



Which WDA member benefit do you find valuable in your professional or personal life?

“ I value the professional relationships I have developed through the WDA Leadership Academy and serving on the membership development committee. As a public health dentist in northern Wisconsin, being part of the WDA has helped me build camaraderie and connection with colleagues throughout the state. I have used the WDA regulatory hotline to get clarification on state statutes, and our family has benefitted from great customer service provided by the WDA Sponsored Professional Insurance Programs. ”

Dr. Kelly Plote
Hayward

The secret to a thriving practice

Dan Paulson, *InVision Development International*

Over the years, I have worked with several practices. Some are solo, while others have associates to share the load. All face the same challenges: growing the number of patients, dealing with collections and insurance, hiring, staff turnover, etc. As an executive coach and consultant, I can tell you the most common feedback I hear from practice owners is that they want to just do dentistry and not worry about all the other “stuff.” This is why many practices struggle to grow in a competitive environment.



Being a business owner is not what you signed up for. As you were earning your DDS, you may have had only one or two semesters of business-related courses. You likely spent most of your time focused on developing the quality of your dentistry and not dealing with all it takes to run a successful practice. This is even truer if you spend all your non-productive time putting out fires.

To be honest, I’m a lot like you. The joy of my work comes from helping others succeed. However, my business also requires me to manage my staff, vendors, business partners, marketing, accounting and sales. This isn’t field of dreams where “if you build it, they will come.” Likely, you have competition. At the very least, you need to create awareness to your potential patients. No matter what, you will have to deal with the needs and desires of your team. At the same time, you must watch costs, understand the numbers and work with marketing companies, suppliers, insurance companies, landlords and/or real estate. I’ve heard some say that although they desired owning a practice, they did not think about everything that comes with it.

Fortunately for you, there’s help! For a price, there are a number of practice consulting firms that promise to take the

burden of practice management off your plate and allow you to just focus on dentistry. Their strength is with systems and process, but many end up missing the most important piece of the puzzle. You.

One of my clients describes their business as a mission-driven practice, with everything centering around the core belief of trust. The doctor trusts his entire staff as they all work together to build the confidence of their patients. As a team, they handle conflicts both internally and externally. As a result, the doctor has been able to pursue several of his passions, build a practice that experienced double-digit growth during our last recession and maintained relatively low turnover for many years. His practice is leading, not following. Along the way, we have developed the tools necessary to keep the practice highly profitable, supporting his growth into other endeavors.



Another client was actively disengaged from his practice when we first started working together. His practice had two parts: the dentist, and everyone else. While the practice was profitable, the numbers were tight and growth was limited. We worked together to re-engage him with the operation of his business and over the years, he’s accelerated growth, bought two practices, pursued his passions, spent more time with family and dealt with less chaos.

Both of these examples share a common theme. When the owner became more involved with their practice, they created more freedom to do what they wanted. An active leader not only positions the practice for growth, it prevents other issues – like high turnover, waste, patient loss, embezzlement and others – from surfacing.

You are the secret to your practice success and it’s all the stuff you do outside of dentistry that matters. Look at your business as a whole. Treat the root cause, not just the symptoms. Spend time working on the parts of your business you need to improve so you can avoid the stress and frustration that comes when you are putting out fires and not practicing dentistry. You will be happier and your team, patients and community will thank you for it.

Dan Paulson is an author, speaker and executive coach. For the past 15 years his company, *InVision Development International*, has been helping business owners shed the stress of building growing, thriving practices so they can spend more time doing the things they want. If you need help, or just have a question, please call 608-235-5320 or visit www.heydanwhatsnext.com to schedule a meeting.