

DE MAGAZINE

DENTIST ENTREPRENEUR ORGANIZATION

How One Company Has Flipped the Outsourcing Model

The driving force behind SupportDDS' "Win-Win-Win" philosophy where their clients, employees and ministries they support around the world all benefit! ▶ [p18](#)

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Decentralization ▶ [p32](#)





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MANAGING EDITOR

Graham Garrison
ggarrison@sharemovingmedia.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Pete Mercer
pmercer@sharemovingmedia.com

CONTENT WRITER

Jenna Hughes
jhughes@sharemovingmedia.com

CIRCULATION

Laura Gantert
lgantert@sharemovingmedia.com

ART DIRECTOR

Brent Cashman
bcashman@sharemovingmedia.com

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Eric Roman, DEO
Josey Sewell, DEO
Rachel Shipley, DEO
Hilda Gonzalez, DEO
Cassidy Parker-Knight, DEO



PUBLISHER

Jake Puhl
jacobpuhl@deodentalgroup.com



VP OF MEDIA SALES

Amy Cochran
acochran@sharemovingmedia.com
619.886.5842

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The driving force behind SupportDDS' "Win-Win-Win" philosophy where their clients, employees and ministries they support around the world all benefit! > pg 18

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Does Impact Exist?

BY JAKE PUHL

There's an old saying: you get what you give.

I've spent my career, and most of my adult life, focused on what kind of impression I want to leave on this life. I believe that the legacy someone leaves is largely defined by the impact they've had on others. For years I have been part of various groups where we get together to share some of the deeper parts of our lives, and it's given me such a great perspective on how others find ways to make an impact. I find myself feeling very fortunate to be part of an industry full of people and organizations who are just as passionate about this.



While providing healthier outcomes to patients is making an impact itself, there are some folks in the industry who've made it their mission to seek out more impact, even on a global level. Two of those people are J.W. Oliver (an American) and Ken Sharpe (a Zimbabwean), who founded ZimWorX and its dental-focused division SupportDDS.

We highlight their inspiring story in this issue. SupportDDS runs with the philosophy of “Win-Win-Win” for the employees, the clients, and the ministries they partner with. These employees are highly trained virtual assistants that work one-on-one with their clients, dental organizations, and become trusted members of the team.

Based on the results, the model works for all parties involved. We reached out to two clients of SupportDDS – metro-Atlanta based Blueprint Smiles and Northern Virginia based Smile Makers Dental Center – for their perspective on what it has meant to bring in a

SupportDDS employee to their team. You'll want to read the feedback they gave if you're thinking about making insourcing a part of your organizational strategy.

This issue of DEO Magazine is jam-packed with insights that we believe will provide both encouragement and impact in your lives and the lives of your team members. Included in this issue are stories that will:

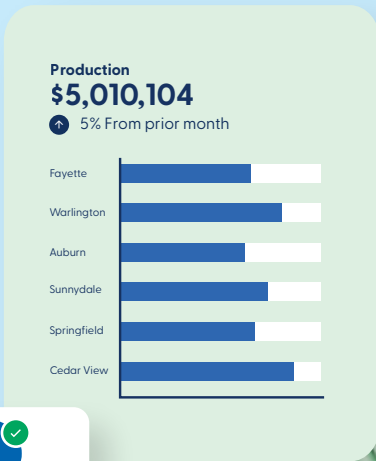
- > Help you decide between centralization and decentralization strategies
- > Select the right tools to overcome business-related challenges and achieve success
- > Recession-proof your business
- > And more

We hope these stories will inspire you toward growth and success as we move into the second half of 2023.

Succeeding Together,

Jake Puhl

“About a year ago we were producing about \$26 Million per year. **15 months later we’ve had a \$10 Million growth.**”



Payments received
\$10,241

Patient Chat

- Laura Williams
Hi there Laura... 9:00 AM
- Zach Hernandez
We will see you then! 8:45 AM
- Danielle Perkins
Hi Danielle! Just a friendly... Jun 29

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Whole Dental Wellness

How one dental group works to make each patient their healthiest self.

BY JENNA HUGHES



A dental practice is first and foremost a business that provides the service of patient care. In addition to taking care of each patient’s oral health and overall well-being, a dental practice must manage business operations including hospitality, HR, marketing, accounting, front office responsibilities, and more.

Whole Dental Wellness integrates a human focus into all aspects of managing its dental practice. Whole Dental Wellness began its operations in 2018, purchasing and merging two practices. To date, they have purchased a total of five practices that have been

consolidated into three locations across the Metro Detroit, Michigan area. The family dental practice provides oral healthcare for all ages, utilizing current technology to provide general dentistry, cosmetic services, implant dentistry, periodontics, and specialty services.

Whole Dental Wellness derives its name from this commitment, and all staff members strive to create professional and interpersonal relationships with each individual patient.

“Our view is very much that we are treating people, not just a broken tooth. We really have a macro- level lens on trying to make people their healthiest self whether it be allowing a patient to chew without pain or to smile brighter, which leads to self-confidence,” said Dr. Whitney Weiner, CEO and founder of Whole Dental Wellness.

Team first attitude

To find success in any business or industry, taking care of employees and team members is most important. A collaborative and supportive team keeps Whole Dental Wellness' practice running efficiently and allows the staff to provide patients with a better overall treatment experience.

"As a company, our priority is our team members who in turn take care of our patients. We feel so fortunate that our teams can impact the quality, and sometimes quantity, of life of the patients we serve, treating them as whole people with the level of care and concern they deserve," said Dr. Weiner.



Within Whole Dental Wellness' business operations, there is a business team and a people team. The business team focuses on the day-to-day medical operations and

patient treatment, and the people team works on the practice's business tactics to keep track of goals, measure data, and improve and expand patient reach.

Each team member, no matter what their role is at the organization, can become fully integrated into the practice and experience great potential for growth within the company.

"One of the really great things about our company is our commitment to growth from within and allowing people to spread their wings and fly and grow within the company," said Dr. Weiner. "We often look to our team to drive new areas of growth. Where do they see opportunities?"



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Where do they feel we can improve systems? The idea that one person runs a company is laughable to me; we are one team united under our common mission of driving impact to the people and communities we serve.”

Curating an exceptional patient experience

Whole Dental Wellness, through the DEO MAP Dental Operating System, developed core business values and a company vision to guide operations and create company-wide goals.

“It was so fun building on our core values because we all felt the same way and experienced the same things. Writing those down and now living by them has been so rewarding. Getting the right people on the bus was probably our biggest challenge before implementing values, and now that we have the right people in the right seats, we’re working to build out our systems,” said Dr. Weiner.

Whole Dental Wellness’ core values are Trust or Bust, Fun-ergetic, Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork, Own It, and Everyday We’re Hustlin’. These memorable goals set in place with the collaboration of each team member serve to motivate and encourage each employee to perform their best at work each day.

After determining the team’s core values, implementing them into the goals of everyday patient care across each position allowed Whole Dental Wellness to successfully meet and exceed both their patient care and business development goals.

Before implementing core values, “No one knew what our growth was going to be. Measuring growth shows you what you have and what you can

Praise for Whole Dental Wellness

Reasons why Whole Dental Wellness was chosen as DEO Magazine’s Emerging Group Spotlight for this issue include:

- Dr. Whitney Weiner has been recognized by several industry organizations for her work. She was honored as one of the “Top 25 Women in Dentistry” by Dental Product Report and named the “Most Interesting Person in Dentistry” for February by Curasan.com.
- In 2017, Incisal Edge named her in their “40 Under 40” young rising dental stars in the nation.
- In recognition of her accomplishments in implant dentistry, in 2016 Dr. Weiner was selected for membership to DENTSPLY Implants’ PEERS North America, an exclusive group of key opinion leaders and experts in the field of implant dentistry – there are less than 100 experts in this elite group throughout North America.
- Dr. Weiner has been voted a “Top Dentist” by a group of her peers in Hour Magazine every year since moving to the metro Detroit area. Only a handful of periodontists have received this honor. Dr. Weiner is a board-certified periodontist and a Diplomate of the American Board of Periodontology.
- Dr. Weiner currently practices with Whole Dental Wellness, a specialist led, cutting-edge group practice of which she is the Founder and CEO. She is committed to providing every one of her patients excellent comprehensive care with a firm and clear commitment to their health and wellness.

be. You don’t realize after 90 days what you’ve accomplished until it’s right in front of you,” according to Sandy Pouttu, Director of Business Operations at Whole Dental Wellness.

Dental industry impact

A large part of the “why” for staff at Whole Dental Wellness is the ability to impact patient’s lives and provide them with high-quality and whole person focused dental care.

In terms of plans for growth, Dr. Weiner emphasizes the importance of access to quality care for all

patients in the Metro Detroit area and beyond.

“We’re not growing to grow or growing for an exit. We’re growing to drive impact and being able to build up our teams, empower our teams, grow our teams, and then grow quality dentistry,” said Dr. Weiner. “One of the reasons we do this is because quality care is a right, not a privilege.”

Going forward, Whole Dental Wellness plans to continue to follow their core values each day in the workplace and provide quality care to every patient treated.

“You really need within an organization core people that you’re working with that you can trust, and that you can take everybody’s guidance,” according to Sandy Pouttu, Director of Business Operations.

Whole Dental Wellness bases its success within the field of dentistry on their collaborative staff and people-focused approach to the business of dentistry.

According to Sara Gorski, Director of People Operations at Whole Dental Wellness, “Everyone’s a person, no matter what position they have in a dental organization and within that you have to treat each coworker and patient how you would want to be treated in the workplace.” ■



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Succeeding Amidst Today's Challenges

Two days of inspiration, innovation, and connection.

BY LAURA BOWLES, DEO

This year's DEO Growth Summit, held June 8-10 at the Manchester Grand Hyatt in San Diego, brought together dental entrepreneurs, dental leaders, and industry partners from around the country. It was an incredible time of learning and connection. Despite the daunting economic and labor climate, there was an undeniable air of excitement about the future of group dentistry. The event offered ample networking opportunities and 15 stellar sessions, jam-packed with actionable content.



Each year the Summit brings the country's top dental entrepreneurs together to focus on how to successfully grow a dental company. Attendees learned about trends to plan for; gained impactful strategies for recession-proofing their business, leveraging AI, optimizing associate relationships, out-of-the-box solutions for the labor shortage, KPIs that drive productivity, managing the inherent stress of being a dental leader, etc.; heard from successful dental entrepreneurs about what to and

not to do; discovered innovative dental industry solutions; and much more.

Dr. Ben Winters – AKA “The Bentist”, the No. 1 dental social media influencer in the English-speaking world, told his amazing story about being one of the first professionals on TikTok in January 2019, 2 months after it launched; and how he amassed over 20 million collective followers on TikTok, Instagram, and Youtube, garnering over 1 BILLION views per year. He shared his formula for leveraging social media to drive more business, with insights like: “Short-form social media content is everywhere. It's king”; “Paid ads force people to look at your content, but that doesn't mean your content is good”; and “Good social media content will bring in better patients and keep your cost per click drastically lower because you're adding value to the social media platform.”

