

From the Founder of the NextLevel Practice™

MILLION DOLLAR DENTISTRY

The Astonishing,
PROVEN WAY

That Highly Successful
Dentists Manage
Their PATIENTS,
Their TEAMS, &
Their FINANCES



GARY KADI

5TH EDITION

Chapter 1

A Day in the Life of Larry Laserguy, D.D.S.

Monday morning.

THE TWO MOST DREADED words in the life of Larry Laserguy, D.D.S.

As he piloted his newly leased 7 Series BMW from his multimillion-dollar home in the best neighborhood in town to his ultramodern suite of dental offices in the best medical building in the region, his life somehow made no sense to him.

A highly successful dentist with twenty years of experience; a large, thriving and lucrative practice; a gorgeous second wife and three attractive, athletic and capable kids, Larry felt as though he should have been on Cloud Nine. Instead, the only numbers that formed in his mind were 911. His life felt like an ongoing emergency, and no one was there to answer the call.

As he navigated the early morning traffic, sipping on his Starbucks and glancing at his new Rolex—a gift from

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his wife, although it was a gift that he would ultimately pay for, since he was the sole provider—Larry felt that nagging sense of upset in the pit of his stomach. The Monday morning team meeting, to begin in fifteen minutes, should be a weekly cause for celebration. After all, the office was jammed with patients, new and old. A sense of what Larry liked to call “organized chaos” pervaded the entire practice, giving off a sense of importance and success. Every year, the office grossed more and more money, enrolled more new patients, closed more cases. Larry’s bi-monthly draw represented far more money than he ever expected to make. It was certainly radically more money than his father had ever made, and yet his father had paid off their house early, bought all of his new cars for cash, and sent Larry and his brother and sister to private colleges and to dental, medical, and law school, without benefit of scholarships.

And his father had never even been to college.

As Larry’s beautiful office tower came into view, he thought for a brief moment about how the weekend had gone. It had gone badly. He and his wife, Linda, had had one of those big blowups—over money, as usual. The kids, all in their teens, were expecting new cars for their birthdays, the kinds of cars that they could drive with pride at their private high schools and private colleges. The cost of insuring three teenagers on the road—he’d just gotten a quote from his insurance buddy at the club—made Larry just shake his head. And they couldn’t have driven ten-year-old clunkers, the kind that Larry drove all through college and dental school. No way. For Larry’s kids, even a 3 Series BMW was a compromise, and not a happy one at that.

They also had fought again about the idea of installing a home theater, something Linda wanted to begin immediately. After all, half a dozen families in their gated community already had home theaters installed, and Linda didn't want to feel as if their family were being left behind. The idea was enticing to Larry, who imagined himself on a Sunday afternoon watching an NFL game with half a dozen of his envious buddies, reclining on buttery leather seats in front of a screen the size of which you would expect to see in a cineplex. Talk about looking like you've arrived.

But arrived where? The poorhouse? The only downside with the home theater was the price. Larry's parents' first (and only) house had cost less than the estimate that the guy from the home theater company had presented. But Linda was digging in her heels; she really wanted it, and he did not want to let her down.

With interest rates ticking upward, payments on the interest only adjustable-rate super jumbo mortgage and the second mortgage were steadily, ominously creeping up, and Larry had the sneaking feeling that not only was he building no equity, he was actually going backwards. Just last night, Larry had checked his bank balance before he went to bed—always a bad idea—only to discover that he was overdrawn, again, this time to the tune of \$4,300. And yet Linda still wanted to install that home theater and buy all the kids new cars. Yikes.

Larry pulled into his reserved parking space and put on his game face, ready to start the new day. Maybe the Monday morning team meeting would go well, for a change.

But as Larry rode the elevator to his top-floor office, with its commanding view of the city, he knew it wouldn't.

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“Good morning, Doctor Laserguy.” Diane, his trusted office manager of nineteen years, greeted him with a smile as he stepped into the office. “How was your weekend?”

“Fine,” Larry lied. As usual, Larry was a bit too consumed with his own concerns to ask Diane how her weekend went; he gave no indication that he noticed the slight frown on her face due to his perpetual neglect of her emotional well-being. Larry knew well, nonetheless, that Diane was the linchpin of his entire organization. Without her, he knew well, his practice would implode. When she took her annual vacation, two weeks that filled Larry’s every waking thought for the preceding two months with dread, he typically ended up doing the million and one things that Diane did. She did them cheerfully, gracefully, and always with a smile. He did them reluctantly, unhappily, and in stark terror that he was going to run out of time. He knew Diane had been entertaining offers from other dental practices, and he had had no choice but to constantly raise her salary. Diane now made a very nice living as an office manager. And unlike Larry, when she had a paycheck, she cashed it immediately.

