

# DE | MAGAZINE

DENTIST ENTREPRENEUR ORGANIZATION

## Recruiting & Building Executive Teams

What to look for when bringing on board a new CEO, or other leadership roles, for your dental organization.

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## What Makes You Stronger

How Dr. Yooson Kim learned discipline through adversity in her personal life and professional career.

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# Leading with Confidence

Clinician. Entrepreneur. Leader. Mom. Dr. Laxmi Reddy believes today's women dental leaders can do it all.

▶ 18



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## Leading with Confidence

**Clinician. Entrepreneur. Leader. Mom. Dr. Laxmi Reddy believes today's women dental leaders can do it all.**

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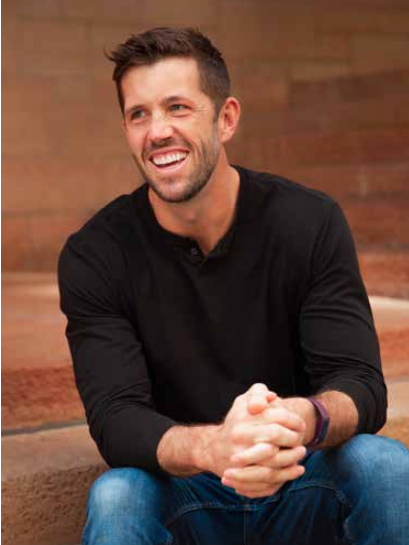
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# Sources of Inspiration

BY JAKE PUHL



**The word ‘authentic’ gets thrown around a lot when speaking of desirable traits of a leader. But what does that mean, exactly?**

Dr. Laxmi Reddy, co-owner of Smile Loft, told us for this issue’s cover story that the best way she’s found to motivate her team is to be with them, support them, work with them, and connect with them. She’s made it a priority to ask team members what their challenges are. And perhaps here is a key difference-maker – she will also share her challenges with them.

“I’m a bit more of an introvert, so it’s harder for me,” she told us. “But I’ve noticed that as I’ve learned to engage, as I have shared my challenges or what I’m working on, it has become much easier to connect.”

Dr. Reddy credits the mutual authenticity between she and her team as one reason for her organization’s phenomenal growth over the last few years. Smile Loft Dental has tripled its revenue to \$20+ million and quadrupled its staff since the pandemic.

Dr. Reddy is one of several high-profile women leaders that we highlight in this issue. In another article, Peak Dental Services’ Amber Collins discusses how to balance standardization with team member considerations in a demanding

marketplace. Dr. ArNelle Wright has a personal development program that recent graduates, young dentists, and dental group practices will want to read about. And, Dr. Yooson Kim shares her inspiring story of how she has overcome adversity in her personal life as well as career.

We’ll have several women leaders from the dental industry at our DEO Summit this summer. Dr. Kim, Tiffany Fleisch, Amber Nish, and Dr. Maja Martin are a few of the names that will be on stage for panels and presentations. You can check out the full list of speakers, schedule, and agenda for the DEO Summit at: [deosummit.com](https://deosummit.com).

Cheers!

**Jake Puhl**



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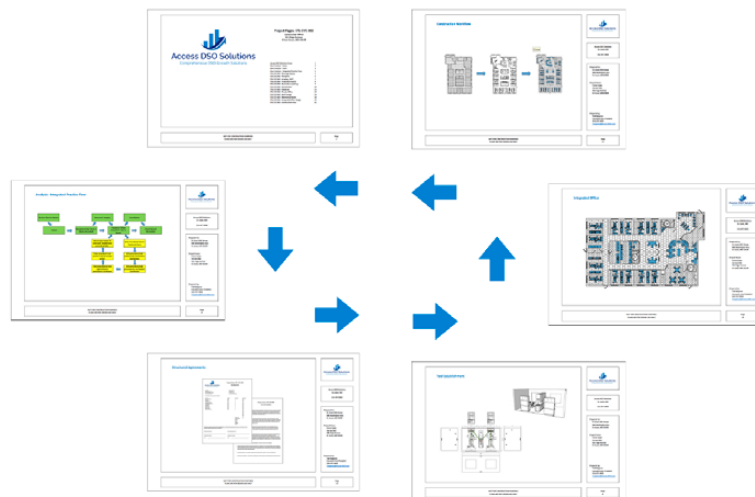
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# Meet the Phenomenal Women Leaders Speaking at Summit

Be inspired by remarkable women in group dentistry, successful dental entrepreneurs, and leaders driving positive change.

BY LAURA BOWLES, DEO

These incredible leading women in dental will take the stage at DEO Summit 2024.

## Dr. Yooson Kim, DDS

### Founder and CEO, Family Dentistry of Morgantown, PA

Dr. Kim earned a DMD from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. She is the founder and CEO of Family Dentistry of Morgantown, a seven-location dental group. Dr. Kim leverages cutting-edge technology to enhance patient care and practice efficiency.

Dr. Kim will speak with Tiffany Fleisch on “Crucial AI Hacks & Systems You Need To Implement In 2024” and delve into the realm of AI in dentistry, how to use it to optimize the patient experience, elevate diagnostic accuracy, and more.



## Tiffany Fleisch

### Director of Operations, Frandsen Dental, Utah

Tiffany has held many key dental company roles, including dental assistant, office manager, and Director of Operations at Frandsen Dental, playing a pivotal role in their successful growth. Her expertise lies in optimizing practice operations and building high-performing teams.

With Dr. Kim, Tiffany will share how to use AI to streamline patient engagement for improved experiences; harness predictive analytics to optimize inventory and boost efficiency; and more in “Crucial AI Hacks & Systems You Need To Implement In 2024.”





**Dr. Maja Martin, DDS**

**Co-Founder and Chief Dental Officer, Village Dental**

Dr. Martin knows what it takes to grow a successful dental group from the ground up. With a focus on sedation dentistry, Village Dental has achieved remarkable growth under Dr. Martin's leadership. She is a 2002 graduate of the UNC Adams School of Dentistry and was a member of the 1994 UNC Women's National Championship Basketball team.

She'll be part of a Summit panel "How Three Dental Groups Grew 10X and Beyond". Attendees will hear struggles and highlights from Dr. Martin's inspirational journey, plus top growth strategies, how to overcome operational hurdles, and transition to an executive leadership role.

**Amber Nish**

**DEO Coach**

Amber is a seasoned expert in dental marketing and practice management, previously holding roles as Chief Marketing Officer, Call Center Director, and more with most of her career spent at Community Dental Partners serving over 70 locations and multiple brands. Amber has spoken at several industry events and served in ADSO and Women in DSO.

At Summit, Amber will speak on "How To Generate More Revenue and Patient Flow In 2024" by optimizing the patient experience, increasing case acceptance, leveraging digital marketing, and more. She will also present "Ultimate Hiring/Staffing Framework for Associates & Hygienists in 2024/2025" with hiring tactics including how to hire intentionally; and develop an appealing recruitment brand; simple retention "rules" to create an inspiring workplace; and more.

While the opportunity to learn from these incredible women is reason enough to attend the Summit, there's much more.

Get a roadmap to multiply your dental practice margins, a plan to grow your business, elevate your team, navigate challenges confidently, and more. Plus enjoy networking opportunities and more at the gorgeous Gaylord Resort in Orlando. ■



**The popularity of Summit increases each year so register now by scanning the QR code. ▶**

**SCAN ME**



# Neighborhood Dental

Though dentistry is a business, it's also an opportunity to change people's lives for the better, says Neighborhood Dental's Tia Meyer.

BY PETE MERCER



## Mission and values of Neighborhood Dental

Founded in 2004, Neighborhood Dental is a multi-site dental organization with 12 locations in South Dakota and Nebraska. Dr. Nicholas Shawd and his brother-in-law Mike Scott had a vision to build Neighborhood Dental into a dental group that served the state of South Dakota.

While Neighborhood Dental started expanding its footprint through de novo offices, they are currently focused on acquisitions or prior established dental office spaces. Across the 12 locations and two states, they serve over 42,000 patients and are looking to grow strategically, ensuring that patient care is at the forefront of everything they do.

“We understand dentistry is a business, but business operations don't take place unless you have strong clinical practices and patients seeking your services. If you do it the right way, having patient care at the forefront, the business will take care of itself!” Meyer said, “Our goal is two to three acquisitions a year, which is a methodology that allows for positive transitions. This allows us to form relationships with the established team members, complete training, and ensure we have alignment with regard to overall philosophy/standard of care.”

**A career in healthcare and dentistry involves improving the lives and outcomes of your patients. Changing your career into that space can be the result of a perspective shift, from working for yourself to working to improve the lives of others – a shift that Tia Meyer experienced while working in retail.**

*DEO Magazine* recently sat down with Meyer to talk about her role at Neighborhood Dental, how she came to be in the dental industry, and the future of the practice. Meyer started in the industry as a dental assistant, went on to obtain her bachelor's degree in dental hygiene, and currently serves as the Clinical Director/RDH of Neighborhood Dental.



Neighborhood Dental works to improve the lives of its patients through advanced dentistry practices and state-of-the-art technology and systems. “Our mission has always been to save our patients pain, time, and money. The way we do that is by making sure that we follow our standard of care, and operating systems, and set forth protocols. By doing these things, we are able to ensure that our patients are the number one priority.”

As for the culture aspect of the company, Meyer says that it’s something that will always be prioritized. “We must continue to evolve in this regard, listening to feedback from our team members and then working

to improve to become better. The stronger our team members are, the better the patient service and that is what it is all about!”