DEO Partners Josey Sewell and Dr. Eric Roman took a deep dive into DEO MAP, sharing its blueprint for dental company growth through systems and processes and a happy, healthy team.

Peter Sheahan, Founder & Group CEO of Karrikins Group delivered a standout presentation that resonated deeply with attendees about finding opportunities amidst the challenges, sharing wisdom like: “You should be as interested in what it's like to work for you as you are in your clinical practice” and “An aligned leadership team with full acceptance of the current reality and a burning ambition to progress their patients' and customers' lives will outperform the limitations of capital.”

It was a powerful weekend with lots of “aha moments” and fun enjoyed amidst the Hyatt’s gorgeous ocean views and incredible activities southern California offers.

The DEO team thanks all the generous speakers and panelists who gave their time and expertise: Emmet Scott; Dr. Eric Roman; Josey Sewell, RDH; Tiffany Fleisch; Andrew Tralongo; Jackie Brown; J.W. Oliver; Patrick Nelson; Dr. David Juliani; Dr. Dave Janash; Elliot Zibel; Florian Hillen; Adam McDaniel; Dr. Michael Acierno; Wes Judish; Amber Collins; Peter Sheahan; Dr. Chris Martin; Dr. Yooson Kim; and Dr. Gregory Toback.

Also, the Summit would simply not happen without the support of incredible sponsors and industry partners! The DEO is grateful for their continued support.

Planning is in full swing for next year’s Summit! Save the date for DEO Growth Summit 2024, Gaylord Palms Resort, Kissimmee, Florida, June 13-15, 2024, and stay tuned for more details. ■



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An Honest Look at the State of Dental Hygiene

How hygienists and dental group practices can find common ground to provide rewarding careers and excellent patient care amid challenging economic conditions.

BY JOSEY SEWELL, PARTNER, DEO

Editor's note: This material originally appeared in the July 2023 issue of RDH magazine, an Endeavor Business Media publication.

I've never hesitated to have difficult conversations or point out controversy. But I'm nervous about this article. I'm nervous about how it will be received, yet I feel compelled to share what I see happening in our industry and how it will affect hygienists and the profession.

I'm a business coach for dentist entrepreneurs and dental groups. I work with executive teams from the East to West coasts. During annual reviews we dive into company performance, including financials, and we spend time learning how to be a healthy team through a structured process.

It's rare for an office to see a problem they don't willingly face, but this year dentists, owners, and executives are tired and beaten down. While 2020 was rough on everyone, 2021 ended up being a great year for dentistry; government loans and a backlog of patients left most dental offices productive and profitable. Last year and into 2023, however, has not been as successful as 2021. Revenue is down across the country, expenses are up, reimbursement rates are down, and it's squeezing the profit margin, which means dentist-owners are stressed.

Every group of dentists is different, but they have one thing in common – every one of them is struggling with their hygiene department. My hope is to bring to light how hygienists affect dentistry, and to empower us with information to get what we deserve as providers to help decrease the stress of our dentists and leaders.

Setting the current scene

- › Post-COVID, we witnessed an exodus of hygienists. Others cut back on their time or decided to become long-term temps.
- › Wage inflation happened across all industries.
- › Not enough hygienists, plus wage inflation, meant hygienists were able to leverage their needs and

ask for inflated rates, so payrolls went up significantly.

- › Due to the labor market, offices started poaching hygienists. Some employees held their offices hostage when they got a job offer elsewhere. Even though dentists couldn't afford the increases, they felt like they had to match the wages other offices were offering for all team members.
- › Employees jumped from office to office to earn a few more dollars an hour.
- › While wages and supply costs increased, insurance reimbursement rates did not. Many hygienists may be shocked to learn that their dentist is losing money on their high pay because insurance won't cover the cost of the prophylaxis they're doing and getting paid handsomely for. This means that the traditional hygiene model is an anchor and loss leader for the practice.

There are ways to ensure hygienists can make high hourly pay and the office can make money. But this might include steps like accelerated hygiene, overbooking to overcome patients canceling or no-showing, or performing more valuable procedures and treatment.

I'm a firm believer that people should make what they're worth. To

be worth what you make, you must produce three times what you're making. However, many hygienists are not open to this discussion. They panic and quit when their dentist starts the conversation. Therefore, dentists feel like hostages to hygienists who demand a certain pay grade but are not open to learning the economics of the business and what it takes to create a win-win scenario.

For some time, dentists were highly productive and could make up for the loss in hygiene with their restorative departments. However, as we've entered a recession and economic uncertainty, patients are not accepting treatment at the same rates as in 2021. Production and revenue have been down, based on the metrics I see from my clients.

All of this has resulted in a lack of trust between dentists and hygienists, which leads to resentment, lack of communication, and fear. Due to high hygiene wages, and hygienists

No matter where you stand on the issues, we can all agree that patients are best served when a hygienist, not a doctor, provides hygiene services.

who aren't willing to learn different care models, some offices are removing hygiene from their practices. Yes, you read that right. Many offices and groups are asking their dentist-associates to do hygiene because it's easier than working with hygienists to get things back on track.

Not only that, but there are a lot of dentists fired up and ready

to talk to their state boards about allowing dental assistants to do supragingival scaling. It pains me to my core to write about this, but it's something I've heard often enough that hygienists need to understand what's happening. I feel like I'm watching a train speed down the tracks at 200 mph and the track ends a few miles ahead and I'm not doing anything to alert the passengers. I cannot sit idly by knowing what I know and not share it. Something has to change.

I encourage hygienists to do some research to see if they're producing three times what they make. To do this, take your hourly rate and multiply it by the number of hours you work in a day. Take that number and multiply it by three.

What can we do?

The ones who really lose in this scenario are our patients. No matter where you stand on the issues, we can all agree that patients are best served when a hygienist, not a doctor, provides hygiene services. I need hygienists to understand the business and economics of dentistry. I need them to learn the numbers. I need them to understand how to determine appropriate compensation based on the value they provide.

I need dentists to communicate better and connect with hygienists in a way that's meaningful so we can come to an agreement and not go to

the state board. Dentists and office managers need to be better leaders, communicate what is at stake, and not lead by guilt or fear. Hygienists need to come to the table armed with knowledge and an understanding of how to negotiate and not hold their leaders hostage.

We all want the same thing – to take good care of patients, and to feel appreciated with actions and compensation. It must make sense for the business. We are providers, and the reality is we have to produce enough

to cover what we earn. That's possible and it doesn't have to be scary. It doesn't mean we overdiagnose or overtreat patients. It is completely possible to make great money, produce enough to support ourselves and the practice, and be incredible clinicians. Those things are not in opposition to each other.

The next steps

I encourage hygienists to do some research to see if they're producing three times what they make. To do this, take your hourly rate and multiply it by the number of hours you work in a day. Take that number

and multiply it by three. That's how much you should be producing in a day. If you're significantly above that on a consistent basis, maybe it's time to evaluate your compensation. If you're below that, find some ways to increase your production.

When evaluating these metrics, consider how much the insurance companies are compensating and how much they're requiring the dental office to write off. If an office is charging \$120 for a prophylaxis but insurance allows only \$80, you need to be using the \$80 for your production. You should not be paid with dollars the office isn't making.

Examples

- > \$50/hour X 8 hours/day = \$400.
\$400 X 3 = \$1,200
(\$1,200 is the daily production goal)
- > \$60/hour X 8 hours/day = \$480.
\$480 X 3 = \$1,440
(\$1,440 is the daily production goal)
- > \$70/hour X 8 hours/day = \$560.
\$560 X 3 = \$1,680
(\$1,680 is the daily production goal)

It is my hope that this information helps you understand what dentists are facing. Every dentist I know is looking for hygienists who will take great care of patients and who understand how to add value to the practice, negotiate a fair compensation, and back their requests with data. The traditional hygiene model is changing. In order for hygienists to have a voice and influence this in a positive direction, we have to learn to talk about the business in new ways and understand how we contribute and determine our value. ■

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Unlocking the Power of Collaboration

Best practices to consider in successful vendor relationships. DR. ERIC ROMAN, PARTNER, DEO

Vendors play an important role in operating a dental business, but failing to leverage these relationships effectively can lead to wasted resources and missed opportunities. In today's technological age, it is crucial to do more with less, focusing on core business activities while relying on vendors to support operations. Here are 7 valuable insights and strategies for optimizing your vendor relationships.

Establish clear communication and alignment

Before engaging in discussions with vendors, it is essential to share your company's vision, current status, and goals with them. By providing vendors with comprehensive information, you ensure they come prepared and ready to align their offerings with your needs. Be upfront about specific requirements, such as regular meetings with your team members. Additionally, evaluate vendor compatibility with your core values to ensure a good match.

Treat your vendors like valued employees, recognizing their importance and the potential value they bring to your business. This relationship should be nurtured and managed just like any other employee-employer dynamic, as it often involves significant financial investments.

Avoid constant negotiation

While negotiation is crucial for maintaining favorable vendor agreements, constantly engaging in it can be counterproductive. Negotiating takes time away from other essential tasks and can exhaust both parties. To overcome this challenge, set a schedule for vendor agreements, typically lasting one to two years. Plan in advance, and assign a team member to notify you when the renewal period approaches. Streamline the process by openly collecting bids from competitors and setting the standards that you will use to make informed decisions for the next contractual period.

Document expectations and responsibilities

To ensure a clear understanding between your business and vendors, establish written agreements detailing expectations and commitments. Store these documents securely, signed by both parties, so that each side understands their responsibilities. Having written agreements helps prevent misunderstandings and serves as a point of reference when issues arise. Moreover, it fosters accountability and allows for effective vendor management.



Delegate to the right people

Avoid centralizing vendor relationships solely around the CEO. Instead, designate knowledgeable team members to handle specific vendors, depending on their expertise and familiarity with the products or services provided. Delegating these responsibilities empowers

team members and ensures better management and communication within vendor relationships. You will have someone within your team keeping track of the latest features offered by your vendors and making sure you are fully utilizing the services available to you.

Implement effective tracking and organization

Maintain a centralized system for tracking all vendor relationships. Consider assigning a responsible party to oversee vendor relationships

holistically if you haven't already delegated each vendor to a specific team member. Create a schedule that spaces out the renewal periods for similar vendors throughout the year. By distributing these tasks, you prevent overwhelming periods of vendor negotiations and ensure a more manageable workload.

Regular communication builds trust, strengthens relationships, and promotes a mutually beneficial partnership.



Review and eliminate unused products or vendors

Periodically review your vendor relationships to identify products or services that are underutilized or no longer necessary. Encourage your team to evaluate the tools and resources provided and decide whether they genuinely benefit your operations. If certain items are not being used effectively, consider eliminating them or reallocating resources to maximize efficiency. Trust your team to make informed decisions while ensuring critical tools are being utilized effectively.

