade, and then in college. Even to this point, I don't know what I want to do tomorrow."

As Dr. Ahmed learned, the critical thing to remember is not to define yourself within any boundaries or lock yourself into a particular approach. It comes down to practicing what you value.

### **Looking to the future**

With a successful DSO that is continuing to grow, how is Dr. Ahmed looking to the future? By protecting the future of dentistry, he said. Obviously, DECA was not an

available resource when Dr. Ahmed was starting out. He did not have many people to turn to when he was trying to build his business. The next part of his journey will allow him to be a resource for newcomers looking to get started on the right foot.

Dr. Ahmed explains he's just as concerned about paving the way for the next generation of dentistry as he is to open more dental practices. "It's not about building something and then selling it. Today's dentists have a big responsibility to the next generation of dentists coming up." ■





# Win Win Win!

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**"SupportDDS offers remote/virtual resources into your practices and integrates them as part of your team and culture. We began with one and quickly have grown to five. They each are an integral part of our growth and customer service. As a Christian, the Win Win Win aspect was an important part of the decision as we are able to enhance our business while making an impact on lives around the world."**



— Blake Foust, Alsbury Dental



Win for Ministry.

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# Improve Productivity and Profitability with Revenue Cycle Management

BY JENNY ORGANISTA

**Smart business decisions are based on good data, not a series of hypothetical guesses.** Anyone looking to build a business, whether it's a dental practice or not, needs a plan for revenue management. While taking care of customers is the primary focus, it's essential to the success of your business venture to ensure that you're tracking the revenue cycle. With a revenue cycle management process in place, you can improve the productivity, efficiency, and profitability of your dental practice.

## **How revenue cycle management works**

Revenue cycle management is a process that identifies, tracks, and collects the revenue from a dental practice from the moment the patient contacts the office to the final



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payment for any rendered services. Dental practices can lose revenue for a variety of reasons, including claim denial and uncollected copayments or balances. Dental groups or individual dental offices need to have a well-structured RCM flow to maintain financial viability, while focusing on improving patient care.

More people have active dental insurance plans than ever before, which necessitates a structured revenue cycle management system. The RCM process is not just an integral part of every DSO, but also every operating individual dental practice. Insurance plans have guidelines and limitations that are constantly changing, making it difficult for dental offices to collect the money they are owed. This also leaves patients with larger balances after dental visits.

With a dedicated RCM team that can focus on revenue flow tasks like insurance benefits verification, fee schedule updates, claims submission, patient balance collection and more, the office staff can fully focus on providing excellent customer care. When staff can focus on providing better care, they can also increase case acceptance and productivity. A fully operational and efficient RCM program allows the organization to maximize revenue, accelerate cash flow, and reduce expenses.

### **RCM at Underbite Management**

At Underbite Management, we provide dental practices of all sizes with centralized tools and resources to help them grow and thrive. We've taken offices that are simple practices and transformed them into

efficient, multi-specialty dental centers. With our consultative process, we look for areas to combat inefficiency and opportunities to expand the repertoire of offered dental services. Our revenue cycle management department is just one more method for us to serve DSOs and private dental practices.

## **The RCM department is a support system for each dental office in the DSO. Our RCM team audits the office work, looking to improve deficiencies that can affect any production or collection goals.**

As the director of the RCM department at Underbite, I built the department from the ground up to what is now a world-class RCM team. We are now in the position to not only support the growth of Underbite, but other DSOs and individual dental practices as well. I started by differentiating the various RCM components and approaching them as interconnected Lines of Business, what I like to call "Phases." This approach allowed me to identify gaps, create benchmarks, and build systems and accountabilities for each phase, all of which are aligned with our company goals.

The RCM department is a support system for each dental office in the DSO. Our RCM team audits the office work, looking to improve deficiencies that can affect any production or collection goals. We post payments into the dental software,

assist office staff with gathering insurance information prior to the patient's appointment, ensuring a more accurate treatment fee estimate and a higher patient collection rate. We also make sure to submit claims in a timely manner and follow up with any outstanding claims. Additionally, our team educates

DSOs and dental practices on what clinical data needs to be collected to submit a complete claim, which helps determine why a particular treatment was not covered by insurance. This allows us to follow up with the patient on their outstanding balance, equipped with the information they need to complete payment.

### **What we've learned**

We've found that every phase of the RCM department plays an integral role in assisting with the unique challenges each dental practice faces. DSOs and dental practices working with an RCM department will increase productivity, efficiency, and profitability across the organization.

Obtaining a complete insurance breakdown and entering the information into the software correctly is one of the many challenges addressed by an effective RCM team.



By implementing this process accurately, office staff will feel more comfortable when presenting treatment fees and educating patients. This allows us to collect co-payments in advance, increase case acceptance, and improve patient collection rates.

Additionally, an effective RCM team will follow up on outstanding claims that exceed 30 days, as well as document how we are moving forward with the claim. At this point, we can escalate the claim with insurance if we need to. This process works to save time on our end, allowing us to quickly follow up with more claims.

I was surprised to learn how many offices don't properly understand CDT/ADA dental codes. It is not an easy process to manage, which is why a well-structured RCM is needed to support the larger organization. Many offices do not bill insurance or even properly charge patients for some of the procedures, either waiving the fee or forgetting to enter the proper procedure code altogether. This is an unnecessary loss in revenue for the dental practice. Through auditing processes and code optimization, an RCM team will help to maximize insurance earnings.