One of the new culture protocols Neighborhood Dental has implemented is a word that the entire team can stand behind for the year. “It’s one word that gives meaning, mission, passion, and purpose to everything we do throughout the year!” Meyer says. This one word is expressed throughout the offices and remains the focal point at the start of each day. One of the words the team has picked in the last few years is “teamwork”, which was reinforced in all the communications, training, education, and patient care processes.

“This year, our word is ‘commitment,’” Meyer says. “It’s really neat how this has taken off, because you will hear the team using this word – you go into a location, and assistants, hygienists, leaders, and doctors are all expressing it in some way!”

### Improving patient care processes

Part of Neighborhood’s strategy for saving their patient’s time is same-day dentistry – when patients call to schedule appointments, team members at Neighborhood know to facilitate and move things around the schedule to make sure they can get into an office that day. For Meyer, this is one of the advantages of the operations of a multi-site dental organization. “With multiple locations, our teams can coordinate with other offices to ensure that the patients are being seen.”

The Neighborhood teams are also equipped with the technology and tools that they need to take better care of their patients. Over recent years, they have implemented digital scanners, allowing doctors to digitally scan the mouths of their patients, preventing manual impressions. The same technology can be used to deliver crowns on the same day, preventing the typical process that includes multiple appointments, hence saving the patients, “time”.

“We are committed to creating value during the patient’s visits so that they know the importance of coming back for recalls and follow-ups,” Meyer says. “We want them to understand that establishing a dental home is necessary – not just when a problem presents, but for



long-term purposes. Being proactive about dental health, which has a direct relation to overall health, is an investment, but will only save a person financially in the long run,” Meyer says.

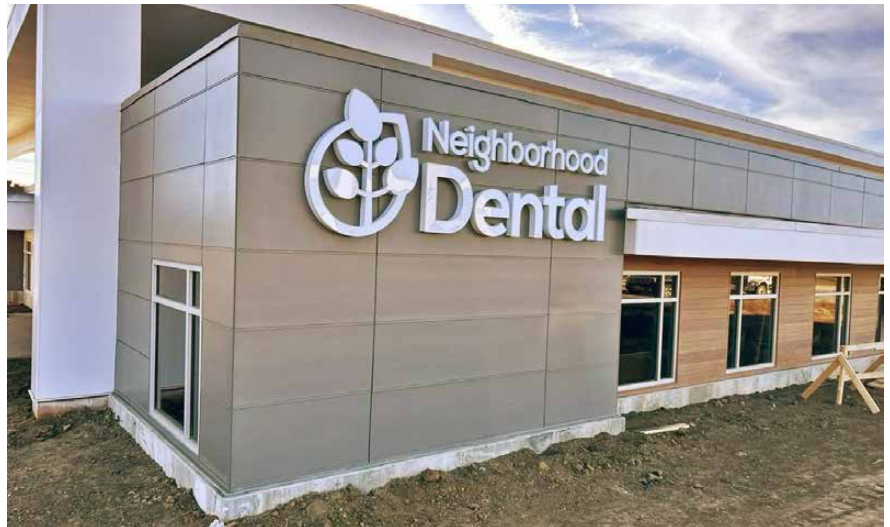
### Selling what patients need

Meyer started her dental career about 16 years ago by applying for a dental assistant role at Neighborhood Dental’s first location in Tea, South Dakota. She’s spent her entire career with the organization, spending the early days training chairside and attending evening classes to get her dental assisting degree at Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls.

“I’ve been with Neighborhood Dental every step of the way in my career, and they have supported me through all of it. I worked clinically as a dental assistant for a while, and eventually applied for dental hygiene school at the University of South Dakota where I obtained my Bachelor’s degree.”

She studied to earn a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of South Dakota, while still working at Neighborhood Dental when her schedule would allow. She said, “They were committed to giving me a job when I got done and I came back to work as a clinical hygienist, before eventually moving on to a leadership role.”

As the organization grew, a need arose to establish a support management team and standardize some of their processes and procedures. Meyer became the hygiene coordinator, where she began to develop standard operating procedures and



protocols, before eventually stepping into her current role.

As the clinical director, Meyer works with all the offices, doctors, assistants, and hygienists to focus on developing leadership skills, obtain continuing education, and continue to enhance overall clinical systems.

Before she joined Neighborhood Dental and started her career in the industry, Meyer sold clothes at a local South Dakota-based retail chain, The Buckle. Through Buckle’s unique and successful business model as well as renowned lead-

ership training, Meyer was able to develop her leadership skills which only influenced her as she moved into the dental industry.

About that experience, Meyer said, “I was really good at selling what people wanted. It was a learning process and a great leadership experience, but I wanted to make a difference in people’s lives by impacting what they need. Now, I am in the business of selling what patients need and making a difference. It is truly amazing to know that we are in an industry that is changing lives!” ■



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# Clinician and Coach

**Dr. ArNelle Wright shares what led her to pursue a career in dentistry and why she hopes to inspire other dentists.**

BY JENNA HUGHES

**Dr. ArNelle Wright's earliest encounter receiving dental care was later than most.** As a high school student experiencing dental pain, once she received that much-needed dental care, she was beyond grateful for the emotional well-being that came along with the visit. Her early dental experiences were impactful in such a way that led her to pursue a career in dentistry so that she too could improve people's lives in the same way.

"In my own practice, I want patients to feel safe, cared for, respected, and worthy; in the same way that the dentist I saw took care of me," said Dr. Wright, now a practicing clinician and dental career coach.

Patients are often apprehensive to visit the dentist, as many anticipate pain and anxiety associated with dental procedures. Dr. Wright's primary patient demographic includes patients in terminal dentition, which means these patients are at the point of losing all their teeth. As a result, these individuals are often frightened and anxious about their treatment, and sometimes avoid it altogether. Dr. Wright ensures that she meets each patient where they are, recognizing that their care comes at a crucial time in their lives.

"There is a lot of emotion attached to losing your teeth, as patients view them as a part of who they are," she said. "I take pride in explaining all the treatment options to the patient upfront, so that they make the best decision for their self-esteem, budget, long-term outcomes, and expectations."



Dr. Wright believes her ultimate job with terminal dentition cases is to be a bridge for the patient's next step, which typically includes educating them and making them feel comfortable with their treatment options: do nothing, fabricate either complete dentures, partial dentures where applicable, or replace their teeth with an implant-supported restoration.

## In and out of the operatory

Being a successful, trusted dentist requires not only extensive clinical expertise, but empathy for patients

in their unique situation. Dr. Wright hosts coaching sessions to use what she has learned throughout her time in the profession to train, assist, and walk alongside other women dentists.

For Dr. Wright, personal growth and development is at the forefront of each interaction within her career, be it with patients, auxiliary staff, or colleagues. Because it's her passion, she piloted the "Being and Becoming Your Best" program, to help other dentists and dental practices focus on their patient care, while developing both their leadership and business acumen.

"Being and Becoming Your Best [BBYB] is a community that provides coaching to individuals and groups of women ready to take their career to the next level," Dr. Wright said. "We focus on leadership development, which includes generating buy-in from your dental team."

Within BBYB, Dr. Wright also consults dental teams on the culture piece to their practice, what it looks like in the day-to-day, and how it's felt and recognized by patients. "It's so important for dentists and licensed professionals to understand each role within their practice along with the ins and outs of their business," she said.

Verbal communication skills, clear expectations, a starting point to growth, and recognizing team needs

are among the tools Dr. Wright brings to equip her clients for personalized success. “I also teach a course called C.R.E.A.T.E. the Culture, where I do a deep dive with the practice owner and the practice manager, separately and together, to get a clear understanding of what their expectations are concerning office culture, on both a leadership and team level. We start these sessions by identifying where they are currently (starting point), understanding their current pain points, while keeping team growth, practice growth, and patient care in mind, and we grow from there.”

C.R.E.A.T.E. the Culture is her signature program that she wishes to share with women in dentistry, so that they start their careers as strong leaders, and pass the same torch on to their successor(s).

### **Well-being in dentistry**

With her many responsibilities, Dr. Wright has come to realize the importance of personal and professional well-being. As a result, she is intentional about balancing both her clinical focus, and coaching practice. Dr. Wright encourages dentists during coaching sessions to check-in with themselves often by taking a step back, clarifying expectations, taking any personal time whether they “feel” it’s necessary and beneficial or not, and to give grace to their staff members.

“I’m in clinical practice during the week, and usually I’m working with coaching clients after hours or on weekends,” she said. “It’s been a good balance, and thankfully I have a team and amazing support system to



keep me organized. There were times, though, over the past three years that I was focusing on my many leadership requirements, and I couldn’t balance both. With time, I have learned when to say yes, when to defer, and when to say no, thank you.”

Dr. Wright desires to partner with recent graduates and younger dentists who have the confidence to speak up and ask for career guidance. She aspires for her coaching

clients to perform at their highest level and remain open to evolving into who they need to be for the next step in their careers.

“What I ultimately want people to know about me is that it’s a big world out there in dentistry, and there are so many opportunities for people to grow as leaders, to grow as speakers, and to take a personalized, independent route in addition to the practice of clinical dentistry.” ■

## **The Power of Mentorship**

Mentors have the power to guide and help dentists grow within their careers. Dr. Wright realized early on in her career the importance of having someone to talk to that also understands the field of dentistry. She believes being built up by other experienced professionals in the field better equips dentists for long-term success. Dr. Wright also developed a program of her own that mentors aspiring dentists, while guiding them through a future career in the industry. For more information about Dr. Wright, you can find and connect with her on LinkedIn, at her website [www.beingandbecomingyourbest.com](http://www.beingandbecomingyourbest.com), or on Instagram where she is socially known as @thedailydentist.



# Balancing Standardization with Individual Team Member Growth Is Key to Scaling

How to balance standardization with team member considerations in a demanding marketplace.