Maintain regular communication

Establish a regular meeting cadence with your vendors to foster ongoing communication and ensure alignment on commitments and expectations. These check-ins allow you to provide feedback on how well the vendor is meeting their commitments, while vendors can also offer insights and suggestions to enhance the value they provide. Regular communication builds trust, strengthens relationships, and promotes a mutually beneficial partnership.

By implementing strategies such as clear communication, streamlining negotiation processes, documenting expectations, delegating responsibilities, and maintaining regular communication, dental businesses can maximize the value derived from vendor relationships. Furthermore, regularly reviewing and eliminating unused products or vendors helps maintain a lean and efficient operation. By prioritizing and nurturing these partnerships, dental businesses can achieve better outcomes and focus on their core competencies. ■



BUILD



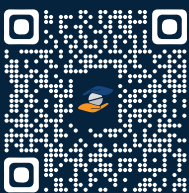
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How One Company Has Flipped the Outsourcing Model

The driving force behind SupportDDS' "Win-Win-Win" philosophy where their clients, employees and ministries they support around the world all benefit!

BY PETE MERCER

Outsourcing members of your team can be a cost-effective and efficient way to staff your organization. Yet if done wrong, it can be an impersonal fit in a world where personal touches have become standard practice in a business setting. One way that dental offices can combat the impersonal outsourced call center is through SupportDDS' insourcing model with their team members.

SupportDDS is the dental-focused division of a larger company called ZimWorX, an organization that is committed to providing an "insourced" employee that is trained for and dedicated to your practice. Essentially, these are highly trained virtual assistants that are ideal candidates for the specific challenges your practice is facing.

ZimWorX was founded by an American, J.W. Oliver, and Zimbabwean, Ken Sharpe. Sharpe and Oliver met at a Christian marriage conference in Curacao in 2015. They developed the structure for ZimWorX and SupportDDS

(which would launch in 2017) with the philosophy of "Win-Win-Win" for the employees, the clients, and the ministries they would partner with.

Currently, SupportDDS has over 800 team members supporting approximately 2,000 dental offices in the United States and UK. ZimWorX is based in Texas, but the majority of the operations are at their center in Zimbabwe. The largest service center is in the heart of Zimbabwe's capital Harare, and the newest service center is located in Costa Rica to serve Spanish speaking patients in the U.S. With an established culture of honesty, respect, and Christian values, ZimWorX is working to provide a solution where everyone benefits.

Win-Win-Win

The win-win-win structure that Sharpe and Oliver engineered for ZimWorX is designed to benefit each party involved: the clients, the employees, and the ministries supported through ZimWorX. One of those employees, a SupportDDS marketing team lead named Miriam Nyakudzuka, spoke highly of her experience at the organization. She said, "I've been at ZimWorX for three years now and I've had an amazing experience. I've experienced a lot of changes, seen a lot of growth – when I started, we were on one floor, and now we have five floors in our building, plus a floor for our finance and talent acquisition team in a nearby facility."

With this "win-win-win" structure, Sharpe and Oliver have the opportunity to employ people who need to work and give back to ministries that

are helping to make the world a better place. Oliver said, “Zimbabwe has an unofficial unemployment rate of about 80%. Jobs are scarce, so we saw it as a win for our team members who would get a job. Then we saw it as a win for our clients who get an amazing person for 30-40% of the cost. And then we saw it as a win for our ministries because my business partner and I agreed that we were going to give 51% of our profits to various ministries across the world.”

They can also ensure that their clients are getting educated, hard working people to represent their dental brands. Out of the 54 countries in Africa, Zimbabwe always ranks one of the highest in literacy as well as university-level education.

Oliver said that one of the good things that former President Robert Mugabe did in his 40 years of leadership is strongly advocate for education in Zimbabwe. “They have British style education systems, so people were able to get a good education. Even if families had to spend their last few dollars to make sure their children were educated, they invested in that because they knew education was a differentiator. There was a huge population of people who were unemployed, but they were highly educated.”

Leveraging the insourcing model

For those who are working for SupportDDS, the organization provides a certification course that equips employees with the skills and resources they will need to serve the dental industry. Because SupportDDS leverages the idea of



“insourcing,” they provide a basic dental certification course, then rely on the dental practices to provide specific training for the different systems and business procedures each company might have.

The benefit of the insourcing approach is that it creates the opportunity for SupportDDS team members to become a part of the culture of the dental practice. Each client will have a dedicated team member that will work within the

operating hours of the dental organization. For instance, if your practice is on the East Coast of the U.S., the SupportDDS team member in Zimbabwe is six hours ahead of your local time. Their schedule is molded around the needs of the client, ensuring that a dedicated team member is always available when they are needed most.

Nyakudzuka said, “The team member is dedicated to one client. If the team member works

›How One Company Has Flipped the Outsourcing Model

for a specific DSO, they can serve the different branches within that DSO. They are dedicated to one parent company but are able to work within the group of offices of the DSO. That's one of our selling points because a lot of other virtual mode companies would have one person juggling three different clients. For our clients, it's just one person."

Having a SupportDDS team member dedicated to your dental practice improves accountability and efficiency for your organization. The SupportDDS team member reliably supports a singular brand without getting overworked with multiple brands and patient requirements.

With this insourcing model, SupportDDS encourages all clients to make the team members feel like they are a part of the organization they are working with. The culture fit is a huge component of that. Oliver said, "We have 10 success tips we talk about – the biggest one is bringing them into your culture, include them in your weekly meetings, include them in your huddles, have virtual coffees, and celebrate birthdays. Make them feel like they are a real part of your team. For us, that's the real success."

Partnering with ministries

Part of what makes ZimWorX unique is the foundational structure of donating 51% of their profits to a variety of global ministries that are trying to make the world a better place. The ministry work is divided into three categories: local ministries in Harare, regional ministries that are in other parts of Zimbabwe

or other regions in Southern Africa, and worldwide ministries.

Oliver grew up in a Christian home, informing his decision to operate his business in a way that many others do not. "Sharpe and I were both running other businesses, so we didn't intentionally get into it to make a profit. We said, 'How can we make God the majority owner?' We both decided that if we give Him 51% of the business, He's the majority owner and He runs the business."

One of the local ministries they partner with is building educational classrooms at orphanages out of converted 40-foot shipping containers with windows and solar panels so kids in rural areas have a nice classroom to get a good education. Oliver said that they are in the process of building

a learning center, which will be equipped with a computer lab in these remote areas serving orphanages.

For the worldwide ministries, ZimWorX is partnering with heavy hitters in the ministry field that serve in the global community like Global Action, who provide biblical/pastoral training for communities in difficult places, and Radical, founded by Washington D.C.-based pastor David Platt. "We want to find people that are making a global impact in the world. We have future projects planned with "Momma's House", that has a plan to eradicate orphanages around the globe, and a self-sustaining "Rabbit Farm" in Zimbabwe to provide affordable and available meat/protein to the underserved. This is what we believe in."

SupportDDS is a big supporter of the DEO community of entrepreneurs. SupportDDS has been DEO's top partner for many years and always supports their events. They align and represent our core values on a daily basis: Growing, Grateful, Generous, and Humble.



Insourcing with SupportDDS: Blueprint Smiles

Finding the right partner in business is critical to the success of your organization. Many dental organizations are in need of supporting players for office roles, which are often outsourced internationally to call centers at a reduced pay rate compared to hiring someone in the United States. With a partner like SupportDDS, these supporting roles are filled, or insourced, by men and women who are considered employees of the practice they are working with.

Blueprint Smiles Dental Group is a general practice based dental support organization that was formed in 2013, with six dental locations operating in the metro-Atlanta area. Dr. Dipesh Patel, CEO of Blueprint Smiles, started this partnership with SupportDDS about two years ago after several members of his team decided not to come back to the industry. He said, “We started working on our technology infrastructure so that we could imagine having an office without the need of a front. We were exposed to the idea of outsourcing and decided to partner with SupportDDS.”

Dr. Patel partnered with SupportDDS because of their experience supporting the dental industry. This experience gives the team at SupportDDS unique insights into what the dental industry needs, without requiring the dental organization to build out an infrastructure for new team members. Today, Blueprint Smiles has



12 teammates across SupportDDS, including Dr. Patel’s executive assistant Mellisa Mashiki.

Dr. Patel said, “My work life would unravel if Mellisa wasn’t in it. Mellisa has evolved her role so many times in our organization and now she works directly with me on all the projects I have on hand. I tell everyone she’s my Swiss army knife.”

As a result of the success with SupportDDS, Blueprint Smiles has been able to increase the pay of its domestic team, increasing retention across the organization. “As a company, we believe that if you have the same team for a longer period of time, your systems are more productive. I think that’s the secret with ROI – if you’re trying to save a dollar, you can probably figure it out. But if you can reallocate that dollar and

get good people, it will positively impact your ROI.”

Regarding his relationship with SupportDDS, Dr. Patel said, “It’s what you can bring to the table first that is going to determine the output you get. If you have an infrastructure in place, a leadership structure in place where you can support remote teammates in another country, then the output’s going to be great because essentially that’s the same reflection of how you probably function here. If it’s chaotic here for you, it’s going to be chaotic there, right? Because now you don’t have that person sitting next to you at the office to teach them and coach them directly. If you don’t have structure in place here, then it’s going to be a little bit harder to try to train somebody remotely.”

Insourcing with SupportDDS: Smile Makers Dental Center

Smile Makers Dental Center is a multi-specialty dental center with six locations in Northern Virginia. Founded in 2015, Smile Makers' mission is to provide its community with the best dental care possible through a strong commitment to quality. They sought a comprehensive partnership that would simplify and streamline the patient experience, with a team of individuals capable of supporting the front desk by handling phone calls, tracking new patient leads, and managing accounts receivable.

With SupportDDS as their partner, Smile Makers fills these supporting roles, or insources them, by employing men and women who work directly for the practice. They have been in partnership with SupportDDS for two years, initially connected through the DEO. Currently, Smile Makers has nine SupportDDS team members who provide call center services and other front office responsibilities. Through these team members, Smile Makers ensures that each patient inquiry is promptly and accurately addressed, without overwhelming their front office staff.

Dr. Geith Kallas, CEO of Smile Makers, stated, "One of the key benefits is the creation of a stable team of virtual front office members. With SupportDDS, we have been able to overcome the challenges of hiring in the current climate, where finding skilled and reliable employees can be difficult."

As many SupportDDS employees are based in Zimbabwe, dental organizations need to establish an effective process for communicating with remote team members. At Smile Makers, they utilize WhatsApp, which provides a simple way to maintain open lines of communication without tying up phone lines. In addition to WhatsApp, Smile Mak-

ers has implemented an onboarding system designed to facilitate the integration of remote team members. Kallas explained, "We have implemented an onboarding system specifically tailored for remote team members. This system has enabled new SupportDDS team members to quickly grasp our processes and become productive contributors to our organization."