Larry’s paychecks, large as they were, would ride around in his wallet for weeks, sometimes for a month or more, until those rare, blissful moments of cash flow that permitted him to actually deposit the darned things.

Even at that moment, Larry could feel the weight of two paychecks in his pocket, his compensation for the last two pay periods, totaling almost \$30,000. That money would go a long way toward resolving the overdraft, taking care of his mortgage payment, and putting down a down payment on the home theater, which Linda would not be denied,

and which he really wanted as much as she did. But Larry had somehow developed the philosophy of “pay yourself last,” simply because if he didn’t pay everybody else, and if he didn’t pay his vendors, nobody would show up at his office.

If he didn’t cash those paychecks, his accountant had warned him, he would be late—again—on his mortgage, and his formerly pristine, 800+ credit score would slip a tiny bit further.

Larry shook his head quickly, as if to banish all thoughts of personal and business finance, and he strode purposefully toward the conference room for the team meeting.

Larry believed in starting team meetings promptly, at exactly 7:30 a.m. Larry was the only person on his team who felt that way. Everybody else straggled in between 7:30 and 7:40, to Larry’s weekly consternation, chatting about the weekend bachelorette party in Vegas that two of them had attended and little Jimmy’s soccer game and the other sorts of things that people talk about as they gather on Monday mornings in workplaces everywhere.

Larry took their lateness and their lack of desire to focus on the important matters at hand as a personal affront. Larry vaguely sensed that his team, for all the salary and benefits he provided them, didn’t like him, and this fact pained him. He didn’t understand why they didn’t like him. He was as competent as any dentist in the city, he never fired anybody, and his salary and benefits package was comparable to most of the other dental practices around town. Sure, some people paid more, but Larry believed in frugality, especially when it came to paying salaries. Thirteen dollars an hour was plenty, especially when given the attitude

of the kinds of people who came to work in dental offices, Larry believed.

It was 7:35 before enough people were present for the meeting to begin. Larry's partner, Charlie Chairside, D.M.D., was nowhere to be seen. He typically made a grand entrance about ten minutes into the meeting. What was *with* that guy, Larry thought, as he surveyed his unruly troops. How does he manage to close cases with just about everybody who walks into his office, while I struggle to close one-third of the people I talk to? And why does he think he's so important that he can just walk into an all-hands meeting whenever he wants? Exactly what kind of example is he setting for everyone else?

At that exact moment, Charlie strode in, flashing his movie star smile at the assembled throng—the dental hygienists, the front desk people, the assistants, the whole team. As soon as Charlie came in, a hush fell over the group, and they all turned expectantly toward Diane to find out what was going on.

Why does he get more respect than I do? Larry asked himself, and then he turned to Diane and said, as he did every Monday morning, "How do we look?"

Diane grimaced and tried to cover it quickly with a smile, but everybody could tell that it was going to be another crazy Monday morning.

"Here we go," Diane began, reading from her handwritten notes. "We're packed today, and we have six emergencies. I hope you all have your roller skates on."

A general groan went up from the group.

"Good old Ms. Backbreaker is scheduled for her fifth redo on number nineteen," she said, as Larry rolled his

eyes. "She's scheduled for four units and I only need fifteen minutes."

Larry looked heavenwards and asked silently, why me? Ms. Backbreaker was never satisfied with his work and, for that matter, never paid for it, either. She must owe the office thousands. Probably exactly as much as I'm overdrawn at the bank.

**"WE'RE PACKED TODAY, AND WE HAVE
SIX EMERGENCIES. I HOPE YOU ALL
HAVE YOUR ROLLER SKATES ON."**

Anita, the appointment coordinator, gave Diane something of an angry look. "Yeah," Anita said, her jaw tense. "But you talk to her for fifteen and you take calls for fifteen and then you hang out at your desk for fifteen."

Larry didn't want this weekly meeting to dissolve into arguments, as they often did. "We need to talk about scheduling at our next team meeting," Larry said. "Let's not waste time. What else is happening, Diane?"

"Jennifer Hanson is coming in at 11:00," she said, looking at her notes. "But the case is not back from the lab. And by the way, does anybody know where Amy is? The new lab coordinator?"