BY GRAHAM GARRISON

**Amber Collins considers herself a list person. As the current COO for Peak Dental Services, an organization with 60 locations in Colorado and Texas, Collins coaches her regional managers down to office managers to plan out what they are doing by the hour to set up a cadence for daily, weekly, and monthly responsibilities.**

“We try to be very standardized,” she said. “But... I’m also a people person. If you are not focusing on your retention and how to develop people within your company, you’re going to lose people. So... yes, I want to plug someone in and go... but have them grow and be with me 5 to 10 years later.”

## Flexibility within standardization

Collins emphasizes the importance of standardization as a roadmap for operational efficiency, goal-setting, and performance measurement. With clearly

defined objectives and regular assessments, management ensures alignment with the company’s vision while providing employees with a roadmap for success. By leveraging tools like RACI charts (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed), they assign responsibilities effectively, fostering accountability and clarity.

While standardization provides structure, Collins also notes there is a call for more empathetic leadership and a more flexible work environment.



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Hygienists, dentists, and office staff are increasingly asking leaders to understand their life and personal needs.

“Employees want different things than they did even three to five years ago,” said Collins. While an organization may want to standardize work hours and days in the office, they also must balance prioritizing meeting employees’ needs. That may involve some flexibility in scheduling.

“We’ve been trying hard to meet people where they want to be, and we’re finding that our retention is much higher when we do that,” she said. “While it makes standardizing things a little bit hard as far as everybody not working the same shifts, I think it’s helped people feel like we care about their day-to-day life and they’re coming into work with more enthusiasm.”

### **Empowering today's dental workforce**

Peak Dental Services’ commitment to employee empowerment extends beyond mere rhetoric. In 2022, Peak Dental Services launched a new ownership package for all the organization’s hygienists, similar to what’s offered to its dentists. About 10% of Peak’s entire hygiene team chose to join the ownership program during its first round.

“When the time came to make the choices for the ownership package, Peak Dental Services made a bold move and offered ownership in Peak itself, not just in the doctor or hygienist’s dental practice,” A.J. Peak, CEO of Peak Dental Services, said. “It is disingenuous to limit the ownership package to the dental practice because our providers’ prosperity would be limited to those 4 walls. Now, all our doctors and hygienists can grow their wealth with us as an owner of the whole company.”

Also, Peak’s robust professional development programs underscore its investment in its staff. Peak has created a custom-designed

training and development path with over 125 hours of continuing education for every team member, enabling them to produce a customer experience where both partner dentists and patients can see the difference.

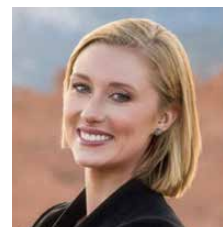
### **Cultivating talent with clear goal setting**

Collins has found success within a standardized management team where each practice employee has three to five tracked responsibilities that they work on. From there, leaders can determine roadblocks, keep on track, and enable practice managers to hold people accountable. Collins says that leaders should recognize what people are naturally good at, and provide training around those skills.

“We really try our very best to say, ‘This is what we believe you’re really good at, so here’s your training surrounding it so that you can be as successful as possible,’” she said. “We’re going to make sure that we’re as emotionally intelligent as we can be about your situation. Then we’re going to set very clear goals and give you a timeline so that you can meet them. People want to feel like they have a direction, and that the organization’s leadership cares about them enough to provide resources, training, and assistance if they need help with anything. When leaders set very clear goals for their teams and give staff a timeline to accomplish them, people feel like they have day-to-day direction.

“But you have to clarify everything,” Collins said. “You have to make sure that you’re really, really clear in your goals. If you don’t have goals first, set those up and then decide what’s going to get you there.”

Peak Dental Services’ success shows that it is possible to standardize while also valuing staff needs. Under Collins’ leadership, Peak has found a path to sustainable growth with harmony between operational efficiency and employee well-being. ■



**Amber Collins**

Amber Collins is Chief Operating Officer for Peak Dental Services, has extensive knowledge of operations in the dental field, and has been dedicated to their growth since 2009. Amber started at Peak Dental when it was still a single location and has been with the company every step of the way as the organization scaled up to the nearly 50 locations it supports today.

# Recruit, Retain, Reward, Resources, Re-Engage and Reflect

Jackie Brown tackles the six proven systems to destroy quiet quitting.

BY DANIEL BEAIRD



**It's all about the people for Jackie Brown. As the chief human resources officer for Community Dental Partners (CDP) in Denton, Texas, she's passionate about its team-building core and culture. Bringing people together who are humble, honest, and work hard toward their goals is very rewarding.**

But how does she do it? Through six proven ways to take your team from checked-out, unmotivated flight risks to happy, productive, self-managing bosses.

## 1. RECRUIT

According to Brown, over 20% of employees who changed jobs last year applied for a new job because they didn't like their company's culture.

"You're spinning your wheels if you're not creating a culture people want to join," she said.

It must be ingrained in your meetings, in your staff, and in how you talk. It improves recruiting, reduces turnover, and lifts your bottom line.

"It's not just pretty posters on the wall," she said. "It's in everything you do."

## Tell your story in different ways

Brown says to tell your story in your job postings and interviews through your company's origin and your perspective on patients,

team members, and clinicians. Feed them your mantra, set the tone, and generate excitement.

"You're connecting with someone you've never seen before, so what are you doing to make yourself different," she asked. "When they know who you are, you save a lot of time and effort."

Posting on job boards and social media sites like Indeed, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram are traditional ways to reach job seekers, but think outside of the box.

"For example, if you have an office in a rural community, everyone knows everyone else," Brown said. "Are you posting your job on your community Facebook page or at the community center?"

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How about a QR code in your front office so patients can see your job opportunities?

On TikTok, “The Bentist” is an orthodontist’s account from Plano, Texas that has over 14 million followers.

“Do you think he has a hard time getting people to work for him? I don’t think so,” Brown said. “People like videos and cool graphic designs. When they’re scrolling and scrolling on social media, they stop to look at videos and things that are eye-catching.”

Social media posts are easy. Take a photo or video on your phone. Upload it to a gif maker like Canva to edit it or add text. Then save it and upload it onto your social media platforms so that it draws attention to your posts.

## Perks

Stand out from the competition. People want to be taken care of in a competitive market.

“Nearly 60% of job seekers say perks are a big factor when deciding to accept a job,” Brown said. “But let’s stop the sign-on bonuses and put that money back into the company where we can really make an impact.”

Referral bonuses serve as a powerful incentive for team members to actively participate in the recruitment process, Brown says. “Implement a leaderboard, show a timeline for a referral payment, and encourage new hires to bring a friend. Everyone loves a competition, and keeping the leader board out there where everyone has visibility to it, encourages a continued focus on recruiting.”

People who are referred tend to stay longer, according to the retention

data. They want to work with people they know and like.

“People don’t leave jobs, they leave people,” Brown said. “They leave bad cultures.”

## 2. RETAIN

Connection, transparency, communication, and appreciation are the bedrock of a good culture.

“But it’s not just having cake on someone’s birthday. That’s fun but people want to feel connected to a bigger purpose,” Brown said.

Appreciation focuses on things that bring joy and inspiration to your team, and connection and transparency align with the mission, vision, and values your company shares with your team members. That’s communicated through everything – every meeting and conversation and all written communication.

“We have nine pillars at CDP and Team Loyalty and Respect is one of them,” Brown said. “If I have an employee coming in late, the conversation with that employee needs to include the culture and a talk about how Team Loyalty and Respect means we show up for each other. When you’re late, you’re impacting the team because they have to pick up the slack.”

CDP also has a Personal Responsibility pillar, so Brown discusses the employee’s responsibility to get up and get to work on time. A good team holds each other accountable and we hold ourselves accountable as well.

## Intentionality in creating leaders

“Everything’s intentional in what we do,” she said.

CDP focuses on a different pillar each month, like Humility, in their morning meetings, every activity or prompt discussion is focused on that pillar. It’s a daily reminder that keeps everyone focused on the culture. Its “STRATE Talk” with its employees includes one-on-one conversations and role-playing situations on how to professionally talk through issues.

“For example, there will be conflict chairside and people don’t like conflict,” Brown said. “You need to be intentional about how you handle conflict. If you don’t deal with it, rumors start and that’s how your culture fails.”

Their nine pillars are in everything they do. Even their performance evaluations include a section where team members are encouraged to engage in self-reflection, identifying the pillar in which they believe they excel and recognizing areas within a specific pillar where they see potential for personal growth.

Brown emphasizes the deliberate effort to ensure that their culture permeates every aspect of the organization, highlighting the importance of recognizing each individual not merely as a worker, but as a leader in their respective roles. “We believe in the principle of leadership at every level, irrespective of one’s position. Our team members are aware of their leadership roles because we treat them as such, fostering an environment where higher standards are embraced. This approach cultivates a shared understanding of the significant impact each person has on the organization’s success, reinforcing



our commitment to development, respect, and personal responsibility.”

### 3. REWARDS

Rather than trying to keep up with the crazy salaries we’ve seen offered over the last year, not to mention it’s probably not a sustainable business model, strategically plan where you spend your dollars and reward your teams for their efforts. But remember that any kind of rewards system must be defined by its ‘why’ and ROI. Reward what’s important, including:

- > Retention/turnover bonus.
- > Attendance bonus.
- > Hitting goals/KPIs.
- > Anniversary.
- > Time frame: monthly, quarterly, annually.
- > Recognition boards and shoutouts.
- > Celebrating successes big and small.

“We started a new PTO program that gives PTO hours for each year of service for our team members. It adds to our overall expenses, but it helps lower turnover costs by increasing retention. So monitor your turnover and conduct employee surveys to see if you’re getting the return on the investment,” Brown said. “If you’re going to implement something, have a way to track it. Data speaks volumes.”