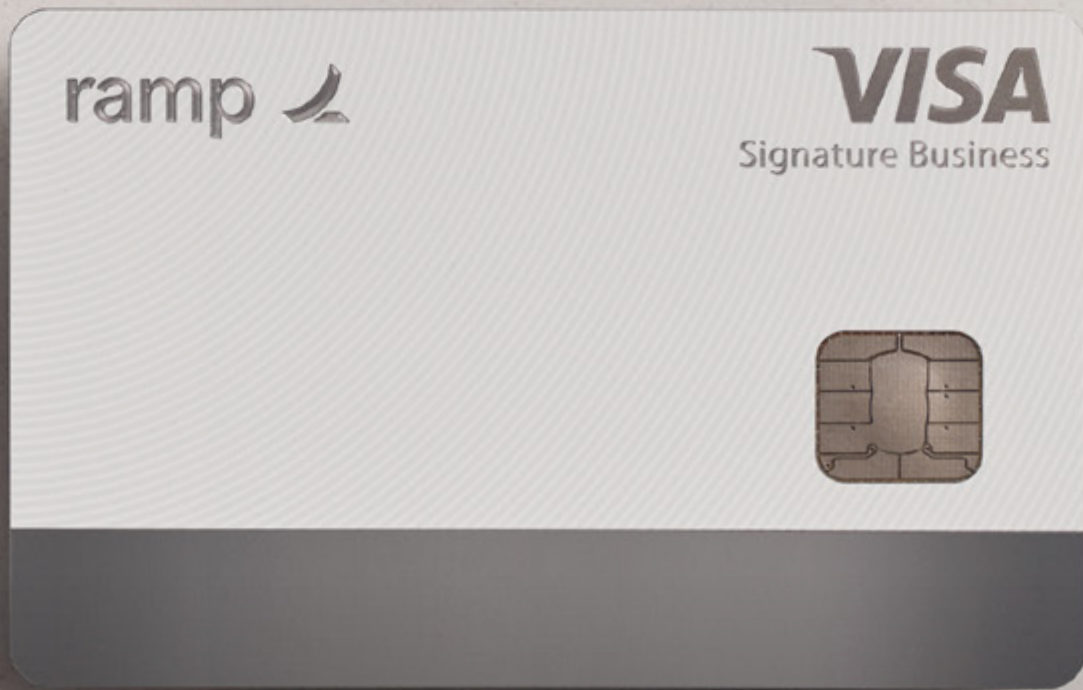
Kallas spoke highly of his experience with SupportDDS, emphasizing that this collaboration is a two-way street. In addition to the new onboarding system, they ensure that each SupportDDS team member is acquainted with the doctors and other staff at Smile Makers, fostering a cohesive unit. "We make them feel like they are part of the team. If we assume they can take on everything without proper support, the relationship won't be fruitful." ■





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6 Strategies to Implement Ahead of a Recession

Turn a downturn into your advantage by making the right moves now.



Editor's note: *The following content was drawn from an extensive six-part webinar series presented by Josey Sewell, Dr. Eric Roman, Ken Kaufman, and Emmet Scott. These industry leaders share their experiences, insights and best practices in handling a wide array of challenges that come during economic downturns.*

Prices are rising across the nation and dentists have faced increasing costs for labor, overhead, and supplies within their practices. During a period of financial recession, patients have less money to spend, focus on their needs instead of wants, and put off making healthcare-related decisions. Unfortunately, for some patients, a recession can mean choosing certain needs over others, often delaying or forgoing dental care to save money.

A recession occurs when the gross domestic product (GDP) of a nation decreases for two consecutive quarters. The national economic state impacts dental practices, as a period of recession often leads to

increased financial challenges for patients, dental leaders, and teams.

Financial hardship within a dental business can impact a practice's case acceptance, limit patients' financing options, and require patients to do more price shopping across dental offices than normal. Impacts also include limitations on growth capital for dental businesses and a dramatic change in consumer capital. It is also more likely that team members and patients have more difficulty within their personal lives than before because of national financial challenges.

It is important for dental practices to have systems in place to bounce back and thrive during periods of national economic hardship. Through operational systems, dental organizations can work efficiently under duress and learn how to navigate future challenges. Great things can happen under duress, and teams can learn the strategies and tools it takes to be successful in the industry.

By prioritizing personal health and wellness, team health, and financial tools, mitigating risk, integrating flexible staffing models, and utilizing levers of profitability, dental leaders can stay on top of their business' operations and navigate a financial recession with confidence.

Prioritizing personal health and wellness

Times of recession can be stressful, time consuming, and overwhelming for a business. It can be easy for dental leaders to lose confidence and neglect their mental health while managing a company's finances.

During times of challenge within a business, it is crucial for individual team members to maintain healthy routines. Leaders must especially prioritize their mental health, as they are the ones who will work through difficult challenges and guide teams to success.

The five indicators of health include physical, mental, spiritual, financial, and relational well-being. Physical well-being includes proper sleep, nutrition, physical movement, and exercise, regularly going to the doctor and prioritizing oneself. Mental health includes an individual's mood, emotions, decision making capability, and the ability to have control over all of these together without making rash decisions.

When a business has a higher profit margin, leaders can treat teams better, offer better benefits, do fun things for employees, invest in growth, and raise pay.

Spiritual well-being includes an individual defining a clear purpose and intention of their work, and focusing on how and why they are committed to the company. Financial well-being goes beyond the money earned and into net worth, what profit goals the company is collectively moving toward, the next phase of planning, and debt management. Finally, relational health is maintaining relationships in an individual's personal life and making time for people within the

office and outside of the office. This can include being intentional with coworkers, making time for a spouse of friends, and putting time aside to hang out with kids.

The five "P's" also guide an individual's health and outline the critical components of our lives. Leaders must recharge their personal "battery" to guide teams within a business. Power is a combination of our physical and emotional well-being that allows individuals to be "full" and provide leadership and guidance to others. The second "P" is determining a personal purpose and ensuring that what is being done within a practice feels meaningful and impactful. The third "P" is people, which encompasses prioritizing

important relationships. The fourth "P" is prosperity, which goes beyond money, into financial planning and defining the positive impact the business has within the community. The fifth "P" is performance. Team members and leaders need validation to feel as though their work is meaningful and impactful.

Taking care of personal health allows team members to maintain stability within the workplace. If a leader of a company is healthy and balanced, the business has more

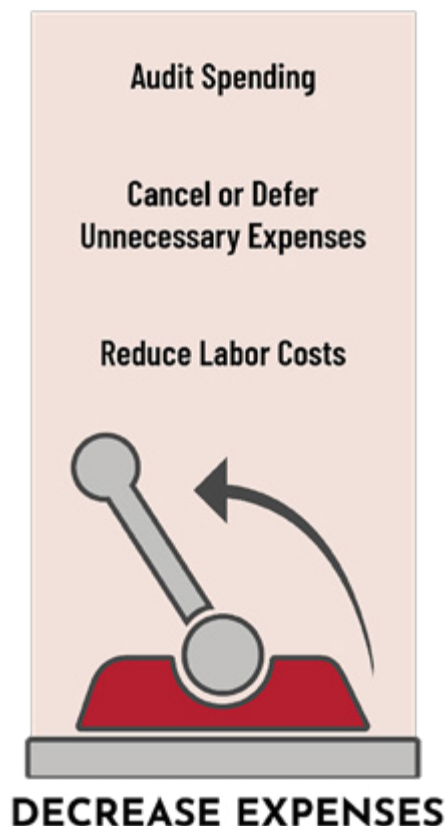
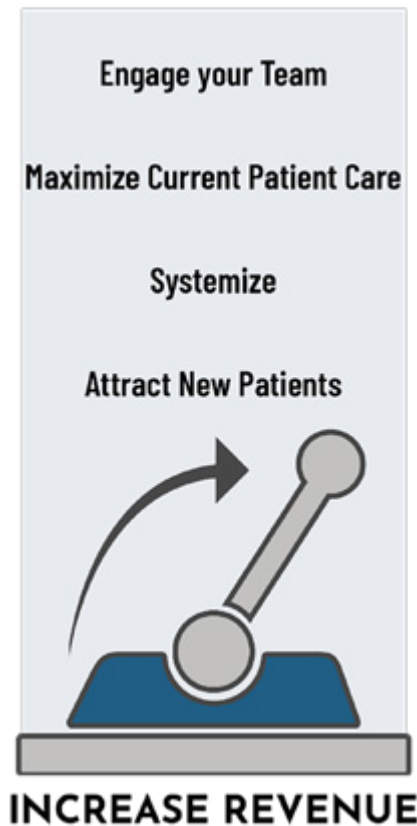
potential to survive during times of challenge. Leaders should prioritize personal time, walking or being outside, writing, meditation, breathing, date nights, family weekends, or whatever is personally fulfilling to them. Leaders must make sure they are emotionally and physically fed so they have the energy to provide for everyone else in the business.

Levers of profitability, increase revenue and decrease expenses

Levers of profitability are the fundamentals and basics of business finance that impact a business. Profitability levers increase a business' revenue, decrease expenses, or combine both. Business leaders can work on increasing revenue by engaging team members, maximizing patient care, systemizing operations, and attracting new patients.

If a business has no profit margin, then there likely isn't a focus on an overall mission. When a business has a higher profit margin, leaders can treat teams better, offer better benefits, do fun things for employees, invest in growth, and raise pay.

To increase revenue, leaders should focus on engaging their team members. To engage team members, leaders must connect with them in meaningful ways. Business leaders should have a system in place to measure employee's alignment to the company's vision and values. They should also coach team members within the business either up, in, or out, conduct quarterly check-ins, and measure key performance indicator data to ensure that patients are making follow-up



appointments. This includes letting go of any disengaged team members, or team members who do just enough at work to not get fired.

To successfully get through a recession as a business, dental companies must set themselves apart. This could be through offering same-day dentistry, increasing case acceptance, systemizing team interactions with morning huddles, recapping the schedule, defining clear roles and responsibilities, and anticipating patient's needs and making sure there enough appointments available.

Maintaining team health

Leaders must remain calm and collected during business challenges so they can lead teams with confidence during difficult times. During a recession, teams need clarity and direction, and they will look to the people in charge to know how to act. Leadership matters more during a recession to properly align teams, communicate transparently, make staffing decisions, build morale, and motivate people to do their best work.

Teams need clear and honest communication. Ideally, dental teams should be receiving communication from leaders weekly. Communication includes short descriptions of how the company is performing, what everyone is currently working on, and how goals have been met. This can be done over a communication platform, a group social media page, or a short video emailed to staff.

Teams also need positivity and hope to be communicated from leaders. Teams should be able to

identify with a future in the business and have confidence instilled in them that the company will get through hardship.

Leaders must be transparent with employees, which includes being vulnerable, candid, and authentic. Leadership should reiterate to team members that they are important within the company, and that business could not get done without them, and empower them to make good decisions and step up.

Leadership matters in challenging times more than ever because insufficient leadership during uncertainty can lead to high turnover, unhealthy competition, decreased motivation, decreased productivity, and ultimately a negative patient experience.