### **How to create your own RCM program**

For those looking to build their own centralized RCM team, I would advise them to begin by differentiating the various RCM components. After that, identify which division requires the most improvement based on where the biggest impact will be made on revenue. Build your own processes, create benchmarks,

**Many offices do not bill insurance or even properly charge patients for some of the procedures, either waiving the fee or forgetting to enter the proper procedure code altogether. This is an unnecessary loss in revenue for the dental practice.**

and leverage metrics for that division; repeat this process for the other divisions.

When it comes to insurance billing, it's important to maintain templates for narratives. Ensure that your team properly understands the information that a particular insurance carrier requires to ensure claims are being fully recovered. This will not only speed up the collections rate, but it will also help prevent you from having to follow up with too many claims.

Make sure there's a process to collect from patients who aren't scheduled to come to the office or will not be in the office in the near future. Ensure the office staff is collecting copayments and balances from patients that are coming to the office for dental services.

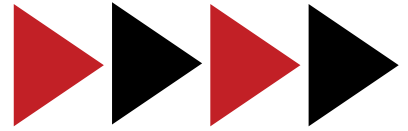
Most importantly, invest in the members of your centralized RCM team. Allow them opportunities to expand their personal and professional development, while equipping them with the tools they need to succeed in their role. Creating a healthy and engaging work culture is just as important as the work itself, so do not let the culture of your team fall to the wayside. ■



#### **Jenny Organista,**

is a Revenue Cycle leader with over 13 years of experience in the dental field. She is an expert at process improvement, revenue acceleration, & strategy execution. As the Director of RCM for Underbite Management & Consulting, Jenny has been an integral part of the DSO's expansion and has built a global team with a growth-oriented culture. Jenny was born in Bogota, Colombia and moved to New York City with her family when she was 15 years old. After graduating with honors from Berkeley College, she completed her Strategic Leadership Certificate from Cornell University. Jenny's passion centers around a growth mentality while ensuring her team develops personally and professionally.

**ULTIMATE “BREAK FREE FROM  
THE DENTAL CHAIR” TOOLKIT**



CURATED BY THE MOST INFLUENTIAL DENTIST-ENTREPRENEURS  
IN THE GROUP DENTISTRY SPACE



# INTRODUCTION

By the DEO

To scale your dental group successfully, The DEO believes it's key to surround yourself with abundantly-minded, entrepreneurial-thinking, growth-minded people. The DEO connects dentist-entrepreneurs and DSO leaders to work through challenges together. They emerge confident leaders with vision and purpose to grow their dental groups.

Having worked with hundreds of dentist-entrepreneurs, The DEO has found tremendous value in solving problems together with those who have “been there done that,” those who are trying to get to where you are, and those who are where you want to go. The DEO subscribes to the philosophy of “Why reinvent the wheel?” With opportunities to learn new approaches for handling roadblocks as well as strategies to plan for success, dentist-entrepreneurs gain clarity and shatter the mental blocks holding them back.

To date, DEO members have 900+ practices combined with an aggregated revenue of \$2 billion. The DEO offers membership (benefits include: mastermind sessions, coaching, private member events, peer learning, a resource library, and more on associates, leadership, operations, and systems, recruiting, retention, financial structure, and all the issues dental group leaders face) plus twice-yearly Summits open to the public.



The DEO has curated these resources to help dentist-entrepreneurs/leaders of emerging dental groups take the next step toward achieving their visions — to go from clinician to entrepreneur. To scale your dental group, you can't be in the chair every day — you have to get out of your own way. The resources here can help you tackle the roadblocks preventing you from making the full transition to entrepreneur/ leader.

# THE DENTAL ORGANIZATION GROWTH MODEL™

No matter where you are on your dental group’s growth journey (looking to add your first location, grow from 1 to 3, 3 to 5, 5 to 10 locations or beyond) you are inevitably going to run into some tough issues, everything from hitting your own “leadership ceiling,” to hiring and training your team, systems and infrastructure, revenue cycle management, creating leaders, and more.

The DEO understands these issues from helping hundreds of dentist-entrepreneurs grow their dental groups, and has developed a successful framework –

The Dental Organization Growth Model™ – to help leaders get out of the “dark tunnel” and solve the issues that are lurking there. This framework can help you determine where you need to spend your time, where your biggest issues are, and where you need to level up.

The first “dark tunnel” most dentist-entrepreneurs encounter is getting out of the chair. To scale, you need to recalibrate your vision for yourself and your business. This Model can help you evaluate how to make this happen and move into the mindset of a leader.





# HOW TO BREAK FREE FROM THE DENTAL CHAIR



What's the first issue that comes to mind when you think about the exciting but nerve-wracking prospect of fulfilling the vision you have for your dental business? For many, it's thinking about how and when to spend less time in the chair, or if you'd rather get out of it completely. Well, you're in luck! We're happy that as our community grows, we're able to create more resources for you.

We're excited to tell you about our latest one, the "Break Free From The Dental Chair" Toolkit. **To download it, simply scan the QR code (seen to the right of this page) to gain instant access.** It will help you take the steps necessary to determine your path out of the chair or how to spend less time there.

First, you have to take the mental step and break through the first barrier — affirmatively deciding to set your growth goals and align them with your vision. Do you want to go from 1 to 3 or 3 to 5 locations or beyond?

Second, if you are like most dentist-entrepreneurs who have decided to "go for it" — shortly thereafter, it will dawn on you that to make it happen — you need to determine how much time to spend in the chair or if you want to get out altogether. The prospect of how and when to do this can be overwhelming to say the least!