Dani, one of the hygienists, spoke up. "She's out today," Dani said. "She called this morning and sounded terrible."

Larry sighed. "Diane," he said, "see me after this meeting regarding Amy. And call the lab immediately."

Diane nodded. "Okay," she said. "Let's move on. Our daily goal, as you all know, is \$10,000. Unfortunately, we've only got \$3,200 on the books, and five hygiene patients

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cancelled. We need the hygienists to get on the phone and fill their schedules. Okay?”

Suzi and Dani, the dental hygienists, rolled their eyes. Like most dental hygienists, they believed that their jobs were to clean teeth—not to support the re-care system, call old patients, educate the patients they do see about cosmetic dentistry, answer the phones, close cases, propose dental work, or do any of the myriad things that Larry kept telling them to do.

Larry could never understand the star mentality that dental hygienists possessed. After all, what exactly was so glamorous about cleaning teeth all day long? Where did they get so much attitude from? You'd think they were all in Hollywood, getting ready for their starring roles, the way they carried on. Larry watched Dani and Suzi's body language. You could see that if they didn't have any patients, they were going to sit around and make phone calls to friends, get their nails done, or do anything other than something that might be useful and productive for the office. Obviously not team players.

I'd fire them in a heartbeat, Larry thought, if they weren't so good-looking.

At that moment, Denise, the one staff member who stayed outside the meeting and handled incoming calls, stuck her head in the door.

“Dr. Laserguy,” she said urgently, “your wife, your lawyer, and the home theater guy are holding for you, and your eight o'clock is seated in room three. And you got an e-mail from the bank about your—”

"I know all about it," Larry said quickly, embarrassed to have his personal finances a potential topic of discussion at the team meeting. What a great way to start the day, he thought.

"Tell them all I'll call them back."

"Your wife is insisting," Denise said, with that look in her eye that suggested that Larry better take the call.

"Tell her to hold a little longer," Larry said wearily. "I'll be right there." He turned back to the group. "Anything else?" he asked, anxious to get the call with Linda over with so he could finally get chairside in room three.

"Mary, the new dental assistant?" Diane said, her voice rising an octave as she spoke, as if she were asking a question.

"What about her?" Larry growled. A more incompetent assistant he had never seen in his entire life. He'd forgotten all about Mary, with everything else on his mind. Another day with Mary was positively going to drive him nuts, maybe drive him out of dentistry altogether.

"She quit," Diane said. "She called me over the weekend."

"But why?" Larry asked, stunned. "Do we have anybody to replace her?"

"She said that you yelled at her in front of a patient." And there was general tittering among the office team. Larry, truth be told, had a reputation for speaking sharply to team members in front of the patients.

Well, why not? He was a perfectionist, and he wanted to do perfect dental work. And if the team members couldn't

keep up with him or do things the right way the first time, that was their problem, not his. He was the commander in chief, and the chair was his operating theater. And anybody who couldn't hang with that was welcome to hit the trail.

"I couldn't find anybody on such short notice," Diane said, embarrassed. "She called me late last night. She also said that she was talking to a lawyer. Something about sexual harassment, Dr. Laserguy?"

Charlie Chairside looked up quickly from his Blackberry. Larry reddened. He'd made a few innocent jokes to Mary, who really was very attractive. An *attorney*? Didn't anybody have a sense of humor anymore?

"Anything else?" he sighed.

"Just a couple of more things," Diane said, and from the expression on her face, they didn't look like positive things. Larry glanced at his partner, Charlie, who had gone back to his Blackberry and was doing his e-mail and checking his portfolio in front of everybody. Charlie wasn't even paying attention! What kind of team player was he?

"Julie, the insurance coordinator?" Diane began. "Well, she opened the supply closet, and it was jammed so tight with all kinds of junk that a computer monitor fell on her toes. She was wearing sandals, and she thinks she broke a couple of toes."

"Oh, no," Larry muttered, wishing that he could magically vanish from the team meeting and head to the only place in the world where he truly felt safe and in control—next to his chair, alongside a patient.

"And the Jerome family is coming in later today," Diane added, avoiding looking at her boss while she mentioned

the name of the family the whole office called the Dental Deadbeats. "They still owe \$2475 on their account, and they're only paying fifteen dollars a month. Are you sure you still want to treat them?"

"Who's in charge," Larry asked, looking around the room, "of managing our accounts, so that we don't have situations like this?"