Mitigate risk without freezing in fear

Risk for a business occurs anytime that there is uncertainty. The concept of risk has varying degrees, as some business decisions are riskier than others.

For dental practices, risk can include cash flow issues, bad strategic decisions, owner limitations, and labor costs including paying hygiene, front of office staff, and corporate employees.

A strategy to navigate risk during a recession is to consistently remind patients that dental care is a necessity. Everyone still needs dental care despite the state of the economy, and there will always be a need for emergency dental procedures and routine hygiene appointments.

Risk mitigation tools can help businesses think about, assess, and

understand risk in a business. If risk is fully understood for a business, leaders can ensure team members are working in the right direction toward goals.

Flexible staffing models

Dental companies should maintain the correct number of employees to make sure that the business is operating efficiently, referred to as flexible staffing models. Employing the ideal number of staff ensures that cost needs are being met.

Reducing the size of a team can be daunting, but it is important to remember that interpersonal relationships can continue even when a work relationship does not.

Reducing the size of a team can be daunting, but it is important to remember that interpersonal relationships can continue even when a work relationship does not. When leaders are open and transparent with communication about layoffs, relationships can be maintained through mutual understanding and respect.

Right sizing is a part of growth, not a failure for a business. Flexible staffing is not firing one or two employees for performance-related issues, instead, it is necessary to implement when a business needs its revenue and expenses to match up to meet profit margins.

When implementing flexible staffing models, it is ideal for

employee's well-being to be certain about the requirements, size, and necessities of the business and to only conduct large-scale layoffs once. If a business does layoffs in waves, it creates uncertainty and anxiety for staff that are still employed.

Leaders should be thoughtful about how to communicate the need for layoffs. Leaders can be more generous with severance if they act decisively. Make sure consistent information is being communicated from leadership and be clear about

what will happen within the business going forward.

Financial tools

Financial tools create clarity on a business' financial state. Leaders can financially plan by outsourcing or hiring an in-house position to evaluate relevant expense and revenue data. Evaluating financial information allows leaders to understand what they are dealing with and inform their business decisions.

There are four essential tools for businesses to focus on when headed toward an economic recession. The first one is historical reporting, where a business must evaluate performance and measure financial indicators, such as a

WHY FINANCIAL TOOLS MATTER



REDUCE ANXIETY



CREATE CLARITY



**IMPROVE
DECISION-MAKING**



**WITHOUT THEM,
EVERYTHING IS JUST
GUESSWORK**

reduction in case acceptance, determine if the business is seeing production, revenue, or collections go down. Historical reporting includes the income statement, balance sheet, statement of cash flow, and monthly KPIs.

The second essential tool is forward-looking financial information. Dental practices should follow many forecasting models including a 90-day model and a 12-month forecast to evaluate the performance of the business over time. This process of reporting allows business owners to understand that even in a crisis, the cash flow has the potential to be solid going forward based on past performance indicators.

The third tool is OPEX and CAPEX, both finance acronyms used to identify operational expenses such as payroll, labs, supplies, doctor pay, standard rent, marketing costs; all of which show up on income statements.

Measuring the internal rate of return (IRR), or how much a company must spend until it is profitable and the return on investment (ROI) is the fourth tool. IRR and ROI are performance measures used to evaluate the profitability of an investment. These numbers help a business to plan in a controlled way.

A business is ready for the next financial step when it is experiencing increasing growth. Once the current trajectory of growth has been evaluated, financial guidance should be sought to assist the profit-based planning. By prioritizing financial systems, dental companies can navigate a national financial recession with confidence. ■



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Navigating Challenges: DSOs in a Rising Interest Rate Environment

BY ERIC A. SCALZO AND JOHN ARNOLD, HOLLAND & KNIGHT



Dental support organizations (DSOs) play a significant role in the dental industry, providing critical support services to dental practices and expanding access to quality patient care across the country. However, these organizations face unique challenges in a rising and high interest rate environment. The impact of higher interest rates extends beyond increased borrowing costs, encompassing risks such as defaulting on credit facilities, tighter lending conditions, changing business plans, negotiating forbearance with lenders and the risk of foreclosure.

Defaulting on Credit Facilities and Negotiating Forbearance

Rising interest rates can significantly increase the cost of servicing debt for DSOs, putting pressure on their cash flow and potentially leading to default on credit facilities. To mitigate this risk, proactive financial management is essential. DSOs should closely monitor their debt levels, consider refinancing options, negotiate favorable terms with lenders and maintain open lines of communication to address any potential challenges. In situations where DSOs are struggling to meet their debt obligations, seeking forbearance can provide temporary relief. It is important, however, to recognize the risks associated with forbearance, as a failure to meet agreed-upon terms can lead to foreclosure. Engaging in transparent and constructive discussions with lenders, presenting a comprehensive financial plan and seeking professional advice are crucial in these negotiations.

Tighter Lending Conditions and the Risk of Foreclosure

As interest rates rise, lenders often become more cautious, which results in tighter lending conditions. DSOs may face difficulties accessing credit or obtaining favorable loan terms, hindering their expansion plans or ability to invest in new technologies and services. Demonstrating financial stability, strong business models and a clear growth strategy is essential to instill confidence in lenders. Exploring alternative funding options, such as private equity partnerships or strategic alliances, can provide avenues for capital infusion. It is important to carefully assess the

Engaging with financial advisors and experienced legal counsel can provide valuable guidance in developing risk mitigation plans tailored to the unique needs of DSOs.

financial situation, explore available options and engage in transparent discussions with lenders to mitigate the risks of foreclosure.

Changing Business Plans and Adaptation

In a rising interest rate environment, DSOs may need to adapt their business plans to help ensure sustainability and profitability. Higher borrowing costs may require them to optimize operational efficiencies, control expenses and seek new revenue streams. DSOs should evaluate pricing structures, negotiate favorable contracts with vendors, implement cost-effective technologies, and focus on assisting practices with patient retention and acquisition strategies. A proactive approach to monitoring industry trends and adapting business models accordingly is crucial.

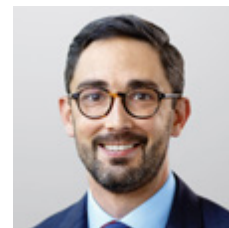
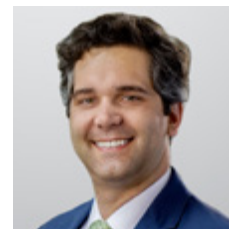
Managing Debt and Interest Rate Risk

DSOs should adopt a prudent approach to managing debt and interest rate risk. This includes diversifying their debt portfolios to mitigate exposure to floating interest rates, exploring fixed-rate financing options, and implementing effective interest rate risk management strategies. Engaging with financial advisors and experienced legal counsel can provide valuable guidance in

developing risk mitigation plans tailored to the unique needs of DSOs.

Moving Forward

As interest rates continue to rise, DSOs face several critical challenges. Defaulting on credit facilities, tighter lending conditions, changing business plans, negotiating forbearance with lenders and the risk of foreclosure are among the significant hurdles. However, by adopting proactive financial management, demonstrating stability to lenders, adapting business models and carefully navigating negotiations, DSOs can successfully navigate these challenges. It is essential for DSOs to monitor the changing landscape, seek outside advice and counsel, and leverage innovative strategies to help ensure their long-term success in a rising interest rate environment. ■



Eric A. Scalzo and John Arnold are partners in Holland & Knight's Nashville office.



Centralization vs. Decentralization

How to make the right decision for your dental organization.

BY EMMET SCOTT, PARTNER, DEO

Streamlining systems and processes for optimal efficiency, productivity, and performance is essential to running and growing a thriving dental practice. Deciding the most effective strategies to create efficiencies can be a difficult task.

One of the first avenues many dental groups explore as they start to scale in how to improve efficiency is whether or not to centralize (and which functions to centralize). There are benefits and costs to explore for centralization and decentralization. And since no two dental practices are alike, either may be right for your business given your current circumstances and business goals.

Centralizing certain activities within your dental practices, if done correctly, can improve efficiency throughout your organization. However, there are reasons not to centralize as well. Following are arguments for both to consider for your dental practice.

The argument for centralization

From an operations perspective, you may have individuals in each dental practice doing an activity that is essential but does not require a full-time job position. Then the question is “How do I maximize this staff member’s time, energy, and expertise around certain activities such as answering the phone or completing billing work?”

To illustrate, consider the scenario where you consolidate the responsibility of answering phones at the front desk to a single person. This means that all incoming calls from different offices will be routed to this individual. By doing so, you can fully utilize their skills and capabilities. This arrangement does reveal one key limitation to centralization: technology. *Alternately, it also highlights a core benefit of centralization: the opportunity to leverage expertise*

across multiple practices through a single staff member.

In the early stages, centralization primarily focuses on consolidating the movement of data, information, or data access, rather than physically relocating people to a central building. To centralize your team, you can establish a system where all data flows to a single group of receptionists at one practice, who would handle tasks for all the other practices. Even though these receptionists are still located within that one practice, they would function as a centralized hub.

Once your practice is centralized, you can begin to make some

For some practices, decentralization makes much more sense than centralizing everything. If the technology isn't available or if it's wearing on the company culture, it would be more beneficial to stay decentralized.

investments into specific metrics. How many phone calls are getting answered or not answered? What percentage of patients are getting called back? How many bills should someone be able to post? How many appointments are scheduled in a certain period of time? You can start measuring these activities for efficiency.

Centralization offers the advantage of bringing together various areas of expertise. For instance, you can gather the revenue cycle management billing team or customer service representatives in a shared workspace. This setup enables a smooth transition so that when turnover happens and new staff members join, experienced staff



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within the same location are available to train them.

The argument for decentralization

A decentralized practice is a typical dental practice where a staff member is at a reception answering phone calls, a staff member is covering human resources, and another staff member is handling billing. For example, in a decentralized dental organization with five practices, you would have different staff handling these functions at each practice.

For some practices, decentralization makes much more sense than centralizing everything. If the technology isn't available or if it's wearing on the company culture, it would be more beneficial to stay decentralized. One problem I have seen frequently is when a dental organization has centralized a role, but that role really served two purposes in the practice. They might have been handling billing while also covering X-rays or some other activity. When such a role is centralized, it does not result in increased efficiency because the organization needs to hire someone else to fill the void. Then, centralization may enhance capabilities, but it does not lead to reduced costs as initially anticipated.

Some practices may stay decentralized because it's just easier and more efficient to operate that way. Centralization may require you to build out a new facility for your centralized team, which will also require a manager. Leadership might say something along the lines of, "We've already got office



managers in place at each practice. The practices are different enough that centralization isn't going to give us more leverage, or the staff covering activities required by their primary job role are also fulfilling additional activities outside of that role. If we centralized, we would still have to hire staff to handle those activities."