#### Perks at Work

CDP offers “Perks at Work” to their employees. This employee perks program offers savings, online classes, and personal development to members for free at [perksatwork.com](https://perksatwork.com).

The Employee Pricing Program offers access to best-in-market



pricing and loyalty points that can be redeemed when employees shop through “Perks at Work.” It also offers a community online academy with live classes for children and adults that can be viewed on-demand or live. “Perks at Work” also offers HR tools that support building a high-performance environment, so there is really something for everyone.

“Market these kinds of discounts to your employees,” Brown said. This is something you would want to include in a synopsis you give your employees each year outlining all the benefits you offer your people. “It’s important to communicate all the great things you do for your team members so that there is always a focus on the positives,” Brown said.

### 4. RESOURCES

Brown says all companies have these kinds of resources, but most don’t do a good job of touting them.

“Think about the things you do for your team members,” she said. “Make sure you’re branding that and marketing it like the Perks at Work program.”

Have all of your resources listed so your recruiting team can deliver them to prospective candidates. Talk about how much money you put into a team member during their performance review.

Not just their salary, Brown says, but all of the resources offered in their total rewards package.

CDP uses benefit carrier BlueCross BlueShield (BCBS), and it offers free resources like:

- > 24/7 Nurseline and/or MDLive.
- > Prenatal program.
- > Weight management program.
- > Behavioral health advisers.
- > BCBS Blue 365 health and wellness products, not covered by insurance.
- > Free Peloton and Apple+ subscriptions.

“We market these things,” Brown said. “Do you think anyone looks that deeply into Blue-Cross BlueShield and realizes they have that free Peloton and Apple+ subscription? No.”

But any team member signed up for those plans gets a flyer from CDP telling them it’s free.

Use meeting agendas, book clubs, surveys, and other communications to engage with team members.

“Treat people like people and not just another KPI in your office. When you have the right people in the right seats, it’s amazing,” Brown said.

## 5. RE-ENGAGE

What fills your team members’ buckets?

Think of your rock star team member. Are you willing to sing their praises and are you willing to sing the praises of your other team members?

“People want to feel like they have a bigger purpose,” Brown said. “You don’t want them just showing up for work. You want them engaged in work.”

You must show up in rock star status every day for your people. Help them stay engaged, maintain positive mental health, and prevent burnout.

Burnout can be exhaustion, lack of energy, distancing themselves from their jobs mentally, and decreasing their ability to work effectively. This can lead to not connecting with patients and team members, a mental fog, errors in diagnosis and treatment, and a negative impact on work and personal relationships.

“Make sure your star performers aren’t just powering through and taking on more responsibilities,” Brown said. “Fill your team members’ buckets. Give them guidance and support through coaching and mentoring.”

Happy people are productive people, and they show up to work every day.

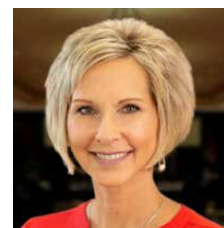
## 6. REFLECT

Finally, contemplate the drive behind continuous improvement and what motivates you to start your day with enthusiasm. If you aren’t focused on how you change your day when you’re feeling stressed, you’re likely to move into the burn-out stage and that’s not good for you or your team.

Encourage your team to share their inspirations and what propels them forward each morning and then support those efforts every day so that they stay happy and engaged. “Never take things for granted and be purposeful in how you show up, how you support those around you, and how you stay focused on a positive culture,” Brown said.

“We tell our story and connect, get into rock star status, make our resources count, fill our buckets, and strive to get better,” Brown said.

Jackie Brown’s approach at Community Dental Partners underscores a proactive and holistic strategy to combat quiet quitting, emphasizing the significance of culture, leadership at every level, and the power of recognition and support. By fostering an environment where every team member feels valued, heard, and inspired, CDP not only enhances employee satisfaction but also sets a benchmark for organizational success. Brown’s insights remind us that the essence of overcoming quiet quitting lies in the unwavering commitment to nurturing a positive, engaging, and growth-oriented workplace culture. ■



### Jackie Brown

is Executive Director of Human Resources for Community Dental Partners. Having earned a Bachelor’s Degree in business administration and management from West Texas A&M University, Jackie went on to study for an MBA at Texas Woman’s University. She joined the CDP team in 2019 as the director of dentist recruiting. Today, as executive director of HR, Jackie is dedicated to providing leadership and clarity, building relationships, and removing road-blocks for supported doctors and staff as she helps them connect to a bigger purpose. For her, it’s about more than just the work – it’s about the people.



# Leading with Confidence

**Clinician. Entrepreneur. Leader. Mom. Dr. Laxmi Reddy believes today's women dental leaders can do it all.**

**As a clinician and dental organization leader, Dr. Laxmi Reddy, DDS, has** honed a quiet, inner confidence over the years. Anytime Dr. Reddy walks into a room, she's aware that people she'll meet might assume she's a hygienist or front office staff, rather than a board-certified dental surgeon and business owner. "They rarely think that as a female, I'm the dentist or the owner," she said.



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Unfortunately, it's a frustrating stereotype that many women dental leaders face regularly. "People will try to make sense of the fact that you're a female, successful, driven, and also a mom," Dr. Reddy said. "Society makes it seem like all of that is not possible. You can't be a good mom and be successful in work – and an entrepreneur."

But Dr. Reddy has embraced the challenge. "As a woman leader, you must have confidence," she said. "Inner confidence is important because society will tell you that you can't do all those things. Women are questioned and scrutinized more. So being able to feel confident and having that mindset that you can do it, is important in today's industry for women leaders to be our best selves and successful. You can be a fantastic mom and you can be a fantastic business owner, and you can balance all of it. You can do all of it."

### 'Dialed in'

Dr. Reddy and her business partner, Dr. Vaibhav Rai, DDS, founded Smile Loft Dental in part because both were seeking a balance between running an organization and practicing dentistry as clinicians.

Dr. Reddy and Dr. Rai are both owners and practicing clinicians, they work well together and complement each other's personalities. Typically, when dental organizations grow beyond a few locations, they'll use outside investment or outside ownership to run the business. However, even through tremendous growth over the last few years, the two co-owners have preserved their unique operating model.

"We're very dialed into our business, but we're also really dialed into what happens with our patients and what's going on at the office level," Dr. Reddy said. "Sometimes that can get lost when you're growing and expanding. If you don't have that ground-level perspective, you may miss seeing how the patients are greeted, what the doctors are doing in the back, what's happening with hygiene, etc."

## Presence matters in leadership. Dr. Reddy wants to set the example as the first one in and last one out when she is in the office. She also wants to meet face-to-face with her corporate team as much as possible.

The mission of Smile Loft Dental has always been to provide quality, affordability, and accessibility to its patient base. Dr. Reddy comes from immigrant parents, so she believes strongly in providing care to as many people as possible. "But we also give them excellent clinical care, because I think that can at times be missing. People always think it's one or the other – affordability or quality. As clinicians, we provide the highest standard of care, but we won't charge \$3,000 for a crown. We want to make it affordable to people because it's important. They're the ones who need it the most. That's a big part of what drives me and motivates me."

Yes, balancing organizational leadership with clinical work can

be taxing at times. Dr. Reddy works three days on the clinical side, "and I'm a leader every day," she said. "I run the office operations every day. I check in with my team before I go in clinically, then check in with the leadership team afterwards." On Thursdays and Fridays, she is usually in the corporate office with her business partner, taking meetings with the leadership team and making sure they are being well supported.

Smile Loft Dental has tripled its revenue to \$20+ million and quadrupled its staff since the COVID pandemic began. In that time the company acquired several locations and bought additional space to expand two of the offices at well-established locations. "We're in the middle of renovating and expanding those offices now," Dr. Reddy said. Smile Loft Dental is also looking at other sites where they could add new offices and other ways to increase revenue through new services. "We're excited," Dr. Reddy said. "We have a lot coming up, so hopefully we can stay on this trajectory."

Smile Loft Dental currently operates in eight Maryland-based locations. The organization also has a corporate office for centralized



operations. There are about 100 employees in total, with 15 doctors and 17 hygienists.

The goal is to grow in an organic and sustainable manner for the next 10+ years. Dr. Reddy said Smile Loft Dental used 2023 to set up building blocks like adding critically important leadership team members and opening a corporate office to handle operations and administrative duties. They've done a lot of groundwork to be able to grow further. "We grew so fast in a few years that we had to catch up. Now I think we've put another layer of foundation down so we can grow again and hope to have controlled and sustained healthy growth over the next coming years as well," she said.

### **Authentic connections**

With the growth of the organization, Dr. Reddy has refined her approach to how she motivates and communicates with her team. "The best way that I have found to motivate my team is to be with them, support them, work with them, and connect with them," she said.

Dr. Reddy makes it a priority to ask team members what their challenges are. She will also share hers. In the beginning, she admits to being a little more closed off and focused more on getting things done rather than opening up. "I'm a bit more of an introvert, so it's harder for me," she said. "But I've noticed that as I've learned to engage, as I have shared my challenges or what I'm working on, it has become much easier to connect." Once she's made those authentic connections, she's found team members

to be more receptive to guidance and feedback.

Presence matters in leadership. Dr. Reddy wants to set the example as the first one in and last one out when she is in the office. She also wants to meet face-to-face with her corporate team as much as possible. While she could communicate with team members remotely, it's easier to form bonds in person.

Judging by engagement, the Smile Loft Dental team has bought into the mission. "They connect with me, and they connect with my partner," Dr. Reddy said. "They are bought into the vision because they've seen where we started and how far we've come. The sky's the limit. We wouldn't be able to do what we do if we didn't have them."