Everybody looked at the floor. Nobody was in charge, Larry realized. We'd better get this handled, he thought. We just can't go on like this.

"Anything else?" he said, feeling emotionally drained. And it wasn't even 7:45 yet. Denise stuck her head in the door and gave Larry another anxious look. Obviously, his wife, his lawyer, and his home theater guy were all still holding. And before long he'd be chairside with the Jerome family, the most phobic group of gagers and squirmers he had ever seen in his entire career.

There's got to be a better way, Larry said to himself, as he adjourned the meeting and went to take the calls from the three people he wanted to speak to the least at that moment. There's got to be a better way.

If anything of the foregoing sounds in any way familiar to you, you're not alone. I consult to dentists across the country who face, to varying degrees, the problems of Larry Laserguy—problems that threaten to swamp or even destroy dental practices, problems that lead to financial disaster, broken marriages, unhappy relationships with children, and the sort of ongoing misery that countless highly successful dentists face and have no one with whom they can discuss it.

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The sad truth is that countless dentists deal with many of these problems every single day of their lives. They're frustrated, they're angry, and they've got no idea what to do. They need a break, and they need someone who understands. Most of all, they need solutions.

Larry's story, as comical as it might be to somebody who isn't undergoing all these multiple crises, admittedly is an exaggeration of the problems dentists face. Yes, many dentists generate huge amounts of income in their highly successful practices, but their expenses, at home and at work, are even greater. I work with some dentists who have been practicing for decades and have nothing to show for it but six- and even seven-figure levels of debt.

They sense that their team members dislike them and sometimes even hate them and that their partners disrespect them, and they cannot figure out why. They are happiest chairside yet find themselves performing the sorts of management and office tasks that they cannot understand why their team doesn't have the common sense or even the decency to handle. After all, that's what they're getting paid for.

It gets worse. They have patients who drive them crazy, who don't pay, who cancel with no notice, and who generally make their lives miserable. They have ongoing cash flow crises that turn their entire business and personal financial lives into houses of cards. And they feel that there is no end in sight.

These dentists pay me six figures to solve these and similar problems. My promise to them—which I back up with a one hundred percent guarantee—is that I will

work with them to show them how to solve their problems and enjoy a guaranteed minimum of a dollar-for-dollar return on investment for my services. The average office increases collections twenty to fifty percent in the first year, and income continues to grow year after year. My clients describe the residual effect of my work as an annuity: the increases in income, happiness, and peace of mind that ratchet up every single year.

Your business becomes your best possible investment—it becomes much more prudent for you to invest in your own business than in anyone else's on the stock market, where you're not in control.

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EFFECT OF MY WORK AS AN ANNUITY—
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In this book, I'm going to share with you the solutions that I implement with my clients, who resolve their debt crises, their staffing crises, and their marital and family crises. They also end up with far more money in the pocket, far more time chairside relative to other tasks, and far more career and life satisfaction and happiness than they ever dreamt was possible. I help these dentists lead the lives that they are entitled to enjoy, after all the hard work they have put into their training and after the years of work they have put into building their practices.

This is not a book about how to start a dental

practice—you could find plenty of those. And this is not cookie-cutter consulting that doesn't grasp the real dilemmas dentists face. Instead, together, we are going to expose—and solve—the kinds of problems that dentists face that nobody wants to talk about and that very few people know how to solve. I know how to solve these problems. I've done it for countless dentists, and together, I'm going to do the same thing for you.

The scenario we just viewed, that of Larry Laserguy and his mounting personal, financial, and professional woes, paints a picture of the extreme situations in which many of my clients find themselves before they come to me. In the next chapter, I'd like to paint a very different picture for you. I'd like to show you the life that you are entitled to lead, and just how much joy, excitement, and success you can reap. And I'll show you how to work less and make more money, too. So let's take a look right now at the life you deserve to live, and let's find out together exactly how to make it a reality for you.

Take Your Practice to the NextLevel:

1. Many highly successful dentists lead a double life. Their world sees them as affluent and powerful, but in reality they are struggling to maintain control over their financial situations and their teams.

Look at your life and make a list of all the things you don't want other people to know about you. What are you withholding? What are you not saying that needs to be said? Making this list will help you identify the parts of your life that could use a jolt of authenticity, responsibility and communication.

2. I've worked with dentists for long enough to recognize the specific problems they face—at the office, with their teams, with their patients, with their spouses and children, and in their financial lives. That's why my methodology is designed to address the dentist's unique plight.
3. Even highly successful dentists can find new levels of professional satisfaction and financial success... if they only know how.