Most of the dentist-entrepreneurs we've met face this question with both excitement and trepidation, looking forward to taking on more of a leadership role in their

practice but unsure how to extricate themselves from the day to day. But there are solutions and roadmaps to follow. We have found there's tremendous value in solving problems like these with your peers, with those who have "been there done that," or those who are trying to get to where you are, and those who are where you want to go. The DEO subscribes to the philosophy of "Why reinvent the wheel?"

Thus, from our experience working with hundreds of successful dentist-entrepreneurs, we have curated resources and have developed a framework — The Dental Organization Growth Model™ to help dentist-entrepreneurs/leaders take the next steps toward achieving their visions — to go from clinician to entrepreneur.



**One component of this model focuses on “you” – the leader**

To level up and go from dentist-owner to dentist-entrepreneur, you can’t be in the chair every day. You have to get out of your own way. Here are some of the resources we offer to help you:

**Resource #1: Chairside Financial Calculator**

This calculator is a resource that was created by Ken Kaufman, CFO of 70+ location National Dental Partners. It is designed to help visualize the finances involved in getting out of the chair. We think you’ll find it valuable to help you map out different scenarios.

**Resource #2: Video – Moving to 0 Days in the Chair with DEO Member Dr. Matt Kathan**

DEO Member Dr. Matt Kathan is co-founder of 4+ location Timber Dental in Portland, OR. Since founding Timber Dental in 2014, Dr. Kathan has successfully taken the journey to break free from the dentist’s chair.

This resource is a video of an interview Jake Puhl, CEO of The DEO, did with him at a DEO private member event. In it, he provides valuable insight and advice for getting out of the chair.

The discussion included:

- › The HERO Culture Trap
- › How to know when it’s time to leave the chair
- › How to reduce your time chairside
- › Hiring systems to replace yourself and hire in general

**Resource #3: Video – Building a 4 Location Group with 0 Days in the Chair: a Case Study with Dr. Matt Kathan**

With this resource, you get to learn even more from Dr. Kathan. He outlines step by step how he went from 1 to 4 locations, in large part due to breaking himself free from the dentist’s chair.

**Chairside Financial Calculator**

|                                 | Current Month |                  | Out-of-Chair Month |                  |
|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                 | Amount        | % of Collections | Amount             | % of Collections |
| Collections                     | 100,000       | 100.0%           | 155,556            | 100.0%           |
| <b>Variable Costs</b>           |               |                  |                    |                  |
| Dr. Pay                         | 25,000        | 25.0%            | 38,889             | 25.0%            |
| Practice Staff                  | 20,000        | 20.0%            | 31,111             | 20.0%            |
| Supplies                        | 6,000         | 6.0%             | 9,333              | 6.0%             |
| Labs                            | 4,000         | 4.0%             | 6,222              | 4.0%             |
| <b>Total Variable Costs</b>     | <b>55,000</b> | <b>55.0%</b>     | <b>85,556</b>      | <b>55.0%</b>     |
| <b>Variable Margin</b>          | <b>45,000</b> | <b>45.0%</b>     | <b>70,000</b>      | <b>45.0%</b>     |
| <b>Fixed Costs (Overhead)</b>   |               |                  |                    |                  |
| Occupancy                       | 8,000         | 8.0%             | 8,000              | 8.0%             |
| Marketing                       | 5,000         | 5.0%             | 5,000              | 5.0%             |
| Billing                         | 3,000         | 3.0%             | 3,000              | 3.0%             |
| Call Center                     | 4,000         | 4.0%             | 4,000              | 4.0%             |
| Clinical Ops                    | 1,500         | 1.5%             | 1,500              | 1.5%             |
| Compliance                      | 250           | 0.3%             | 250                | 0.3%             |
| IT                              | 1,000         | 1.0%             | 1,000              | 1.0%             |
| HR                              | 500           | 0.5%             | 500                | 0.5%             |
| Accounting                      | 750           | 0.8%             | 750                | 0.8%             |
| Legal                           | 500           | 0.5%             | 500                | 0.5%             |
| Admin                           | 500           | 0.5%             | 500                | 0.5%             |
| <b>Total Fixed Costs</b>        | <b>25,000</b> | <b>25.0%</b>     | <b>25,000</b>      | <b>25.0%</b>     |
| <b>Practice-level Margin</b>    | <b>20,000</b> | <b>20.0%</b>     | <b>45,000</b>      | <b>28.9%</b>     |
| <b>Other Cash Items</b>         |               |                  |                    |                  |
| CAPEX                           | 0             | 0.0%             | 0                  | 0.0%             |
| Debt Payment                    | 0             | 0.0%             | 0                  | 0.0%             |
| Other                           | 0             | 0.0%             | 0                  | 0.0%             |
| <b>Total Other Cash Items</b>   | <b>0</b>      | <b>0.0%</b>      | <b>0</b>           | <b>0.0%</b>      |
| <b>Modified Cash Flow</b>       | <b>20,000</b> | <b>20.0%</b>     | <b>45,000</b>      | <b>28.9%</b>     |
| <b>Dr-Owner Take-Home</b>       |               |                  |                    |                  |
| Dr. Pay                         | 25,000        | 25.0%            | 0                  | 0.0%             |
| Modified Cash Flow              | 20,000        | 20.0%            | 45,000             | 28.9%            |
| <b>Total Dr-Owner Take-Home</b> | <b>45,000</b> | <b>45.0%</b>     | <b>45,000</b>      | <b>28.9%</b>     |

Jake & Dr. Kathan chat about:

- › The key ingredient to scaling: growing yourself (leadership development and more)
- › Quick tips for business growth
- › Maintaining relevance without being in the chair

If you are at a crossroads in the growth of your dental group – looking for business tools, templates, and expert knowledge to help you make the big leap out of the dentist’s chair – grab this Ultimate “Break Free from the Dental Chair” Toolkit. We hope these resources will help you wherever you are at breaking free from the dental chair. Use these tools to get out of your own way and make that next big leap towards your vision.