Indeed, finding ways to connect with team members – especially new hires – has never been more important. A new generation is entering the field, requiring leaders to rethink how they interact with new employees. "That's a big trend," Dr. Reddy said. "How do you utilize Gen Z? What are their skills? What are they good at?"

Dr. Reddy said leaders must figure out a way to work with the new generation who have their own thoughts, methods, and strengths. "They have their own skill sets, which are very different from the previous generations, just like every generation. What motivates them is very different from what motivates Millennials or Gen X."

And that changes the way the business runs. Recruitment, HR, and even training are different. For instance, Smile Loft Dental has

revised its training manuals to better engage a generation more familiar with online learning. Along with hiring and training a new generation of workers, things like wage inflation, consumer preferences, and market volatility are all trends that Dr. Reddy and her team have had to navigate and make adjustments to in recent years.

### **Being an example**

When Dr. Reddy is finished with her career, she wants to have blazed a trail so bright that tomorrow's women leaders will gain the confidence and encouragement needed for their own journeys. "I have women

that I look up to – my mom, friends, colleagues," she said. "There are a ton of women that have done it. I hope I'm that example for my two-year-old daughter and other young girls."

Smile Loft Dental is already well embodying that hope. The company is diverse and inclusive, and its staff is predominantly female. "We have a lot of female employees, and many are younger than I am," Dr. Reddy said. "I hope they see that there is a female who's in a leadership role who is a doctor, a mom, and an executive. Those examples can motivate women. It certainly is what motivated me. I hope I can do that for at least one person." ■





# How to Maximize Your Marketing Investment

Creating a strong marketing plan is integral to your organization's success.

BY JENNA HUGHES

The focus of dental care is to assist patients while encouraging them to properly maintain their oral health, but a dental practice is ultimately a health-care business. "This means that a part of maturing as a dental organization is ensuring the revenue and finances of the company are as healthy as the clinical outcomes being provided to patients," said Amber Nish, Coach, DEO.

A healthy bottom line requires a solid marketing strategy. Indeed, focusing and refining marketing efforts ultimately allows a dental practice to gain more profit and positively impact patients.

DEO assists practices with three main "levers": growing your business, yourself, and your team. Growing business revenue, through marketing, is one facet of growing a successful company.

The following are four keys to a solid marketing foundation:

## No. 1: Get clear on your ideal customer profile

In dental practice marketing, each company must determine its ideal customer profile. Consider who the ideal patient is for your business. The "ideal" patient is different for every dental practice based on its business model, Nish said, and can range from a pediatric to a geriatric patient base. Dental practices must be able to match the capabilities of the practice to the ideal patient to avoid misaligning the doctor and patient.

"Understanding your ideal customer profile allows your organization to maximize marketing dollars through direct marketing efforts," Nish said. "Being clear and concise as to your patient demographic allows your practice to customize its client experience."

## No. 2: Set marketing goals

Dental leaders should consider these questions: What are their practice's production goals? And how many new patients are expected? Evaluating both production and new patient goals can help teams determine their marketing budget and strategy.

Start to answer these questions by averaging the number of patients by each practice within a company. On average, a healthy established company can handle about 50-60 new patients at a smaller practice, and up to 100 in a larger practice. Also, in a healthy average company, 25% of the total patient volume comes from new patients.

"Understand what your organization's biggest constraints are," Nish said. "Be sure to evaluate ambitious marketing goals based on the reality of the situation. Marketing leaders need to be aligned and understand the strategy, and there needs to be operational marketing communication so that your organization isn't spending money that doesn't exist."

## No. 3: Align on operational KPIs

A dental organization should have clear key performance indicators (KPIs) established before setting a marketing budget. The No. 1 KPI to track when it comes to marketing efforts is the phone answer rate. Out of the total number of inbound calls, if 40% went unanswered or to voicemail, your company has a 40% no-answer rate.

"Marketing KPIs such as this are important because marketing efforts pour revenue into one thing: getting the practice more phone calls," Nish said. If a practice is spending \$5,000 to drive phone calls and 40% go unanswered, that means there is a

## Foundations of Marketing



\$1,500 revenue loss. To avoid unanswered calls, dental companies may set a standard requiring teams to have a certain number of answered calls before spending more of the budget on marketing.

Most of the time, phones aren't getting answered because front desk staff are busy greeting patients, calling insurers, cleaning instruments, etc. But the reason for calls going unanswered must be understood. Reach out to your phone service provider for a baseline number if you don't know the number of unanswered calls, and they can inform you. Raise awareness to the team on lowering the unanswered call rate, and make sure it is a number they see every week.

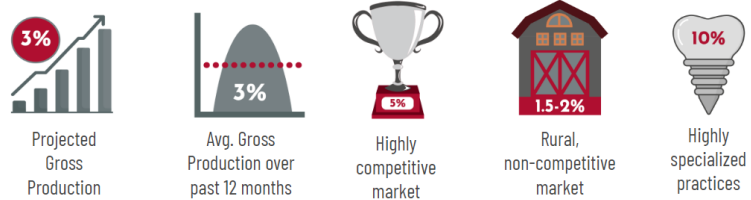
#### No. 4: Establish a budget

A dental organization is ready to prioritize marketing spend and establish a budget when: operational KPIs are clear; it has hit new patient goals (if you are already hitting patient goals, there is no need to increase marketing spend); and the company has determined a dedicated person responsible for marketing strategy. The chosen person should know that their goal, along with other responsibilities, is to oversee marketing.

Once all these goals have been met, a team can set its marketing budget. To do so, the team should come together to determine production first and then use those numbers to determine its marketing budget.

Successful marketing starts a minimum of a month before patient numbers are set to increase. In a highly competitive market, marketing budgets may be as high as 5-7% of revenue. In rural areas, it may only be

## Determining Your Marketing Budget



## When Are You Ready to Prioritize Marketing Spend?



2-3% of revenue. In suburban areas or with established organizations, the budgets may grow to 10-15% of revenue. If you've never done a marketing budget for your organization, start with a 3% of revenue budget.

Marketing should be categorized as a practice expense line item, Nish said. Make sure this is being correctly followed by the finance team. Things can accidentally be spent with marketing budgets that aren't for marketing. Make sure everything is allocated to practice-level expenses.

The marketing budget can be spent on a wide array of services, including online booking, branding, local marketing, paid ads, landing

pages, consistent content generation (blogs, website posts, etc.), multi-channel marketing, and more. Determine how much you are paying on marketing per patient to determine the marketing value for your specific organization.

Marketing is ultimately a tactic that can propel your business forward into earning more revenue and focusing on better patient care. "Marketing is a team effort, requiring consistency from front office staff to dentists," Nish said. "Creating a strong marketing plan is integral to a business's success, and has the power to create productive teams and a strong financial outlook for a dental business." ■



**Amber Nish** is the newest coach on the DEO team, and brings a wealth of marketing knowledge to the community. She is a 10-year veteran in the dental marketing space. Most of Amber's career was spent at Community Dental Partners where she started as an onsite location manager and was promoted to Chief Marketing Officer, serving over 70 locations and multiple brands. One of her most transformative roles was serving as the Call Center Director and gaining a deep understanding of lead conversion and practice needs.

# Recruiting & Building Executive Teams

What to look for when bringing on board a new CEO, or other leadership roles, for your dental organization.



**While every role in a dental organization is important, no other individual sets the tone, temperature, and culture like the CEO, which makes the vetting and hiring process so critical.**

Finding the right fit for the CEO of a dental organization can be a challenging process because so many dental practices are founded by doctors. While skilled and knowledgeable in the practice of great dentistry, they may not have the business experience and acumen needed to effectively run and operate the business side of the organization.

At a recent DEO event, Emmet Scott sat down with Gabrielle McCarran, Senior Vice President of People for North American Dental Group; Dave Saliccioli, Chief Strat-

egy Officer of Singing River Dental Partners; and Noah Madison, Partner at TEAMWORx Health to discuss what it takes to hire the right CEO for a dental practice, the qualities that make a good CEO, and how leaders must approach navigating the chaos often involved in operating a dental practice.

**DEO: How do you feel about the position of CEO?**

**McCarran:** There's no doubt that the CEO is the most important and critical role in the organization.

The CEO is the pacesetter. When you think about the dental space, a CEO is an interesting person because you typically see a founder CEO or a Private Equity (PE) CEO. Sometimes there's even a CEO in between, a person meant to shop the business to the PE. You want leaders who have run other organizations, they're operational and have a strong understanding of finance.

**Saliccioli:** There are so many of us who have stepped out of the chair and stepped into the role of CEO, but it's always an option to move into Chief Dental Officer and hire another person for CEO, because it's a completely different set of habits and practices. It's like the journey



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from bricklayer to architect – you’re not the problem solver now, but you are the agenda setter. You’re not the warrior for a particular person or practice, you’re more of a diplomat who must rise to the occasion.

**DEO: What attributes are you looking for in a CEO in today’s market? What is the difference between what you see in a founder CEO and what the business needs to take the next step?**

**Madison:** I think it comes down to the idea of “where does your passion lie?” Are they clinicians? Did they go to medical school or business school? There’s a certain point where a clinician founder may not be able to take the company to the next level. There’s a difference between being entrepreneurial and being a clinician – the entrepreneur might have the passion to go to work and be able to scale the business, whereas the clinician wouldn’t necessarily have that skillset.

**Saliccioli:** There’s a lot of room to design the role and your team around what you are most passionate about. All of this is driven by the clarity of the founder. If you have clarity in your vision, you can build the team for that next step in the journey, whether that’s towards private equity or whatever it might be. I’m big on figuring out what we are going to specialize in that role so that you can make the highest contribution to the business.