Chapter 2

The Life You are Entitled to Lead

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, I painted a fairly bleak, if all too accurate, picture of what many dentists' lives resemble—an outward display of success masking a painful sense of desperation fueled by crises at work, at home, and in their financial lives.

It doesn't have to be that way.

In this chapter, I'd like to focus on the sorts of results that my clients have achieved. They now enjoy unimagined financial success. They spend fewer hours at work. They report a much higher degree of job satisfaction, harmony in the workplace (it can happen!) and at home. They even possess a plan for an orderly and well-crafted retirement, so they can do the other things in life that matter to them.

Now it's your turn to live this way.

Throughout the rest of the book, I'll show you how you can achieve each of these goals in your own practice, and I'll show you specific tools, methods, and approaches that have had wonderful, long-lasting results on the bottom line

and on the personal satisfaction of my dentist clients. But first, let's paint a picture of exactly how life can be.

Before we get into the specifics of how to achieve these results, let's first talk about what you can reasonably hope to achieve if you are willing to expand your sense of possibility and try a few new approaches to the practice—and the business—of dentistry.

1. Have All the Income You Desire.

Before anything else, I get my clients to dream big dreams. As the expression says, "Green goes with everything." There's nothing like a healthy, regular dose of high income to make people feel good about themselves, their dental practice, and their personal lives. Typically, sole practitioners working with two hygienists in an office gross about \$50,000 a month when they come to see me. By implementing the suggestions I offer, they go up to \$85,000 a month within the first year, and they continue to achieve similar rates of increase year after year.

BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, I GET MY CLIENTS TO DREAM BIG DREAMS.

Two dentists working together and employing three dental hygienists typically gross \$100,000 a month. My consulting methods take them to a gross of \$150,000 per month, and again, the increases keep on coming, year after year.

Three dentists working together and employing five hygienists will typically gross \$150,000 a month. I generally

take them to between \$235,000 and \$250,000 a month in gross income.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, my clients achieve these remarkable growth rates *without* adding to their existing team, *without* working additional hours, and without any new forms of marketing. They don't achieve these results with smoke and mirrors. Instead, I show them how to apply the sorts of business practices that simply aren't taught in dental school or, for that matter, anywhere else.

My consulting work typically leads dentists to have a brand new problem—what to do with all the money that's rolling in, far more money than they ever expected to handle. After all, where do you put all that new-found cash that flows in, unceasingly, steadily, month after month, year after year?

That's *exactly* the sort of problem that I want to create for you.

Dentists typically have what I call blind spots in their belief systems. They have caps on what they think they can earn. They don't realize that a well-managed dental office permits a dentist to gross up to a thousand dollars an hour for his or her time chairside. They don't realize that every aspect of their business can be turned into a profit center until I show them exactly how. I'll show you exactly those same methods in this book.

I start off by asking dentists exactly how much money they would *like* to earn. Then I ask them how much money they can earn per hour if the practice is managed well, and then we multiply that figure by the number of hours they wish to work. In so doing, my clients set income

goals—often for the first time in their entire careers—and these goals far exceed what they are currently earning.

They have trouble at first believing that they can reach those goals without adding a new team, without working more hours, and without marketing efforts that they fear would make them look unprofessional in their own eyes, in the eyes of their peers, and in the eyes of the general public. But it's entirely possible for a dentist to earn up to a thousand dollars an hour for every hour he practices dentistry. I've shown my clients how to do it, and now it's your turn to have all the income you desire.

2. Work as Many or as Few Hours as You Would Like.

There are three basic ways for dentists to increase production. The first method is that they can increase the number of hours they practice, doing the same amount of production per hour. I don't recommend this method, yet this is the most commonly accepted way for a dentist to make more money.

The second way: Dentists can increase their production per hour, and I show my clients how to do that. Often, my clients find themselves strapped for time and for cash flow. They feel that they are on an endless treadmill, spinning faster and faster, and they are working more and more hours, but they seem to be standing still nonetheless in terms of cash flow and net worth.

Again, it doesn't have to be that way. My clients learn how to increase their productivity per hour and thus reduce the number of hours they work, from thirty-two down to

twenty-five, without evenings or weekends. This way, they alleviate the frustration of not being able to spend enough time with their spouses and children. They eliminate the sense of exhaustion and frustration that overwork typically creates. And they have a hell of a lot more fun, too.