Additionally, you might have purchased a group of practices that bill totally different insurances or collect money differently. Implementing centralization necessitates a certain degree of standardization

that would be challenging to uphold among these diverse practices. Consequently, you would not be able to achieve any efficiency gains by centralizing any of these roles.

There is no one right decision for whether to centralize or decentralize certain activities in your dental practice. While centralization can lead to improved efficiency and the leveraging of expertise, it may not always result in reduced costs or be feasible in practices with diverse operations. Ultimately, each dental practice should carefully evaluate its

unique circumstances and goals to determine if centralization is the best course of action.

How the DEO can help

One of the major advantages afforded to members of the Dentist Entrepreneur Organization (DEO) is access to a large network of dental leaders who have centralized their practices in many different circumstances, like high volume in a Medicaid environment or high level of customer care in a geriatric environment. Alternately, there are DEO members who chose to keep a decentralized model for their practices. There are also members who

The nuance of centralization is a common conversation in our Mastermind Sessions including what technologies are available and which ones work best for specific centralization scenarios.

are doing a mix of both, centralizing certain functions like billing but staying decentralized for others. The DEO member network is an invaluable resource for determining if, when, and what to centralize. Additionally, the DEO has a number of training and resources weighing the pros and cons and offering strategies for

centralization available in our exclusive online portal available to members. The nuance of centralization is a common conversation in our Mastermind Sessions including what technologies are available and which ones work best for specific centralization scenarios. Find out how you can become a DEO Member by visiting deodentalgroup.com. ■

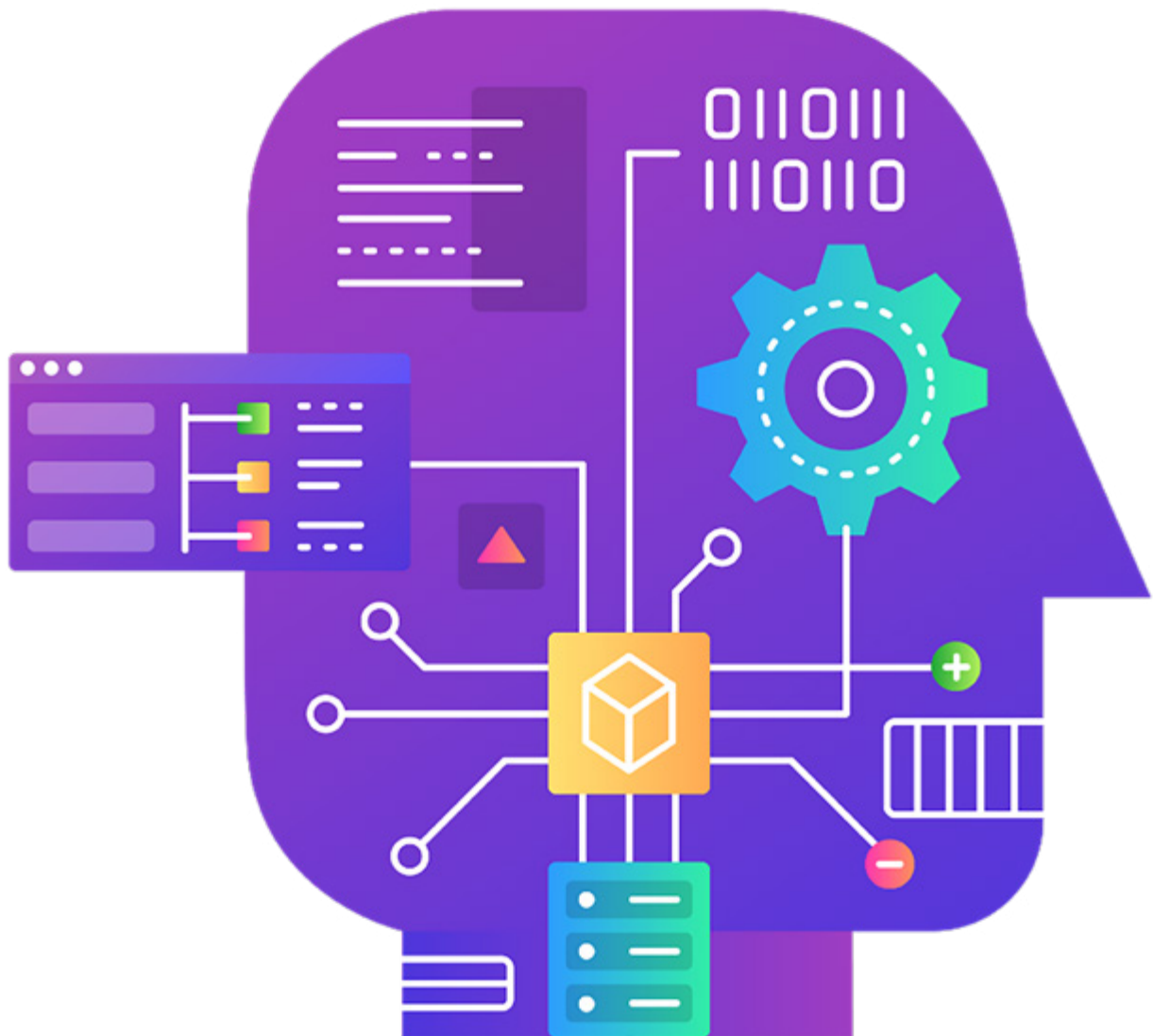


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5 Different AI Platforms to Help You Stay Ahead of This Rapidly Growing Technology

Exploring the transformative impact of AI, technological shifts, and highlighting its potential benefits and challenges.

BY C. P. KEYSER, DCO

As 2023 winds down, it is clear that the hottest hot-button topic is AI and how the new technology is changing the world. AI has gone from being a villain in a sci-fi movie to being a tool that people are starting to use daily to improve their businesses and lives.

Much like when the Internet started hitting homes in the '90s, things changed quickly. People were scared of losing their jobs and wondered what effect it would have on children. The Internet was a technology disruptor, and now we are at a time when AI technology is changing things again.

Jobs will be lost, and some industries will see radical changes as new technology takes hold. Occupations like graphic designers, lawyers, doctors, content creators, and even auditors will be forced to adapt to the new reality that AI is creating.

Every industry will feel the waves of change hit as AI starts making some of our daily tasks, and some jobs obsolete.

But, it's nothing new.

The telegraph ended the Pony Express.

Video killed the radio star.

Streaming took out the video rental industry.

For every industry that the new technology will hurt, there will be many that thrive.

When computers were introduced to NASA, humans like Katherine Gobel who did the calculations by hand started to become obsolete. The people that got the space program off the ground were not the same people that built the space station.

Calculations were no longer done by hand, but people had to know how to work and read the machines that were doing the tough calculations.



We're at a point where AI technology will become just part of our lives and businesses in the near future. We're not quite there yet, but there are AI tools that can cut costs and save time for your dental business.

As these new technologies develop, it will be important to stay on top of the emerging industry that is being created to make life and business easier.

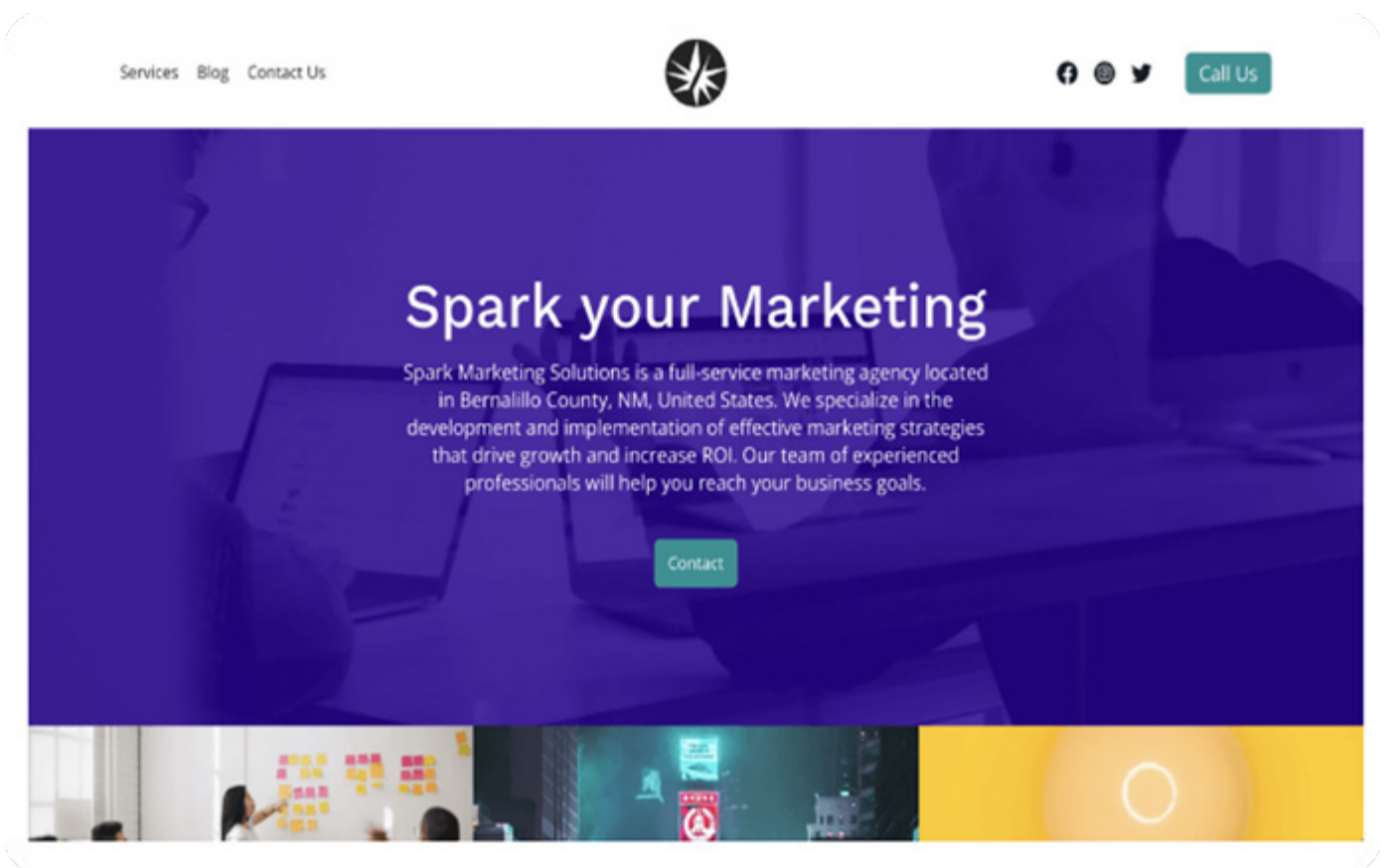
New doors will open, and it is important to recognize the opportunities that will sprout as this new technology grows. Gary Vaynerchuk started his digital marketing career by email when nobody else was emailing people. Back when it was brand new.



He didn't create anything new, but just simply used the new technology to reach new customers in different ways. As AI develops, it is important to grow with it and see what tools can make your life better.