**McCarran:** If the CEO is looking to grow into that role, then it’s all about hiring people around you. I think

having the self-awareness to know what you’re good at and what you’re not good at is critical. Then you can set your ego aside and hire people who are smarter than you in those areas.

**DEO: Where do you see failure in this process? What have you found to be an indicator of success for placing an executive in an organization?**

**Madison:** A big piece is real input from the top down. When we start a search process, it’s not staffing – it’s a search process. We want to talk to everyone who’s going to be working with this person and understand what they think the role should be. From that, we put together the job description. That approach also gives us the ability to tell a compelling story. When you’re partnering with [an outside organization] as an advocate for your business to get the biggest pool of people, you want to be able to narrow it to finding the right person. A big piece of that comes down to cultural fit, and mission driven.

**DEO: What are some of the qualities you look for when you’re hiring a true executive to run the business?**

**McCarran:** What I’ve learned through my career is that once you get above that \$175K level into that executive range, relationships and how you manage your people are most important. You are making high-impact decisions. It’s all about relationships, your brand, and the impact you have on the business.

**Saliccioli:** The ability to understand influence and leadership acumen is a big deal because you’ll have some people raise their hand

and say, “I want that title.” Well, they only want it because they want to wield authority and have people do what they say without question.

**DEO: How can you minimize the disruption of bringing someone into a role that didn’t exist before? How can you navigate that chaos?**

**McCarran:** It’s a balance between old guard and new guard. During the interview process, you should ask about a time when that person had to come in and win the hearts and minds of existing employees. There should be a compelling answer there, but they should be able to lead through it and win over everyone around them.

**Madison:** I was at a conference a few months ago and met the CEO of a very large optometry business. We were talking during lunch, and he brought up the point that with all this chaos going on in his business, they weren’t scaling as fast as they wanted. We started talking about making a VP of Special Projects, which is an interesting solution to that kind of problem – bringing in a full-time person to address those sorts of challenges from the inside. With a specific skillset and legacy knowledge of the organization, they could be uniquely suited to help your team navigate those changes.

**Saliccioli:** We’ve had to have lots of hard conversations and continual coaching around where value can be added and how they can help design the role. When you bring a new person onto the team, you must redesign most everyone’s roles. You must coach everyone through it. ■

# What Makes You Stronger

How Dr. Yooson Kim learned discipline through adversity in her personal life and professional career.

BY DANIEL BEAIRD



## “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” is Dr. Yooson Kim’s motto.

Dr. Kim maintains a broad array of interests in the field of dentistry: she sustains her busy practices, is a certified trainer for SOLEA®, and is a consultant and key opinion leader for a variety of emerging dental technologies and concepts. As a leading dental practice in Morgantown, Pa., Dr. Kim and her team at Family Dentistry of Morgantown are committed to the highest quality of cosmetic dentistry.

Born and raised in South Korea, Dr. Kim received her doctoral degree in dental medicine from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. She has an extensive research background with the school, as well as with the National Cancer Institute, and the National Institute of Health, and has been recognized and awarded for her research publications.

“Growing up in Korea was simple, yet hard,” she said. “Everyone was driven and expected to be successful.

During middle school, I took a one-hour bus ride to school and arrived at 5 a.m.” She then had classes before school starting at 5 a.m., school from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and then more classes until 7 p.m. “This was all geared toward preparing for a test that allowed you to advance to the next grade.”

Dr. Kim would take the one-hour bus ride back home and take piano lessons for another hour. Then, it was homework and dinner, only to start it all over again the next day.

“I don’t know if I had time to think about if it was fun or not because the day was so packed and structured,” she said. “I just had to keep moving forward.”

## Move to the U.S.: learning and keeping busy

She moved to the U.S. with her parents when she was 16 years old, and still remembers anxiously learning her ABCs on the flight.

“I was the only Asian person in my high school in rural Maryland,” Dr. Kim said. “I don’t remember what I was learning because I just had to get myself into it and learn what I needed to learn. If people were making fun of me, I didn’t understand it and just moved forward.”

Dr. Kim eventually graduated as valedictorian of her high school class but found it difficult to have more free time in the U.S. compared to Korea. She filled it by taking on three jobs. She made biscuits at Hardee’s in the morning before school, was a carpet estimator after school because of her strong math skills, and in the evenings and on weekends, she taught piano.

“I needed to keep busy, and I was able to test my English skills,” she said. “But I still won’t eat biscuits from Hardee’s.”

## By her side: during mother’s fight with cancer

She was also a translator for her mother during her mother’s fight with stage four ovarian cancer.

“She was diagnosed almost immediately after we arrived in the U.S.,” Dr. Kim said. “Being the only child and the one who picked up English fast enough, I was the one who had to be in charge and responsible for translating medical conversations and making decisions with my mom. I felt like the field of oncology was my calling and I wanted to become an oncologist.”

Dr. Kim’s mother enrolled in the NIH Cancer Research program and was one of the first patients to receive alpha interferon drugs. Dr. Kim joined NIH for its cancer research opportunities. She secured funding, did research, and had a guaranteed job through high school and college.

Her career path changed in college when her mother passed away. Dr. Kim knew then she wouldn’t be an oncologist because she didn’t want to experience the loss associated with the death of a patient.

She changed her track from pre-med to pre-dental, attended dental school, and opened her own practice.

### Office flooded but still standing

Through the years Dr. Kim has grown and expanded her practice and the reach of the high-quality dentistry she provides. But amidst success and growth, there are still unexpected challenges. Dr. Kim recently walked into her dental office on a Monday morning to find flooding from a water main break near the street. But contractors were quickly there, and the dental team worked to disconnect all the equipment.



“Our teams were basically just waiting to know what they could do to help,” Dr. Kim said. The team came together to quickly start saving what they could and prepare for the needed repairs.

Dr. Kim’s dental equipment vendor, A-dec, has disaster relief and moved Dr. Kim’s dental office to the front of their production. “They pushed us up so that we could get into our chairs,” she explained. “They drop-shipped everything to the office and bypassed the distributor.”

While the flood was a terrible disaster that shut down the office, Dr. Kim kept positive: “The office didn’t burn down. It wasn’t a fire. We have places to go and people to take care of. I can’t complain,” Dr. Kim said.

### Every day: a true leap of faith

Throughout Dr. Kim’s life, there have been trials and challenges. “There were many points in my life I could have stopped and blamed it on what life dealt me,” she said. “I was in a dark place many times and not sure where to turn. The decisions I had to make were leaps of faith. But isn’t every day of our lives a true leap of faith? Every day has been a miracle in itself.”

Dr. Kim says she tells her redemptive story’s ups and downs to show why her “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger motto” holds true. ■



### Dr. Yooson Kim

Dr. Kim is Founder & CEO of Family Dentistry of Morgantown. Dr. Kim received a bachelor’s degree at Franklin and Marshall College and DMD from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. She has an extensive research background with the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute of Health, and has been recognized and awarded by the University of Pennsylvania for her research publications.



# The Modern Dental Manager

The operational and interpersonal skills needed to succeed as an office manager in today's dental group practice setting.

BY CAMIE WORLEY, IMPLEMENTOR & COACH, DEO

**Dental office managers wear many hats when leading their teams. They must** show up to work each day with a positive attitude, ready to use their strengths to guide and support office staff. It is no easy feat to master day-to-day optimization, team engagement, and dental systems all at the same time within an office leadership role.

Successful dental managers know exactly how their business runs, communicating with all office personnel, including front office staff, team members, and doctors. They must balance connecting with people interpersonally while also delegating tasks, coaching staff members up, implementing structure, and much more.

## The role

So, what exactly is the role of an office manager? And how do company leaders hire into these positions? Time management has shifted over the years to the idea of a “modern dental manager,” where managers are actively leading people. In this model, instead of an office manager having 25 to 30 tasks they complete all by themselves, they recognize that they must only manage systems, but not be the ones doing daily tasks.

With such a range of responsibilities, it can be difficult for a dental office manager to connect with staff on a personal level, while also being firm with them and setting boundaries.

Dental managers starting out, or seeking to improve in their role, should begin by outlining non-negotiables for team members, making it clear that if the rules are broken, there will be consequences. It is also important for dental managers to find a balance with rule setting to avoid becoming more of a micromanager than a supporter within an office space.

Office managers should ensure that they have a handful of guidelines for their staff that are clear and consistently enforced to create workplace structure. These guidelines will additionally allow staff members to improve each day within their positions.



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Read further for the skills of a strong dental manager:

### **Leading an office**

When leading employees, managers should always refer to the company's core values for structure and guidance. The company-wide core values should clearly explain what is expected from employees. Emphasizing the importance of core values within each person's role keeps them focused on optimizing their work in the right direction.

Sometimes, a manager can find that too many people are responsible for the same task within a practice. To address this, have separate KPIs that each employee tracks for their position so that their roles are individualized.

As a manager, it is important to understand roles within the organization should they need temporary (or permanent) replacement. Knowing the expectations of each position and what is needed to perform not only helps in a bind but also allows managers to train from experience, which can help set employees up for success.

### **Proper guidance**

Office managers should structure organizations where team members have the space to complete tasks and office managers manage what is getting done. So, how does an office manager properly do this? Read on for three components to properly guide teams:

#### **No. 1: How do you find the right people for the right seat?**

When KPIs for office managers

include employee retention, it can lead to them holding onto people who aren't necessarily the right fit. A patient's in-office experience is important, and it requires the right people in the right positions. Patients can be as needy as they want, and dentists are always there to meet the needs of their patients. Make sure that each employee is equipped with the knowledge and skills for their job, and evaluate if they have the heart, care, and passion to succeed. If they have all these abilities, it will be shown in the first 90 days. However, if an employee early on is showing up late, complaining, or can't physically do the tasks, they may not be the right fit for the company.