The third way to increase income is to increase production and hire an associate at the same time. The new business skills that you will bring to your practice, the second dentist's production, and the equity of his buy-in will combine to radically increase your income. I'll show you how to do all that. The bottom line here: you can work as many or as few hours as you would like, if you know the secrets my clients know about how to increase your production and make each hour spent practicing dentistry truly count.

3. Have Your Patients Show Up—and Have Them Show Up on Time.

One of the most frustrating things about practicing dentistry is that none of your patients want to come see you. They show up late. They cancel appointments at the last minute. Sometimes they don't even give you the courtesy of any notice at all. They back away from the suggestions that you have made about the kind of dental care they need. While you think they have accepted the case you have presented, the reality is that they have no intention at all of letting you do your job.

My clients experienced the frustration I've just described until I taught them methods for educating new

patients from the start about the nature of the dental work they truly needed and also *the importance of keeping their commitments*. Believe it or not, there are proven ways to get patients to show up—and show up on time! Imagine how much freer your life would feel if you did not have the constant, nagging irritation of knowing that on any given day some of your patients were bound to cancel the appointments they had made with you, and thus deprive themselves of the dental work they need and deprive you of the income that you deserve.

**BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THERE ARE PROVEN
WAYS TO GET PATIENTS TO SHOW UP
AND SHOW UP ON TIME!**

It *is* possible to create a new framework with your patients that has them showing up—and showing up on time—for their dental work.

**4. Be Free to Present Comprehensive Treatment
Without Any Fear of Rejection or Negative
Reaction from the Patient.**

We all hate rejection, whether in our personal lives or in our professional lives. For dentists, that fear of rejection translates into a myriad of lost opportunities—and lost income. They are trapped by their fear and unable to present the comprehensive treatment that they know their patients need. Dentists are not really doing their patients a service by minimizing real problems, simply because they sense that the patient might say no to comprehensive

treatment, might claim to be unable to afford such treatment, or simply won't come back.

In our society, for some bizarre reason, there is a stigma attached to anything to do with sales. Dentists rightly think of themselves as highly educated and highly competent medical professionals. But the reality is that if your office doesn't sell, you can't practice dentistry.

Most dentists are frustrated by the fact that their lives seem to be an endless, boring succession of "drilling, filling, and billing." In other words, they see themselves doing the same relatively dull, mundane tasks of dentistry over and over again, simply because they don't have the selling training necessary to explain to patients what is truly necessary for their optimal dental health. I'm not talking about offering you high pressure sales tactics or sleazy "can't miss" closes. Instead, I'm talking about knowing how to sell in a sophisticated, confident, trustworthy manner that enhances the patient's confidence in you as you accomplish your goal of providing maximum service to your patient.

With the kind of sales techniques I will show you, everybody wins: the patient will get all of the dental care he or she needs, and you will earn more and practice the more interesting kinds of dentistry, the sorts of treatments that require multiple visits, that challenge you and get you out of that "drill, fill, and bill" mentality.

My clients are not afraid to present a comprehensive case and complex cases, and they thoroughly enjoy the process. And their confidence in the ability of the entire team to sell cases has a huge impact both on the dental health of their patients and on their own financial bottom line.

5. Have Patients Accept at Least Eighty Percent of Treatment Presented and Pay For It... in Full and in Advance.

These must seem like outrageous claims to the average dentist who struggles to convince patients to accept anything more complicated than a couple of fillings. The fact is that if you present a case properly, you have every reason to expect that your patient will accept that case eighty percent of the time. Not only that, I will show you how to have your patient pay in full for that treatment—and pay in advance.

Most dentists look inside the patient's mouth and present the solution—you need three crowns, you need a bridge, whatever. The acceptance rate for dentists who practice in this traditional manner, I have discovered, is approximately thirty-eight percent. In other words, in most offices, patients are rejecting their dentists' recommendations almost two-thirds of the time. Actually, most dentists don't even track this figure, and they are often quite surprised to learn just how low their acceptance rate really is. Why is the rate traditionally so low? It's because these dentists only present solutions.

Your patient will accept treatment far more often if you also present the problem in all its clarity by use of an intraoral camera, so that you show the patient exactly what has to be treated. On top of that, I can show you how to explain to the patient exactly what the dream of one hundred percent dental health looks like. When you combine these three elements—the problem, the solution, and the

implications for complete dental health—your closing rate will shoot up, just as my clients have experienced.