There are new AI tools and resources available every week and even in the early stages of this technological revolution, these tools can save a lot of time and money in different scenarios. Everyone talks about ChatGPT, but what else is coming out of this new industry?

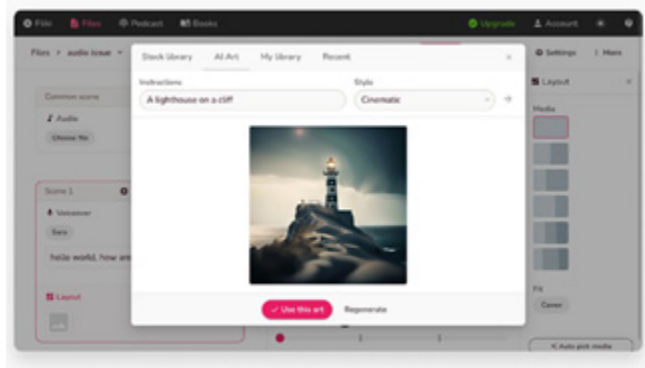
Here are five AI platforms that solve a wide variety of problems. Next time you have a project or task, try some of these AI platforms and see if you can start saving some time and money.



Fliki - fliki.ai

What Is It? - Fliki is a text-to-video or text-to-voice platform that can take your written copy and turn it into videos with voice-overs.

Application - Fliki can be used to improve your videos on websites, training, and HR videos, as well as with content creation for your social media.



Looka Logo Maker - looka.com

What Is It? - Looka Logo Maker will do exactly what it sounds like. Make a beautiful logo and build cohesive branding for your business with Looka.

Application - It doesn't matter if you have any design skills or never made a logo before. Looka will use AI technology to help bring your ideas to life and then finalize your logo.

Playground AI - playgroundai.com

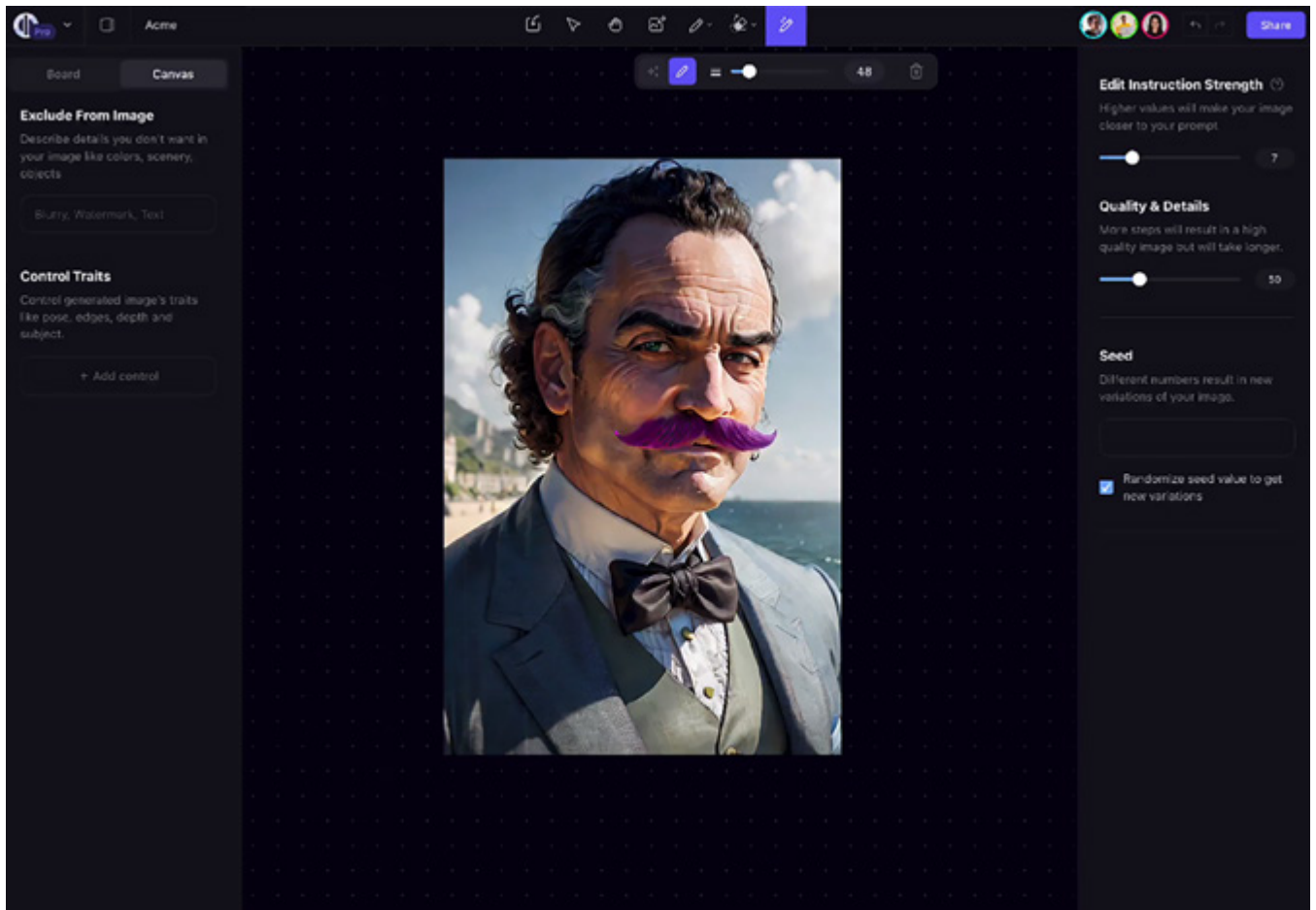
What Is It? - Playground AI is where you can go to turn text into art. Make graphics with text prompts and you can even use images as starter images.

Application - Whenever you need an image for social media, for ads, or for recruiting, AI can save time and money. Creating your own image for social media could really help capture the eyes of potential patients.

Tutor AI - tutorai.me

What Is It? - Tutor AI is an AI-powered learning platform where you can simply enter any topic and almost instantly are given various options you can use to learn about that topic.

An advertisement for Bisco dental products. The top half features a blue and purple gradient background with the text 'Award-Winning Solutions for Group Practices' in white. The Bisco logo is in the top right corner. Below the text, several dental products are shown, including 'ZirClean Restoration Cleaner', 'DUO-LINK UNIVERSAL', 'TheraCem', 'TheraBase', 'TheraCal PT', and 'FluoroC'. The bottom half of the ad has a red background with a QR code, the text 'LEARN HOW TO SIMPLIFY YOUR DENTISTRY', and contact information: 'Contact Sarah Peterson for more information: speterson@bisco.com 1-847-534-6016'.



Application - If you search, “how to fill a tooth cavity”, you will be given four different modules on “understanding cavities”, “types of dental fillings”, “procedure for filling a cavity” and “cavity prevention and maintenance”. This is much easier than going to Google to learn something. Just type what you want to learn, and let the growth begin.

Durable - Durable.co

What Is It? - Durable is an AI website builder that will take your ideas and turn them into a website with copy and graphics.

Application - Remember having to get a website designer to build you a website, not anymore. You can simply use Durable to build you a website with basic prompts. This is perfect if you are starting a personal brand website, or need to make something for a promotional launch.

These are just a few of the hundreds of AI tools that are out there and available for use. These are also just a sample of what is possible as AI technology grows. Artificial intelligence isn’t going anywhere, and as our world changes it is important to grow with technology. ■



C. P. Keyser is the CRO Specialist for the DEO, Author of “100 Digital Marketing Ideas: 100 Awesome Promotions, Contests & Content Ideas For Small Businesses In A Digital World”. Keyser founded one of the first social media manage-

ment companies in the world, and also co-founded NFT Gaming and Collectibles. He is an influencer in the NFT space of crypto gaming and digital collecting.

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Increasing Productivity and Decreasing Costs with Inflation

Key initiatives dental organizations can implement to increase profit and create a market niche.

BY JENNA HUGHES

Costs are rising as the nation faces financial inflation, and the overall price of goods and services continues to increase. Dental organizations especially deal with the impacts of inflation as dental supplies, labor, and overhead costs climb, leading to unexpected costs and high expenses.

To be able to navigate the financial challenges of inflation, dental organizations must create a niche to stand out in the changing marketplace. Dental practices that are the least impacted by inflation tend to have a distinct market strategy. For Westwind Integrated Health, the stronghold that kept the practice afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic was the team's focus on delivering a culture of wellness to the overall community. To ensure patient health, dental practices must consider the mouth and the rest of the body as one wellness entity.

Westwind Integrated Health has developed a wellness model within their practice to hedge against inflation and financial recessions, said Dr. Maryam Beyramian, CEO and Founder of Westwind Integrated Health in Phoenix, Arizona. Dr. Beyramian's advice to dental leaders is to recognize that the market fluctuates, and organizations should plan their business strategy accordingly to anticipate these changes.

Even with a clearly defined business strategy, it is important to remember that patient numbers may still decrease during times of financial stress. There will inevitably be times when a practice has less patients, especially during inflation events, but the productivity of staff will increase if a practice focuses on humanistic care.

A human-focused practice begins with a dental practice's team. Morning and evening huddles, periodic meetings, and performance evaluations will allow a dental team to review and evaluate what they did, saw, built, and collected throughout

the day. These checks will ensure that everyone is holding themselves accountable and making workplace improvements.

Increasing profit

To become more profit oriented, dental leaders must determine a vision and mission for the organization. In dentistry, making a profit goes beyond just scheduling more patients or drilling more teeth. Instead, the road to a greater income and success for a dental organization requires a systematic approach.

Dentistry is a necessary service. Dentists must reiterate to patients at each touchpoint that dentistry is not an option for them, and if they don't make appointments, they are going to get sick. It must be clear to patients that to prevent getting sick, they must commit to making consistent dental visits.

Dentists must reiterate to patients at each touchpoint that dentistry is not an option for them, and if they don't make appointments, they are going to get sick.

Patients that are encouraged throughout each visit that dental health is integral to overall health are more likely to make future appointments, despite their financial situations. If patients are still making appointments in light of inflation, then business doesn't go down as drastically.

Stay true to vision and mission

To begin guiding productivity, dental leaders must first understand the

magnitude of rising costs and how they are directly impacting the business. Once the impact of inflation is evaluated, strategies and goals for each team can be implemented.

Each team member within a dental organization has a goal with distinct deliverables. To track team productivity, it is helpful to use software technology. Track the deliverables that staff are able to make a daily or weekly difference in. These deliverables include day prep, scheduling, productivity, etc.

From the data collected, analyze factors from the external environment that may be impacting business.

For example, you may also see a decrease in the amount of patients seeking dental services caused by things out of your control such as patients leaving the geographical areas you serve due to inclement weather or financial constraints

that prevent people from having the income/money to spend on dental care.