# Investing in Oral Health

Why a first-of-its-kind venture fund will provide unique investment opportunities in the oral healthcare/dental space.

BY DR. JEREMY KRELL, MANAGING PARTNER, REVERE PARTNERS



**Startups are a passion of mine. Along with practicing dentistry, I've** been involved with startups the last 17 years. I founded a web and graphic design company that branched into three. After selling two of those companies, I went into luxury goods and commodity services targeting college students. I started an incubator and scaled it from Boston to New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and currently sit on the board. I then took a role focused on strategic provider innovations and development at Oscar Health, which had an IPO recently. I joined quip very early and was with them for the last four years until I became the Head of Marketing at Simplifeye and Chief Marketing Officer at Verena Solutions. Simultaneously, I built my own management consulting firm for oral health startups, the Barchester Bay Group, and have over 30 ventures under management.

Yet through those experiences, I noticed a glaring hole in dentistry. The innovations were there, yet the investments that spur innovations happening in other businesses were absent in oral health. There are no institutional investors in the oral

health space, so you have to pitch to somebody outside of the space who might consider dabbling in it. Even then, those investors may not fully understand the space, its market size, or the potential of the product or service being pitched. To be

successful acquiring funding, you have to masquerade your startup as something other than dental, like, “we’re a tech company” to draw comparable EBITDA multiples and sufficient market size.

Historically, we’ve left the products and software updates largely to the big corporate stakeholders in this industry. But I believe we’re at an inflection point where practices are frustrated with the products they have access to because they see the potential to provide a higher quality of care to their patients based on the advances in science and technology available to many other healthcare sectors. The products aren’t quick enough, accurate enough, convenient enough or cheap enough. DSOs need more variety as well as the clinical and business tools that go hand-in-hand with successful and quick growth. But that takes innovation. And with innovation comes startups.

## Tap into potential

Frustrated by these dynamics, I started the first independent venture fund in oral health, Revere Partners. We did about 18-20 months of research to prove the strong return on these types of investments. We are an AngelList Rolling Fund, which is a unique structure that matches the demand of oral health startups and the state of the investment landscape in this space really well.

Dental group practices are in high growth mode, so it's important for them to be testing and trying new things, whether they are experientially driven and they're planning the most modern, quality care experience for their patients, or they're trying to optimize the business end of their practice. These businesses are in such a high growth mode, they want top-of-the-line products and the services that are in their space to differentiate themselves from other emerging group practices and provide both excellent patient care and an engaging experience for their patients.

To do that, you have to tap yourself into the tech side of the industry. What is the best toothbrush or toothpaste you should be recommending? What is the best software to use for AI powered radiographic diagnostic assistance reputation management in your practice? How can you generate more revenue by paying attention to your online presence? Can you use endodontic root canal therapy for implants that are cutting edge and efficient and save costs or generate revenue? To set yourself apart, you have to tap into the latest innovations in oral health.

We're raising a \$50 million venture capital fund for oral health. With a team of 40 of oral health's most esteemed leaders, we've spent the better part of the last two years in stealth mode, and in the last couple of months started to bring it out. Even by word of mouth, the response has been resounding and overwhelming. We have about 130 startups in our queue, and we've done due diligence on about 35. Those companies represent categories such as dental

technology, biotech, consumer products, payments and reimbursements and access to care.

Anybody can be involved. If your organization or doctors have an idea, we can help with the funding. If your doctors or your organization are interested in investing in the tech industry, we can help as we have a proven track record in managing, raising, and making money for investors. We invite you to invest in Revere Partners. This is a platform where the emerging DSO can dip their fingers into new ideas and test them out. We're giving dentists and healthcare professionals a way to invest in an area they know and love, and which fuels their own practice(s), in addition to just investing in the S&P or bitcoin.

This is a venture fund founded by the industry for the industry. It's not someone coming from outside of the space and directing the way they envision the dental industry growing. This is a fund whose investors and partners are comprised of industry leaders. The rolling fund product makes VC investments more accessible. Investment opportunities traditionally reserved for ultra high net worth individuals or institutions are now being made available to those in the industry.

The dental industry is ripe for innovation and, through Revere Partners, everyone in the industry is invited to be a part of it. There is tremendous potential. Providing the future industry disruptors with the capital, access and expertise they need to flourish presents a unique opportunity for founders and investors alike. ■



**Dr. Jeremy Krell,**

is a general dentist, as well as an experienced investor with a business background. He has raised rounds and generated returns for investors at dozens of companies, sold several, and acquired two more as a key operator. Jeremy oversaw strategic provider innovation and development at Oscar Health and provider and clinical growth initiatives at quip. He has since built the Barchester Bay Group, a portfolio consisting of over 30 separate ventures. Jeremy is an angel investor and sits on the boards of several healthcare, tech, and dental startups. He has a 17-plus year proven track record with start-ups, multi-million dollar fundraises, and acquisitions. For more information please contact: [info@reverepartnersvc.com](mailto:info@reverepartnersvc.com)



# Dealing with Anxiety as a Practice Leader

How to go from anxiety to confidence as the leader of your organization : BY EMMET SCOTT

**As a clinician and practice owner,** your life is filled with stress from dealing with patients and employees/associates all the way through to managing facilities, supplies and other aspects of the business – not to mention trying to balance your job with your responsibilities at home.