**WHEN YOU COMBINE THESE THREE
ELEMENTS—THE PROBLEM, THE
SOLUTION, AND THE IMPLICATIONS
FOR COMPLETE DENTAL HEALTH
—YOUR CLOSING RATE WILL SHOOT UP,
JUST AS MY CLIENTS HAVE
EXPERIENCED.**

**6. See the Exact Type of Patient You Enjoy Seeing
and Do the Exact Type of Dentistry You Want to Do.**

These concepts tie in with the points we discussed earlier—the idea that most dentists want to get away from “drilling, filling, and billing.” Many dentists have specific types of dentistry that they would prefer to perform. But they can't seem to find patients who need that kind of work or will accept those treatments. These dentists believe patients who can and will accept those kinds of treatments can be found only by resorting to hope and prayer... and external marketing.

Hope and prayer are simply not adequate foundations for building a thriving and lucrative dental practice, as many of my clients had already discovered by the time they came to see me. The fact is that you can perform the kind of dentistry you prefer, and you can find—and sell—the kind of patients to which you aspire, if you only know how. And, as I'm sure you've guessed, I can show you exactly how to

find them. Actually, you'll discover that the greatest source of ideal patients... is your appointment book! I'll show you a new way to relate to and care for your current patients that will allow you to do the dentistry you want to do the most.

7. See as Few or as Many Patients as You Would Like.

My clients no longer practice what I call "assembly line" dentistry. They are not tied to finding patient after patient after patient who for the most part can only be sold on the simplest, least lucrative, and least interesting forms of dental care. The key for my clients to moving beyond assembly line dentistry is to understand *how to structure payment schedules*.

This may seem counterintuitive—what exactly do methods of payment have to do with the number of patients you see? The surprising answer is that when you know exactly what payment options to offer—and when to offer them in the selling process—you can sell more people on more care that they truly need.

Let me offer you a different way to think about this issue. Who spends more on a meal in a restaurant—an individual who orders *a la carte*, or someone who orders a *prix fixe* menu? Naturally, it's the person who orders the complete meal. That person knows exactly how much he or she is going to pay for the entire dinner and doesn't leave until the last course is served!

The analogy fits well with the practice of dentistry. Most dentists sell their patients dental services on an *a la carte* basis. It stands to reason that if a dentist knew how to propose and sell patients on *prix fixe* dentistry,

that dentist would make far more money than one who continued to offer services *a la carte*. This may seem like an impossible dream for many dentists, but *my* clients do it with ease. They also understand how to remove the question of financing dental treatment from the patient's decision to go ahead with comprehensive treatment. By taking money off the table as an issue, my clients are able to sell far more cases than they ever had in the past. Also, when patients pay in advance, you'll enjoy another side benefit: They'll find less wrong with your work! When people owe money, they can *claim* that something's wrong with the service or product for which they owe... and thus duck out of their responsibility to pay. Has this ever happened to you?

In short, the key to seeing as few or as many patients as you would like is knowing how to handle the question of payment, so that you can move your patients from an *a la carte* basis to a *prix fixe* approach that benefits them—and you.

8. Have Little or No Accounts Receivables.

There's nothing more frustrating than performing dental work for people who won't pay for it. I've never been in a dental office that didn't have that little plaque that says, "Payment is due at the time services are delivered." I've also never been in a dental office (except for those belonging to my clients, who know better) that didn't have thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars of accounts receivable on the books. If you know how to get your patients to pay in full and to pay in advance, you don't have a lot of accounts receivable.

9. Delegate all Tasks that You Dislike and Still Retain Complete Control and Accuracy in Your Practice.

Whenever I come on board with a new client, I'm always shocked to find the degree to which that dentist, like so many dentists who are not achieving their highest level of success, is unable to delegate.

Many dentists suffer a need for compulsive over-control in their workplace. They find it impossible to delegate financial matters to people who are specifically trained to work as bookkeepers or accountants. They meddle in staffing problems that ought to be handled by the office manager or some other designated person. They've constantly got their noses in the appointment book, moving patients around, insisting that people reschedule for the convenience of the dentist and not for the patient. They behave like out-of-control traffic cops, sometimes creating motion and havoc with everybody's schedules for no discernible benefit to anyone. Still other dentists spend valuable time writing up charts instead of having their assistants do that kind of work. They bypass the person accountable for these tasks and, in so doing, invalidate them.