## **As a manager, it is crucial to address any issues or confusion among staff right away so that it doesn't compound or spiral out of control.**

#### **No. 2: How does an office manager give teams clarity and structure?**

If teams express the need for more clarity or day-to-day structure at work, a dental leader should schedule a team-wide meeting and be clear and open with employees. Collaborate with employees, ask for their thoughts, and decide where the lack of clarity is among everyone.

As a manager, it is crucial to address any issues or confusion among staff right away so that it doesn't compound or spiral out of control. When making team-wide

decisions, consider team values, and how the decision aligns with them. Create a floor in any meeting where employees can voice their concerns and keep issues open to discussion.

#### **No. 3: Why is it important to foster positivity throughout the day?**

To maintain staff morale, have a regular team huddle at the start of the day, the end of the day, or both. Have teams start in huddles by sharing something good that took place in the office, or by calling out things that are wins from that day or the day before.

Employees should have a team huddle agenda, and a leader should

make sure that the meeting stays positive, keeping momentum and morale up.

Make sure team leads understand that huddles are a necessary time to create positivity and to get everyone into the right headspace. Allowing a team member to lead meetings is a large part of delegating as a manager; managers must understand that some tasks require coaching.

When delegating a task, set the expectations, let go of the reins, let employees get their feet wet, and then come back and coach them on what they missed, making sure that

they truly understand. With time, employees will improve, and they can one day take over the task on their own.

### **Difficult conversations**

One of the most important skills a manager needs to learn and master is how to have difficult conversations. This can also be one of the most intimidating skills for a manager, but remember, when we avoid difficult conversations we trade short-term discomfort for long-term dysfunction. When a difficult conversation is necessary, be sure to start a meeting by letting employees know that you, as a manager, value them and their position, and be upfront with them that this meeting is to discuss a difficult topic, and hopefully, we come to an agreeable solution. Starting this way will help ensure that everyone feels respected and heard despite the topic. Then, explain to the employee the reason for the meeting. Focus on keeping a constructive tone rather than blaming or accusing the employee. Come to meetings like these prepared, with clear data that shows a lack of consistency in their performance or adherence to the company's policies, or from the employee in meeting their position's KPIs. Avoid using words that express your personal feelings toward the employee, but rather keep the conversation geared toward areas of performance where there can be a resolution.

Ask the employee if there is something that you as a manager can do to help them improve or how you can best train them to be a good fit within the organization. Before the conversation concludes, ensure that the employee feels as though they can successfully complete their work. Don't forget to create an action plan with the employee with clear expectations and deadlines for improvement. In some cases, a follow-up meeting or conversation may be needed.

**Other managers' experiences are beneficial when determining how to manage a dental office. Managers need to know that there are always others in their shoes. Lean on each other and learn from each other; it's okay to not know everything.**

A manager may deal with a defensive employee in a difficult meeting. If this happens, consider the possible ramifications of both keeping the employee vs. letting them go to find success somewhere else. If the employee truly seems to be a wrong fit for the company and your core values, it may be best to part ways rather than prolong the inevitable. Whatever decision you make, know that you have to live with the outcome of that decision. Managers must develop their skills and training in hiring/firing as well as when to hire/fire, as this is a part of overall leadership skills.

Office managers can learn and improve by sharing their experiences with colleagues at other locations or people in the organization who have held their positions. Other managers' experiences are beneficial when determining how to manage a dental office. Managers need to know that there are always others in their shoes. Lean on each other and learn from each other; it's okay to not know everything.

It takes skills and experience to excel as a dental office manager, and guidelines set in place through DEO can provide the foundation of support that office managers need as they grow in their roles. Always focus on the positives, seek assistance from other office managers, and know that within an office manager role, you are always learning and growing. ■



### **Camie Worley**

Worley started as a dental assistant with her family dentist while she was looking into nursing programs. She fell in love with the industry and has worked as a clinical manager for a family dental group, and as a Director of Operations for a nationwide mobile dental organization. Worley was hired as a community manager at the DEO in January 2020, right before the onset of COVID-19, and now works with leading dental organizations as a DEO Implementor and Operations Coach.



# Philips Sonicare Introduces At-Home Teeth Whitening, The Oral Healthcare Leader's First Semi-Customizable, Grab-and-Go Whitening Solution

The new offering provides a safe, easy, and effective way for patients to get brighter smiles in three days from the comfort of home.

**Cambridge, MA. – Royal Philips (NYSE: PHG, AEX: PHIA)**, a global leader in health technology, today announced the launch of Philips Sonicare Teeth Whitening Kits. From the #1 dental professional-recommended sonic toothbrush brand worldwide, this is the latest innovation stemming from Philips' mission to empower patients with evidence-based solutions that meet their unique oral care needs. Philips Sonicare Teeth Whitening Kits provide a semi-custom option for dental professionals looking to cater more efficiently to their patients' desire for a bright smile. Designed to be easy to use at home, patients can feel confident they are using a safe and effective solution with the recommendation of their dental professional.



Most patients want whiter teeth<sup>1</sup> and Philips has long been a leader in teeth whitening through the Philips Zoom! portfolio of in-office and custom take home whitening treatments. For the first time, Philips Sonicare is introducing grab-and-go whitening solutions for patients to use at home, with zero chair-time required. The whitening kits

feature semi-custom reusable trays for patients to easily mold<sup>2</sup> to fit their teeth prior to applying the dentist-developed, enamel-safe whitening gel in the tray. Philips Sonicare Teeth Whitening Kit Advanced (9.5% hydrogen peroxide solution) is clinically proven to whiten up to five shades after nine uses with little-to-no tooth sensitivity<sup>3</sup>.

“Philips Sonicare Teeth Whitening Kits are the perfect complement to our Philips Zoom! custom in-office and take-home offerings,” says Matina Vidalis, Senior Marketing Director, Consumer & Professional Oral Healthcare, North America. “Dental professionals can now satisfy all patient whitening desires with our complete whitening portfolio. We are proud to continue to create solutions that empower and meet the needs of dental professionals and their patients.”

“As a dental professional, it's important to listen to what your patient wants, and more than any other treatment, I find that patients want whiter teeth,” says Mark Hyman, DDS, PA, Philips Oral Healthcare Key Opinion Leader. “What Philips has created with Philips Sonicare Teeth Whitening Kits is a product that delivers convenience and clinically proven results with less time in the chair. I look forward to recommending this innovation and seeing the positive impact it has on dental professionals and their patients.”

Philips Sonicare Teeth Whitening Kits will launch exclusively in the dental professional channel for dispensing in either 6% or 9.5% hydrogen peroxide solutions. All kits include a Quick Start Guide to help patients through the treatment process and achieve optimal results. To learn more or try the product, dental professionals should contact their local representative or visit [PhilipsOralHealthcare.com](https://www.PhilipsOralHealthcare.com) for more information. ■

<sup>1</sup> 79% of Americans want whiter teeth according to Philips survey; <sup>2</sup> 73% of 139 participants agree, US, 2022; <sup>3</sup> 81% of 67 participants, US, 2022



# Eruption to Evolution

**The conscious leader's journey through chaos.**

BY BRAD NELSON, PARTNER AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, POSITIVE IMPACT DENTAL ALLIANCE

**How can we lead ourselves and our teams through chaotic and uncharted times?** Effective leadership requires making conscious decisions and adjustments based on changing environments that often look and feel like chaos.

## Surviving the chaos

Six years ago, I lived on the Big Island in Hawaii with my incredible wife and our only son at the time. We moved there a few years earlier to simplify life and spend time together. We owned our home, and

we were looking forward to the birth of our second son.

As we all know, Hawaii is a volcanic island. In 2018 we noticed some earthquakes. Everyone seemed to think it was normal volcanic activity, so we carried on with our lives – but

the earthquakes continued, eventually turning into cracks in the ground. Still, official channels told us there was nothing to worry about.

But the cracks continued to worsen. Then steam started pouring out. Finally, we were two hours from home one day when our phones blew up with the news that lava was erupting in Leilani Estates, our neighborhood. We barely had time to get home, grab a few things, and evacuate. Time

stood still. We were in complete and utter limbo, physically and mentally. Officials had the area locked down and we all relied on “lawbreakers” who sent out photos and info about which houses were lost. All my attention and energy were directed at figuring out how to navigate this situation with my very pregnant wife and kid. At moments like this, everything else feels irrelevant. That week was like a delirious dream, scrambling for any solid ground to stand on to figure out what to do.