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For many practice owners, these constant stressors can become overwhelming and lead them into the “anxiety cycle.”

Do any these thoughts seem familiar?

- › You constantly feel like you’re failing (even if you have brief moments where you feel success)
- › It always seems like you’re behind on your timelines
- › You’re constantly measuring yourself by your peers only to come up short
- › Everywhere you look, you see multiple fires that need to be put out
- › You have trouble prioritizing because everything is a No. 1 priority
- › You can’t stop moving forward, because if you do, you’ll never get started again
- › When you’re at home, you feel guilty and lazy for not being at work. When you’re at work, you feel like you aren’t filling your responsibilities to your family.

Everyone experiences these thoughts from time to time. It’s when these thoughts and feelings are nearly constant for a period of time that they can cause long-term problems not just for your own health, but for those around you – as well as for your practice.

Over time, those thoughts form patterns which in turn become a dangerous feedback loop, throwing you into a cycle of anxiety that can prevent you from finding the root of the problem and breaking free.

For one, anxiety can be very easy to rationalize, since people with

clinical anxiety can point to real, actual problems that other people can also see and agree are problems. The lie people with anxiety tell themselves is that those feelings will go away – that everything will get better once whatever the problem is either goes away or is fixed. But when that problem is fixed and those feelings are still there, they assume they were wrong before – that previous thing wasn’t the source of their anxiety, this new issue must be the real problem.

This can also be fueled by the fear that, if you stop taking on so much or reduce the amount of things on your plate now that you will become complacent and lazy and lose all of your ambition. These fears then push you to take on even more, deepening the problem.

**A lot of the anxiety cycle is fueled by ambition. Ambition can be a good thing. Ambition helped you climb the first mountain, but once you got to the top, rather than enjoying the moment, you were sizing up the next mountain. The overuse of ambition can put you in a place of consistent anxiety and feelings of failure.**

It’s very easy to mistake your anxiety for your ambition. In part, this is because that need to solve problems in order to banish those feelings of anxiety can (in the short term) create productivity which is often rewarded. All those things can make it hard to realize that you’ve fallen into the anxiety cycle and make it harder to get out of.

## **How anxiety will kill your business**

If the only person who was directly impacted by your anxiety was you, you might entertain the notion that the potential harm to your emotional well-being was worth the tradeoff for the material rewards.

As a practice owner, ultimately everything falls under your responsibility. This is where falling into the anxiety cycle will impact your team and practice.

When you’re in the anxiety cycle, you lose the ability to prioritize problems. Everything becomes “the most important.” As a practice owner, you have a team underneath you who can help you put out all the fires. You don’t have to do everything yourself. This might seem like

a relief. You can attack every problem at the same time.

But with so many projects, you won’t have time to give your team clarity on what needs to be done, or give them adequate support and resources. Regardless of how positive and uplifting you try to be, your team will eventually start to feel this pressure. You can try to tell yourself

that having so many irons in the fire means you're moving forward, when in reality, you've created failure and burnout within the organization because you were unable to prioritize your business's problems and needs.

### Breaking the cycle

So what can you do about it? Can you even fix a problem for which attempting to solve the problem is, in itself, a symptom of the problem?

Yes, you can. Moving into the "confidence cycle" is going to require you to re-frame your thinking.

In the anxiety cycle, you create too many projects than can ever be done with quality. You look around and see all the little fires that need to get put out before they get out of control. So everything becomes a fire drill. Anxiety lies in constantly living in the future of what is not yet done.

## As a practice owner, ultimately everything falls under your responsibility. This is where falling into the anxiety cycle will impact your team and practice.

Confidence lives in looking to the past where all the challenges have been overcome. Look to your past and present to find confidence. Seeing the strengths you are currently standing on can make all the difference. Seeing yourself as already winning changes the paradigm dramatically.

It's painful to be an out of shape loser who's trying to find some time

to work out. It's inspiring to be an athlete who needs to get back in shape. Perspective is powerful to being in the confidence cycle.

It's also important to realize that getting one thing done well is better than starting a bunch of things that get low quality solutions or projects that go unfinished. To get out of the anxiety cycle, you must have the courage to let some fires burn.

Because what the anxiety cycle does, ultimately, is take away your ability to see things holistically. This means that every new problem seems to exist in a vacuum. You don't have the ability to couch this new problem relative to your previous successes (and failures!), or even to see your myriad problems relative to each other. You can't prioritize.

What's worse is that you don't have the ability to take lessons

learned from past wins and losses and apply those to the problem in front of you – you wind up trying to re-invent the wheel every single time.

Being in the confidence cycle means not chasing every problem nor seeing yourself as behind. In the confidence cycle, you still see all the issues and problems, but you see them with increased clarity – you

see where everything fits into the bigger picture.

When you realize that succeeding in the past didn't make you immune to new problems, it becomes a lot easier to believe that failing in the future won't keep you from getting back up and moving forward.

The truth is a lot of the anxiety cycle is fueled by ambition. Ambition can be a good thing. Ambition helped you climb the first mountain, but once you got to the top, rather than enjoying the moment, you were sizing up the next mountain. The overuse of ambition can put you in a place of consistent anxiety and feelings of failure. This can affect not only you, but your team, who may not feel that success is ever attainable based on that ambition.