When dealing with the chaos of recession related business downturn, it is important to remain focused on the overall goals of the organization to be able to navigate any external challenges that may arise. The narrower your services and market is, the more likely that repeatable processes can be implemented to overcome inflation related financial changes. ■

How to Gain Clarity in an Unclear Time

With the right tools, dental practice leaders can overcome business-related challenges and achieve success.

BY JENNA HUGHES

Dental organization leaders plan, strategize, and organize dental offices to the best of their ability to run a smooth and successful business. Many industry leaders have experienced firsthand that a business strategy and plan can be devised, but even the most thorough plan is subject to the external environment. Inevitably, a dental practice will face unexpected challenges that make running an organization more difficult. It is key for business leaders to remain confident in themselves and encourage their teams to remain positive when hurdles arise.



Learning how to manage a business through uncertain times allows dental practices to organize, comprehend, and evaluate the overall operations of an organization. Assessing how to grow a business, think strategically, and determine what work needs more focus leads to better overall outcomes for a practice's patients and business.

Examples of uncertainty that specifically impacted dental organizations were the recent inflationary pressures, workforce shortages and supply chain disruptions. Many dental practices' short-term and long-term goals, as well as financial forecasts, were completely upended. Not to mention their staffing models. For many

organizations, it was necessary to develop new strategies to stand out among industry competitors.

So, how can dental practices gain clarity during uncertainty?

Reassessing business strategy in the face of challenges

The first place that dental leaders can begin to have leverage within an organization in an unclear time is by considering their own impact on the organization. Starting the process of clarity within a business by evaluating oneself is difficult, but it allows leaders to gain further understanding of the goals that need to be achieved personally before guiding teams. The process of individual introspection as a leader exposes who an individual is and how they operate under uncertain circumstances. This self-administered evaluation of performance can allow a leader a new perspective and lead to overall business transformation.

Everyone reacts differently to workplace stressors. Some individuals react with frustration or anxiety in uncertain situations. As an entrepreneur, it is important to focus on reducing any anxiety related to business uncertainty and to focus on regaining confidence. Staff look to leaders for guidance in times of

uncertainty, and if a leader does not recognize their impact, they can negatively impact their team.

Leaders must determine how quickly and how often they are able to get back to confidence in the face of challenges. They must constantly work toward improving their game. A successful leader determines how they can improve and make changes at the ideal speed so that they are able to stay at a high level of confidence.

Vision and team

There is no doubt that the dental industry faced many operational challenges because of inflationary pressures, workforce shortages and supply chain disruptions. Business challenges, while at times overwhelming for an organization, ultimately foster learning. Overcoming a workplace challenge helps individual employees and the team experience personal development and growth. After a challenge is navigated and solutions are developed, staff will know how to address them as a team and be adequately prepared to create new strategies in the future.

After the leadership team rebuilds its confidence, the next step is for them to focus on guiding teams to success. In uncertainty, successful dental leaders reevaluate and reinvent a new vision for the company to fit new circumstances.

To reimagine the company vision, teams must consider the original company mission. The process of reevaluating the company's goals allows space to reset and reconsider what needs to be accomplished. Once

a leader and the dental team reconsider the overall goals of the practice, there is opportunity for leverage.

In uncertainty, teams must move from chaos to momentum. A large part of momentum is rebuilding teams and making decisions. Starting the journey of clarity and progress begins with determining what your teams need to work toward and having clear, outlined goals that can be accomplished.

Learning how to manage a business through uncertain times allows dental practices to organize, comprehend, and evaluate the overall operations of an organization.

So, what does momentum look like and how do you get there? To achieve team momentum, leaders must connect with each member on a team and check-in on the progress that is being made toward goals.

As a leader gets further into the strategic arena they must document, organize, and prioritize the goals to work toward that fall within the company vision. This ensures that teams are prioritizing the work that will allow the business to have clarity when working through uncertainty.

Fragile to unshakeable

A successful leader strives for employees to learn from the experience of each challenge. The next step toward clarity in uncertain situations is to move a business from being fragile to unshakeable.

Unshakeable is defined as a clear roadmap of procedures in the face of challenges and knowledge of how to regain company-wide confidence no matter what challenges may arise.

One example of a way that businesses can become unshakeable is through the introduction of technological advances, so that an organization can streamline its processes and depend less on repetitive tasks.

Another way is to change seats on the bus or allow for movement throughout the different positions within the company. Every time a problem is faced within a dental practice that leads to uncertainty, people have a chance to grow from the experience.

Challenging scenarios create the best strategic plans for a company because each team knows what they need to accomplish to get to the common goal of business stability. As a business grows into prosperity, inevitably there will be uncertainty along the way. However, if leaders focus on the fundamental vision and overall business goals, leaders can move organizations from being fragile to unshakeable. The next time a challenge is faced going forward, employees and leadership teams will know exactly how to tackle it. ■

Through Dental Community Advocacy, Reform Is Gaining Momentum

BY ANDREW SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ADSO



At a time when the shape of healthcare is changing across the nation, the need for significant reform to existing laws governing the dental industry has never been greater. The industry is currently at a crossroads, facing rising costs, a workforce that cannot adequately meet demand, and a system that often serves insurers over patients. The issues at hand will define the future of dentistry. Fortunately, the Association of Dental Support Organizations (ADSO) has been able to join the dental community in celebrating a series of legislative victories in states across the country that will improve outcomes for dental professionals and patients alike.

Throughout the past year, the ADSO helped lead the push for the passage and enactment of legislation addressing some of the most pressing issues facing the industry. From the introduction of Medical Loss Ratio via ballot initiative in Massachusetts to the passage of interstate licensure compacts in Iowa and Washington, the ADSO has taken part in a number of legislative reform efforts aimed at resolving challenges like the workforce shortage and suboptimal practices on the part of insurers.

Different states have, of course, required different types of reform.

In Arkansas, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, we looked to Assignment of Benefits (AOB) legislation, which requires insurers to follow a patient's request to pay their dentist directly for services rendered. In states where these laws don't exist, insurers often pay the patient instead of the dentist, creating confusion and additional hurdles for patients.

In Iowa and Washington, we saw the enactment of licensure compact laws for dentists and dental hygienists, which streamline recognition of licenses from providers in the participating compact states with the goal of increasing the supply of

dental professionals and thus expanding access to care for patients.

Spurred along in part by our ballot initiative victory in Massachusetts, Colorado and Nevada passed critical legislation focused on Medical Loss Ratios (MLR). This refers to the share of premiums paid to a plan spent on treatment and activities that improve the quality of care, where the remainder is the share spent on administration, fees, and profits earned. These laws regulated how much of premium payments must be spent on actual patient care, reducing costs for patients.

Finally, Illinois, Minnesota, and Missouri passed laws relating to

both Network Leasing and Virtual Credit Cards. In the case of the former, a preferred provider organization (PPO) rents its dental network to other PPOs, such that the first PPO's in-network dentists must unknowingly accept patients and terms as an "in-network" provider with other PPO, which harms dental practices. For the latter, the laws addressed the not uncommon problem of dental plans and third-party administrators (TPAs) paying dental offices with a credit/debit card as the only payment option. Dentists have reported that the card may carry a higher processing fee than a traditional

debit or credit card transaction, which results in lower reimbursement for the care provided. In some cases, insurance companies even share in the revenue generated from these fees.

At each stage, collaboration with our dental organization partners, dentists, dental hygienists, and legislators who understand the importance of our proposed reforms has been absolutely essential. Together we confidently pushed ahead with the knowledge that coordinated efforts from within the industry to achieve change on these critical issues will determine the coming decades of dental care. ■

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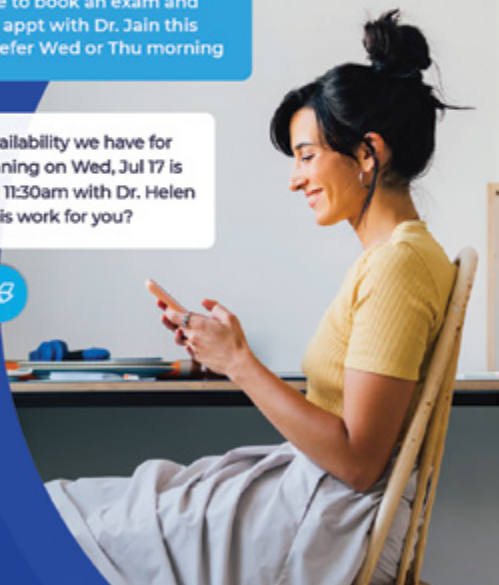
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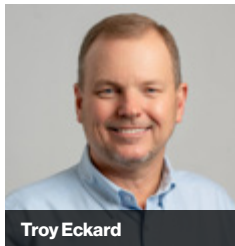
Unlock the secrets to building a thriving dental organization with DEO's Growth Secrets Podcast.



Emmet Scott, DEO Partner and host, interviews a diverse line-up of dental industry leaders, revealing the secrets behind their success and extracting the tactics and tools they used along the way that can be incorporated by all listeners. In each episode, guests share their wisdom and insights in never-before-told stories that dig deeper into the challenges, failures, and triumphs that leaders face as they strive to build thriving organizations.

EP 169: Investment Opportunities Most Dentists Don't Consider But Should (Sponsored By Eckard Enterprises)

In this episode, Ken Kaufman hosts Troy Eckard, CEO & Manager, of Eckard Enterprises to discuss alternative asset classes and unique investment opportunities for dentists and entrepreneurs to earn passive income. They also discuss the topics of what it means to be a high net-worth individual; private equity; traditional financial investment institutions; the volatile current economy; energy and mineral rights investments; banking; the stock market; retirement and estate planning; and much, much more.



Troy Eckard

EP 171: Large Practice Sales Trends with Chip Fichtner (Sponsored By Large Practice Sales)

Emmet hosts Chip Fichtner, Co-founder and Principal, Large Practice Sales. They discuss the difference between a DSO and what Chip calls an "IDSO", what's

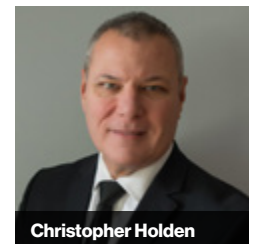


Chip Fichtner

happening in the marketplace right now if you're thinking about a transaction, what constitutes a "large practice sale", ways deals are being structured currently, and much more. Chip shares what numbers to look out for and any potential red flags when considering a transaction. They dive deep into specific financial indicators to review when evaluating a DSO's financial health, and many more financial topics.

EP 172: Innovative Products to Improve Efficiencies in Your Practice (Sponsored By Ivoclar)

Emmet hosts Christopher Holden, President of Ivoclar North America. They discuss key business principles Christopher has heeded in his career and leading both small and big companies. Emmet and Christopher highlight why keeping innovation at the forefront of what any business does is key, and in dentistry that means best serving the needs of patients for convenience and quality – whether it's the services dentistry provides or the products both doctors and patients need. Christopher talks about how Ivoclar embodies this philosophy, and reviews how their products can help you create efficiencies to grow your dental company and more! ■



Christopher Holden



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