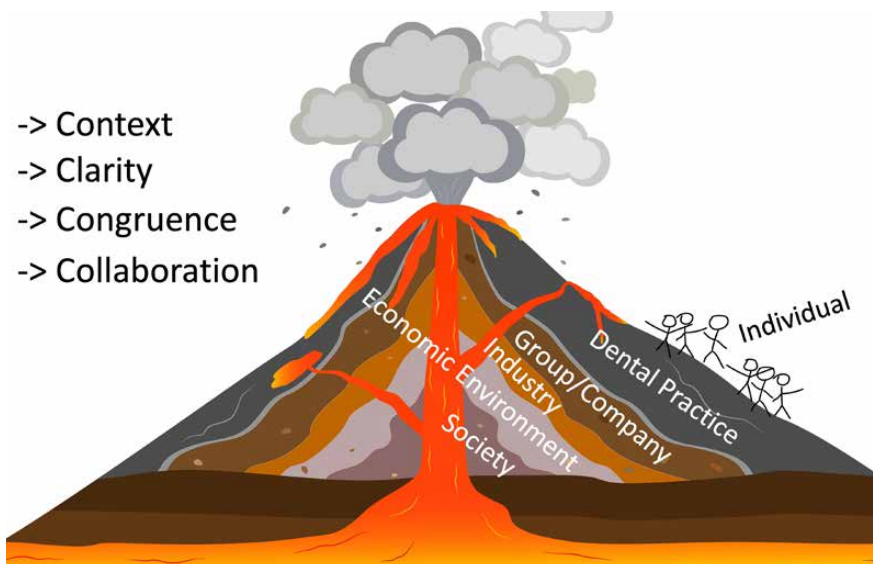
In the middle of all this chaos, my wife started having labor symptoms. She was at high risk for a C-section which couldn’t happen locally. After making several phone calls, we booked flights to Honolulu for an appointment with a great OB office that was going to help with the birth and advocate for us with the insurance company. After all that, her labor symptoms stopped after we got to Oahu. But three weeks later, our little Kade Krater erupted into the world.

During that time, the lava had wiped out large swaths of neighborhoods, and so many favorite places. The destruction was devastating and unavoidable.

The process of creation is often destructive and can feel chaotic. It’s how everything was ultimately created. I draw a parallel between each layer of a volcano and the various levels of our society and business. As individuals, we exist on the surface, making life’s decisions with limited insight into the forces beneath us. If we do not know what lies below, we can feel like a victim of these changes. This is the state of the world, the economy, and the dental industry. New attitudes, generations, and technologies are pushing their way up. How can we lead our teams, our companies, and (perhaps most importantly) ourselves through such dynamic times?



- > Context
- > Clarity
- > Congruence
- > Collaboration



### Leadership in chaotic times

Our teams may not see the broader industry layers and can feel disoriented when something shifts. Even small changes within our groups or practices, something as simple as a new process, can feel as unsettling as an earthquake, creating friction and disorientation. Our teams may feel shaken by societal trends in employment or attitudes, new technologies, and broader economic factors that challenge our initial assumptions.

The leadership team needs to be prepared to forge a path through the chaos. I propose four essential concepts for the Conscious Leader. These concepts are as interconnected as they are crucial.

**Context** helps us depressurize the situation and helps our teams



understand the bigger picture of what's going on. Without context, we can inadvertently take too much blame or credit for what's happening on the surface. A broader context enables us to accept the existing forces so we can direct our energy to adapting, not resisting.

**Clarity.** Communicating a clear vision in a way that resonates with and is meaningful to each layer fosters congruence, or alignment, in adapting to the unpredictable nature of change and progress. Clear communication about how your BIG GROUP-LEVEL VISION relates to each practice, doctor, and team member cultivates buy-in and enables them to contribute effectively from their unique positions. Our teams don't need more pressure; they need clarity. Low context and clarity can lead our teams to take the broader trends too personally or misunderstand your true vision. For instance, Positive Impact Dental Alliance has grown quickly through acquisitions. If my leadership team isn't communicating where each practice is in our vision, our team members can feel forgotten and uncared for. Communicating that vision with clarity provides context to the team.

**Congruence,** or alignment, naturally emerges when context and clarity are present. This alignment empowers your organization to adapt to change. Essentially, you want everyone to be on the same page as far as the mission, vision, and culture of your practice. You want people to feel heard and seen. Everyone can contribute from their individual position working toward a common goal. Congruence replaces friction with unity and understanding.



**Collaboration** ties these ideas together. We can't navigate complex forces when each of us only sees a small slice of the broader pattern. Collaboration is essential at every level. Industry collaboration in groups like the DEO is essential. When I first went to a DEO event, I thought everyone knew something I didn't. The DEO events helped me understand industry-wide factors, which provided crucial context for my leadership and decision-making. Collaboration is where the real magic happens.

We are only one small part of much bigger, and deeper, patterns that are moving beneath and around us. Our teams are hungry for leadership and stability. When disruption occurs, do we resent it? Or do we elevate our vision, provide context

with clarity, promote congruence, and nurture collaboration?

It was this experience of massive change and disruption that blindsided me, that was my call and invitation to step up, and to adapt and become decisive about the things I could control in the overwhelming midst of factors I could not control to move my family into a period of new creation, born of disruption and destruction. It was out of this period that I landed in Oklahoma, and out of these ashes that our dental group was born.

We have a unique opportunity. We can shape how we, and our teams, navigate the inevitable earthquakes and disruptions, and how these lava flows of new creation solidify into new foundations of our life and industry. We're shaping the future through how we lead in this turbulent time. ■



**Brad Nelson** is an avid adventurer and lover of life. You can often find him with his wife and three sons hunting for bugs, building robots, or enjoying a campfire. For fun, Brad leads Positive Impact Dental, an acquisition-model DSO he co-founded in 2018 with his childhood friend Dr. Loren Israelsen. Together they have completed 34 acquisitions without private equity backing. Leveraging scalable technology with strong operations and 250 amazing team members is the only way this has happened. Brad loves connecting ideas and principles from disparate fields to build high performing teams and organizational systems. What lights Brad up is using technology to work WITH human nature to lead teams and practices through an evolving dental landscape.

# Navigating the State of Dentistry

## Challenges, progress, and paths forward

BY ANDREW SMITH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THE ASSOCIATION OF DENTAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

**The Association of Dental Support Organizations (ADSO)** recently released its State of Dentistry report – a culmination of a multi-year study commissioned by the ADSO and conducted by RTI International. This comprehensive report delves deep into the challenges and opportunities shaping the dental industry, echoing what many of us have been advocating for: the pressing need to address the dental workforce shortage.

The report found that closure of multiple hygiene programs, increasingly competitive acceptance requirements, and the limited seats available in programs collectively exacerbate the dental workforce shortage. Despite an increase in dental hygiene programs in 2022, acceptance rates have plummeted from 31% to 25% over the past ten years. As a result, the number of graduating dental hygienists does not sufficiently meet the demands of the industry.

Moreover, according to the Health Policy Institute (HPI), vacancies in hygienist and dental assistant positions have reduced dental practice capacity by about 10% annually. This has forced many dentists to take on responsibilities often performed by hygienists, making it difficult for them to focus on their practice and provide high-quality dental care.

Although the report shows a 1.9% increase in licensed dentists over the past decade, the

most recent data from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) shows that 13,354 dentists are still needed to meet the needs of Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA), or areas where the dentist-to-population ratio falls below recommended levels.

There are currently 7,651 HPSAs in the country, and rural areas bear the brunt of these staffing shortages. According to the RTI report, over 33% of the rural population are underserved. Alarming, the report shows that the attrition of dentists further worsens the existing shortage, with many dentists migrating from rural communities to larger metropolitan areas in sunbelt states.

## According to the RTI report, over 33% of the rural population are underserved.

The report further provides insight into the effects of the dental workforce shortage, including the decline in annual dental visits and worsening oral health among children.

On a positive note, the RTI report highlights a noteworthy progress in diversity within the workforce. According to the report, the graduating class of dentists in 2022 is the most racially and ethnically diverse in history, with students of color making up 48% of the graduates and women making up 53%.

However, more work still needs to be done for the dental workforce to reflect the diversity of the population it serves, as the number of Black dental students has remained roughly the same from 2005 to 2020.

The implications of the RTI report's findings are clear: the dental industry is at a critical juncture. Despite the current challenges, there are signs of progress and cause for optimism. Forward-looking policies and initiatives such as the Dentist and Hygienist Compact offer solutions that address the evolving needs of modern dentistry and the current workforce shortage in the industry. The compact streamlines the process for licensed dentists to practice

in other participating states, with Washington, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Tennessee already passing state legislation to join the compact and 12 other states introducing legislation that would allow them to participate. Policymakers, industry experts, and dental professionals need to come together and collaborate on innovative solutions like the Dentist and Hygienist Compact in order to address the staffing challenges and ensure access to high-quality dental care for all Americans. ■

# Beyond the Microphone

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 187: Large Practice Sales and Partnerships

In this episode, Emmet hosts Chip Fichtner, Co-founder and Principal, Large Practice Sales. They discuss what's happening in the marketplace right now; partnerships; if you're thinking about a transaction; what constitutes a "large practice sale"; ways deals are being structured currently, the difference between a DSO and an "IDSO"; 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. *(Sponsored by Large Practice Sales)*

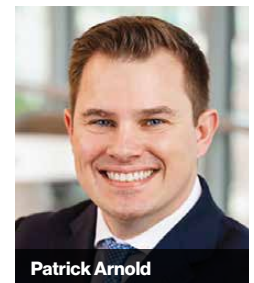


Chip Fichtner

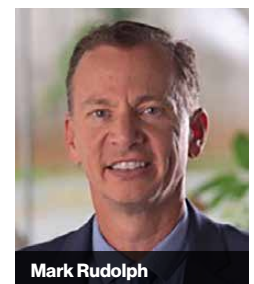
## EP 188: Decoding Accounting & Financials for Scaling Success

In this episode, Emmet hosts Patrick Arnold, Manager, and Mark Rudolph, Shareholder, both from

Elliot Davis, discussing accounting and finance for dental entrepreneurs on everything from benchmarking, partnerships, associate equity, compensation, margins, financial acumen, and more. They cover the accounting specialties of tax accounting, tax strategy, and managerial accounting, emphasizing the need for tailored accounting services. Mark and Patrick advise on essential capabilities for dental owners' finance/accounting teams, stressing forward-looking accounting, budgeting, and forecasting. They outline steps to align financial systems with practice growth, ensuring access to crucial data for successful scaling. *(Sponsored by Elliot Davis)*



Patrick Arnold



Mark Rudolph



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