So how do you get out of this cycle? It starts by looking back as often as possible. Pause and reflect on where you were, what you've overcome, and what you've achieved. Think about the mountain you've just climbed, and what it was like during the climb. You can do that at any point of the climb. Celebrate the progress, not perfection. Appreciate what you're doing.

We're almost always our worst critics. There are no success police. This is all a figment of our imagination when it comes to defining the rules of game. So why not create a game where you're always winning?

"Hey, look at what we've done so far. Look how far we've come."

With that kind of outlook, you can't lose. ■

To listen to the complete podcast, visit <https://dsosecrets.libsyn.com> and download episode No. 53.

## Anxiety: More than just everyday worries

BY ALAN CHERRY, EDITOR, DENTALFACTS

Often, stepping back, taking a breath and reframing your approach is all it takes to break the anxiety cycle. After all, experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. It comes and goes. It is tied to an event or a person or something finite and well defined. Once the crisis passes or the stressor is removed the anxiety goes away as well.

But that isn't always the case. Mental health is a large, under-addressed issue in our country and within the dental profession specifically. For some people, the anxiety cycle isn't something that can be escaped by reframing their thinking and doing all of the right things.

Chronic anxiety – an officially recognized mental health illness with five subcategories. It's far more common than you might expect and, like any illness, has a wide range of severity from PTSD on one end to generalized anxiety disorder on the other.

People with generalized anxiety disorder frequently have intense,



excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. These feelings of anxiety interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, and are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time.

It is very important to make this distinction,

because people have a tendency to disregard the signs and symptoms of clinical anxiety (in themselves and others), in part due to the fact that it's often hard to distinguish between clinical anxiety and simply "being anxious."

The good news is that there's a way you

can beat anxiety, and that it is only one sentence long. The bad news is that the answer will probably make you as frustrated as it makes dental patients who ask, "How do I fix and prevent getting cavities?"

"Seek care from a qualified medical professional." ■



# Clean Lines

Adhering to the CDC's guidance on infection control and prevention amid the pandemic includes properly maintaining vacuum lines.

**In today's group practice setting, especially amid fears of COVID-19,** it's critical for group practices to maintain infection prevention standards. This includes cleaning vacuum lines daily. In all times (not just in times of COVID), the the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that suction lines should be cleaned and disinfected daily to remove blood and debris with a solution compatible with the amalgam separator and evacuation system. Cleaning high volume suction tubing at the end of the day is important since debris can accumulate and clog vacuum line. Daily use of an evacuation cleaner should be used as a shock treatment to keep the system running effectively.

Indeed, the CDC and Prevention deemed the topic important enough to address in its Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Dental Settings During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic. Per the CDC in its Equipment Considerations section: "Air compressor, vacuum and suction lines, radiography equipment, high-tech equipment, amalgam separators, and other dental equipment: Follow protocol for storage and recommended maintenance per manufacturer IFU."

But how can dental group practices know they are doing things right? The following are three best practices that dental group practices should adhere to when it comes to proper vacuum line cleaning.

1 Offices that choose to use a microbial vacuum line product are typical safer, then chemically based concentrations to clean their vacuum lines. These formulations are organic and do not contain any harmful compounds that would be harmful

to the patient, dental professional or the environment. Enzymatic formulations remain in the vacuum lines until the waste is digested and not simply just flushed through leaving bits of debris behind adhering to the walls of the vacuum line.

2 Offices clean their vacuum lines daily and after every surgical procedure with a line cleaner compatible with their amalgam separator and wet or dry vacuum system.



3 In compliance with the EPA "Dental Rule" on the proper handling of amalgam waste in the dental practices, practices must use a vacuum line cleaner with a neutral pH between 6 and 8. ■

For more information on the CDC's guidelines, visit: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/dental-settings.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/dental-settings.html).

View the Solmetex Powerscrub here: <https://solmetex.com/powerscrub>.

## Common misconceptions with cleaning vacuum lines

1. You only need to clean your vacuum lines once a week.
2. Practices should not use bleach (sodium hypochlorite) to clean lines, this chemical can corrode metal parts in the system.
3. Practices should not use foam cleaners as they leave a residue which can lead to lower suction flow and eventual vacuum pump failure.

# What EPA compliance looks like.



Get your ducks in a row and ensure compliance.



**SOLMETEX**  
MAINTENANCE  
PROGRAM™

Set your  
schedule  
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# Crafting Patient Conversations

Begin with the end in mind : BY DR. CHARLES MOSER, VP COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT FOR DEO

**After four years of dental school** and more in a residency, it's out to the real world for dentists, without the slightest clue, hint or notion of how and why people make decisions, and no earthly idea how to communicate the value of what we do. Not a single class, lunch-and-learn or webinar about converting treatment planning to treatment planned. Well, never fear, help is on the way.

designed to stimulate conversations and assist the provider in closing the deal.

## **Question No. 1: "If you could change anything about your smile, what would it be?"**

Great question, as long as you're trying to provide procedures to straighten and/or whiten teeth, because those are the top two

crown and bridge dentistry. The answers you're looking for are, "I want to keep (save) my teeth," "I just want to be able to smile," or "I like to eat." These replies can lead you into a dialogue that builds value in endodontics and restorative procedures. Think like an attorney. Lawyers never ask a question that they don't already know the answer to.

Remember, the only goal is to get your patient to acknowledge they have a problem, and that fixing the problem will better their lives. Think about what you want to hear and work backwards with the questions. Answers like, "I know I need to do it," "I have put this off for too long," or best of all "When can we start," are the admissions you're looking for. Style your questions that get those answers.

