

Applying *your* dreams to the *business* of dentistry.

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In previous articles I have emphasised the importance of balance in all aspects of your life, suggested ways that you can discover your core values and shown a technique for exploring and defining your dreams.

The title of this piece deliberately places emphasis on the words *your* and *business*. Critics will say (and they frequently do) that it's all very well having these "pie in the sky" dreams but business is harsh. All this talk of ideals and values are fine for coaches and consultants to pontificate upon, but come Monday morning you have to get real and put all that stuff to one side. Nobody appreciates that more than me.

So how does Monday bring the practice you want? I am a business coach - the strap-line of Dental Business Partners is "building your perfect practice". I have no illusions about how hard it is to build and maintain a successful dental practice. I did it for twenty years in general practice and I am currently the business director of a successful orthodontic practice. Using simple, tried and proven methods I help my clients achieve their goals whether they are running a multi-chair NHS facility, a specialist referral unit or a one chair bespoke practice. The ideas and experiences have over the course of more than two decades evolved to become "The Seven Pillars of Dental Practice Management©".

They are:

- Vision
- Financial Controls
- Sales
- Marketing
- People
- Environment
- Systems

Each and every pillar is equally important, when one fails the rest are put under extra pressure and business success is threatened.

Here's what happens when dentists embrace the changes:

	Before	After
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •You have no clear idea of where you want to be in 5 years, 3 years or even tomorrow. •You look at the next day's list and complain because: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.It's not fully booked or 2.It's double booked. •You worry about the knock on effect of taking a long weekend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •This way you can check you are going in the right direction. •You have a clear idea of where your personal & professional life will be in 5 years and beyond. •You can plan the steps you need to take. •Time management means that you decide how the day list looks and how much profit it will generate.
Financial Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The bank might or might not be on your back. •You can't think about the Inland Revenue without coming out in hives. •Your accounts reflect ancient history. •You hope that the money outlasts the month. •Everything's fine (really?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •You know where your money is both coming from and going. •Your spreadsheets mean that your budgets can be done without pressure. •You no longer fear the bank taking its umbrella away when the rainy day arrives.
Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A dirty word. •Unethical. •Unprofessional. •You already know who can and can't afford treatment and what's best for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Your patients make informed decisions for the benefit of their long term dental & general health and wellbeing. •You and your team know how to present treatment options - including doing nothing. •You check routinely that patients' wants and "not wants" haven't changed. •Patients request treatments.

	Before	After
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •You're in Yellow Pages between Demolition & Design but it's getting so expensive. •You have a website but it hasn't been updated for a year or more. •Twitter is for Twits & Facebook is for kids and has nothing to do with dentistry. •Asking for business is tacky and unprofessional. 	<p>You have a marketing policy which produces <i>measurable</i> results.</p> <p>Your patients remember you, appreciate what you do and refer people.</p> <p>Social media is no longer a cause for puzzlement but a valid part of your marketing.</p>
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Some time servers who just turn up and do it. •Not sure if they're an asset or a liability. •You think you have some potentially great people that you just haven't the time or resources to develop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •They work as a team - your team. •By fulfilling potential, their growth reflects the development and improvement of the practice. •Recruitment and team building is done scientifically using proven methods. •You always knew the need to invest in new equipment - now you invest in your greatest asset.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Surgery from the Space Shuttle •Reception from Ikea. •The last time it was decorated you did it over Easter. •Suction and handpieces can be heard over the telephone. •Patients comment about the "dental" smell. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Everyone appreciates that first impressions count and they're excellent. •Regular examination of all stimulants of the five senses. •Patients comment about the sight of fresh flowers.
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •You "passed" the CQC registration but dread an inspection. •"All these systems are "killing" dentistry." •Thankfully the ever reliable Suzie has everything under control - what would you do without her? •Suzie is planning to join your associate in a cold squat 3 miles down the road. 	<p>You have a practice manual that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reflects your ideals and values. •Is a complete guide to anyone joining or visiting your practice "how it's done here". •Is three steps ahead of current legislation.

It is possible to square the circle of building your dream practice where your patients are treated ethically and comprehensively whilst running a profitable business that satisfies your core values and provides balance in your life.