One last question that can be helpful to set the stage is: "When you came in today, did you think your mouth was in great shape, or were you expecting me to tell you that you needed some work?" Holy great question, Batman! What does their answer tell you? We'll leave that for the next column.

Have fun with these questions. Think of more. Roleplay with your teams. Predict the answers and remember, your only goal is to get your patient to acknowledge that they have a problem, and that fixing it will better their lives.

Want more? Contact me at [Cmoser@deodentalgroup.com](mailto:Cmoser@deodentalgroup.com). ■



**Think like an attorney. Lawyers never ask a question that they don't already know the answer to.**

To be clear, making you Zig Zigar or part of the \$1 million club in this 1-page column is a big ask, so let's continue with baby steps.

The main takeaway is this: The goal is to get your patient to acknowledge that they have a problem, and that fixing the problem will better their lives. If you keep that in mind as you craft your conversations, you'll be on the path to higher conversion rates.

## **Questions to ask**

You've already seen some common questions on a medical history form

answers. However, if your practice model is designed around emergency dentistry, implants or large restorative cases, this may not be the ideal inquiry. A patient that responds with "I want them whiter" is not likely to be thinking root canal therapy or implant. But, if cosmetics are your zone of genius, keep that question in your cache.

## **Question No. 2: "What is the most important thing about your teeth?"**

Try this one on for size if your armamentarium includes operative and

# Audacious Service

Today's Dental is committed to providing patients with the best possible care, and making the world a better, healthier place.

**On the first day of Dr. Brent Rising's freshman year of dental school,** his professor had the class write down a mission statement for themselves. His assignment was to answer the question "why are you going into dentistry?" His professor collected the responses from the class, holding on to them until his class graduated. On the day they graduated, they would receive these responses to show what might have changed over the years they spent in school. Dr. Rising responded to this assignment saying that he wanted to have a good, successful career in dentistry and that he wanted to use dentistry to give back to the underprivileged and underserved.



Certainly, a lot of these responses would have changed during dental school. Like any other higher educational experience, you emerge a vastly different person than when you started. Not for Dr. Rising. His mission has never wavered. To this day, Dr. Rising leads Today's Dental with that same vision and mission to bring dentistry to the people who need it most. How do they accomplish this mission? By establishing a culture built around helping those in need and setting BHAGs (big hairy audacious goals).

## Finding a culture match

Today's Dental is a dental group based out of Nebraska, with locations throughout metropolitan Omaha. In 2010, Dr. Rising joined the team at Today's Dental as an associate. After a couple of years working with the owner, he purchased the practice in 2012. With his purchase, he inherited a reputation of excellent patient care held for 30 years. In 2015, Today's Dental went from a solo practice to a group practice. Since then, Dr. Rising has added six locations through acquisitions, de novos, and even somewhere in between the two. After several years of building out the brand for Today's Dental, Dr. Rising has discovered exactly what he is looking for when it comes to adding locations and new team members.

Company culture is such a huge topic of conversation these days,



especially when it comes to how companies can engage their employees through a healthy work culture. Dr. Rising has designed Today's Dental as a place where people can come to experience personal and professional growth, as well as a place where dentists can make a difference in the world around them. "At Today's Dental, we want to see everybody in the company flourish. From dentists to hygienists to the front office, I want everyone to experience growth in their position.

Today's Dental is driven by their core values, devoted to providing their patients with better care and an exceptional dental experience. Rising and his team work with their patients to create a comfortable and stress-free environment. That culture is what defines their productivity and profitability. Rising hires based on whether applicants match the core values and culture of what he is trying to accomplish with Today's Dental.

"Sometimes the best choices we have made are the ones we have said

no to," Rising said. As an entrepreneur, Rising has had to learn that it takes more discipline to say no than yes. The secret is knowing how to answer each question. After a new location is added, Dr. Rising and his team sit down to do a "postmortem" to identify the pain points of their process and identify ways to improve it for the future. "We are trying to find the least traumatic way of doing things," he explained. "In an effort to be more proactive for next time, we try to compartmentalize all the processes from marketing, finance, HR, operations, payroll, and insurances to understand what our team struggles with in each venture."

### Big hairy audacious goals

In 2018, Dr. Rising and his team worked together to develop their big hairy audacious goals, or BHAGs as they are known around his group practice. He says that these goals are designed as something that the founders and owners could wrap their heads around as well as something tangible that the whole company can be a part of. The current BHAG is known as "28 by 28," or 28,000 free smiles by 2028. Dr. Rising said, "We do a lot of charity dentistry. Each location has a free dental day where we give back to the underserved and underprivileged. We do regional mission trips all the time to perform free dentistry. For us, our BHAGs are just as important as production and new patients."

Today's Dental is so committed to this goal that they use it as a standard of measurement for success each day. Dr. Rising explained their





process saying, “We track how many BHAG give backs we do each week. In fact, it’s on one of the top lines for the score cards for each week.”

This year, Dr. Rising is planning to take his team to the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. His team also regularly participates in Nebraska Mission of Mercy, a free dental clinic for the local community. In addition to their regional outreach, they also make efforts to do international outreach. Dr. Rising has taken his team to places like Guatemala and Honduras and is looking to help form a nonprofit clinic in Rwanda.

Dr. Rising is committed to not only providing his patients with the best possible care, but also to making the world a better, healthier place. He wants to improve life for

**“We do regional mission trips all the time to perform free dentistry. For us, our BHAGs are just as important as production and new patients.”**

as many people as possible through their teeth. As the Clinical Director of Today’s Dental, Dr. Rising steers the culture and ensures that his team is committed to his vision of a better world for people in need. He believes that the “culture of giving back, progressive technology, and a team focused on creating trusting relationships” is what sets his group practice apart from the competition.

While company culture is a hot button issue for everyone right now,

what makes Today’s Dental unique is their commitment to global outreach for people in need. Dr. Rising’s commitment to matching his team and his new locations with the vision of the company will continue to perpetuate their culture of outreach and service. By aligning the company values with his vision of providing dental services for those who need it, he is building a brand that will have a lasting mark on the world of dentistry. ■

# Leadership Resources

**Editor's note:** **The DSO Secrets:** *Dentist Entrepreneurs Growing Dental Organizations Facebook page is a place to find resources, networking opportunities, information about upcoming industry events, and a forum to ask fellow dentist entrepreneurs questions you may have about running your business. The following was a recent discussion among DSO Secrets Facebook page members.*



**Arunav Chakravarty asked:**  
**Any recommendations of audio books, podcasts on leadership?**

**DSO Secrets Facebook page members responded:**

Brené Brown's Dare to Lead podcast. – **Cassie Tallon**

Dave Ramsey's EntLeadership podcast. Listened to each podcast multiple times. – **Bernie Kolber**

TED Business is a leadership podcast hosted by Modupe Akinola of Columbia's Business School. Brené Brown's podcast Dare to Lead is worth checking out as well. – **Sina S. Amiri**

1. "Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box," by The Arbinger Institute
2. "Who Not How: The Formula to Achieve Bigger Goals Through Accelerating Teamwork," by Dan Sullivan and Dr. Benjamin Hardy

3. "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable," by Patrick Lencioni
4. "Conversations Worth Having: Using Appreciative Inquiry to Fuel Productive and Meaningful Engagement," by Jacqueline M. Stavros and Cheri Torres." – **Gary Bird**

"Paul Etchison's Dental Practice Heroes podcast." – **Kaori Ema**

"Trillion Dollar Coach: The Leadership Playbook of Silicon Valley's Bill Campbell," by Eric Schmidt and Jonathan Rosenberg is fantastic." – **Kyle Garro**

"The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals," by Sean Covey and Chris McChesney. Simple yet profound. – **Doug Gray**

Agree with the "Leadership and Self-Deception" recommendation.

It's a mandatory read for all our new employees on Day No. 2. Also recently read "If Disney Ran Your Hospital: 9 1/2 Things You Would Do Differently" and it was amazing. All about vision for what a healthcare setting can be like. – **Tim Richardson**

"None of these will help unless you actually implement what they are saying. A lot of times we (I am guilty also) listen to them, believe they have great ideas and we never change. Take an idea and give it a chance! I do this weekly now. Some work, some do not, but if you do not try, why even waste your time reading or listening?" – **John Cannariato**

I love the book "Atomic Habits" by James Clear as this is the start for any good implementation of leadership or anything you are passionate about! – **Eric Todd Scheyer**

"Radical Candor" by Kim Scott who will be a speaker at the 2021 DEO Summer Summit. – **Deo Crew**

The Resilient Entrepreneur podcast with Kevin Johnson. – **Patrick O'Rourke**

"The 15 Commitments to Conscious Leadership," by Jim Dethmer and Diana Chapman! A must read. – **Charles Moser**





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## 42 North Dental announces new COO



Chris Carlisle

Johnny Khouri joins 42 North Dental as chief operating officer (COO) after more than 12 years at CVS Health. At 42 North Dental,

Johnny will lead an operations team that provides best in class support to all its affiliated dental practices. As a licensed Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD), Johnny brings a unique understanding of the provider-patient relationship to the leadership role, the company said. Khouri previously held operational leadership positions at CVS Health, including VP roles in all three main areas of the business – Pharmacy Operations, Retail Operations and Minute Clinic Operations. 42 North Dental currently supports 84 dental practices across 5 states

## Guardian Dentistry Partners appoints two to key posts

Guardian Dentistry Partners (GDP) announced the appointment of two longtime industry pros to the rapidly growing Dental Partnership Network. Chris Carlisle has been named General Counsel and Andrea Garson has been appointed Chief People Officer.



Andrea Garson



Chris Carlisle

In his position, Carlisle is responsible for overseeing all legal aspects of the business, including mergers and acquisitions, regulatory and compliance, contracts, as well as insurance. Garson oversees all Human Resources functions for GDP, including culture, engagement, leadership development and attracting and retaining key talent for the GDP team.

Carlisle comes to GDP from the Dallas office of the law firm Dykema, where he served as Senior Counsel in the Corporate Finance practice group. He brings a wealth of experience to GDP, including practicing for four years with Dykema's Dental Services Organizations industry group and serving as in-house counsel for Dean Foods, a food and beverage manufacturer, for five years.

A native of Nova Scotia, Canada, Garson brings experience to Guardian that is both vast and varied. During her tenure as Vice President Human Resources at Workopolis, then Canada's largest online job board, the company was recognized with numerous awards for its culture and workplace engagement.

In addition to Workopolis, Garson has held key leadership roles at Cardinal Health, Dell Canada and Pepsi Bottling Group. She joins GDP from Breaking Glass Inc., where she has served as President of the HR consulting firm since March 2017. In 1991, Garson earned her MBA with a concentration in Human Resources from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She, her daughter and their two Golden Retrievers reside in Halifax, NS.

## EVENTS



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