A dentist who does not know how to delegate wastes his or her own time and demeans the entire team. After all, a dentist's team is (at least in theory) trained and competent to complete the tasks that the dentist can't seem to let go of. My clients learn how to delegate all the tasks that they dislike and all the tasks that they shouldn't be involving themselves with, because their time is too valuable.

They end up with an office that runs more smoothly and a team with a much higher level of morale.

10. Work Eighty Percent Chairside, Ten Percent on Managing Your Business, and Ten Percent on Designing Your Future.

As we saw in the previous point, most dentists waste an enormous amount of time managing the wrong things. Not my clients. They spend only ten percent of their time managing the business because they know how to delegate, empower, and avoid undercutting the people they are paying to accomplish things for them. Instead of spending sixty percent of their time chairside, they now spend eighty percent chairside.

In addition to the ten percent of the time managing the business, they spend another ten percent of the time designing the future of the business. This is the sort of advance planning—some might call it dreamwork or just time away or time off—that totally eludes most dentists, who don't have the time for it and don't even know how to go about doing it, even if they could make the time, which is highly unlikely.

11. Have a Team that Motivates You.

Most dentists think that they have the responsibility of motivating their entire team, from the front desk people to the hygienists to the person who books the appointments to the bookkeeper. Most dentists think that they are expected

to be a combination of Tony Robbins and Vince Lombardi, imparting motivational thoughts to their teams at all times. The reality is that most dentists are far too frazzled to motivate anybody, including themselves.

I teach my clients that motivation actually flows from the team upward to the dentist, instead of the other way around. I'll show you how to turn every aspect of your practice into a profit center.

You'll discover how to train your dental hygienists to present cases and not just clean teeth, and how to motivate the hygienists, the appointment coordinator, the front desk people, and everyone else in the office. Everyone receives incentives to bring in more revenue for the business. You want to show them how to be entrepreneurial in their outlook and approach to work.

Ironically, the number one complaint I hear from my clients' team members has to do with the fact that the dentists who hired me aren't doing all the dentistry that they took the initiative to sell! Doesn't that sound like the ideal problem to have with your team? That's right—the team is actually pushing the doctor to do more dentistry. Why not you?

12. Have a Team that Respects You and Takes Your Direction.

When the energy of the team is unleashed and team members are encouraged, through direct financial incentives, to be proactive in terms of creating revenue, everybody wins. My clients look at each aspect of their practice—the appointment coordinator, the hygienists, the front desk

people—as individuals who are playing a great game, and that game is, “Make more money for the office.”

There's no denying that you may be at least in part motivated by money; for most dentists, this is at least one reason why they went into dentistry in the first place. Why should it be any different for your team? When you bring out the entrepreneurial spirit in your team members, they will respect you, appreciate you, and be highly motivated to do whatever it takes to keep their jobs. After all, there exist grapevines among all of the different groups of people who work in dental offices in any city or town. They all know which offices are hot, which offices pay the best, and which offices are the most fun. The people currently working for you will be highly motivated to do the best job possible for you so that they can keep their jobs, because they know that everybody else in town wishes they worked for you. How does that sound? Best of all, you'll no longer be solely responsible for driving your practice. You'll see how everyone else in the office will actually be very excited and motivated to share that all-important responsibility with you.

13. Have a Waiting List of Professionals Demanding to Work for You.

Some dentists have rocky relationships with their team members. Most people—not just dentists—shy away from confrontation, and dentists take the attitude that it's better to have a mediocre team member on board than to have no one at all. Many dentists tell themselves, “There are no

good people out there anyway,” and they figure the devil they know is better than the devil they don’t know.

Other dentists take a very different approach, churning through team members in an effort to find the “perfect” person. This search for perfection inevitably fails, not because the team members are uniformly terrible but because the demands that the dentist places on these people are simply far too high for any reasonable human being, especially for the salaries offered. One of my clients went through seventy-seven people in seven years before he brought me on board. That’s no way to run an office.

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The fact is that there are wonderful people out there, and they have enough self-esteem and dignity to work only in wonderful places. If your office transcends the usual sorts of problems by applying the exceptional sorts of solutions that I offer my clients, word will get around the grapevine in your community, and you will be in the delightful position of being able to pick and choose from the best of the best in every aspect of staffing your office.

14. Have Fun and Enjoy Going to the Office Daily.

Most dentists think that they are stuck for life with the stressors that make their lives miserable: recalcitrant

team members; nonpaying patients; patients who cancel appointments, show up late, or are simply no-shows. Most dentists think that these aggravating factors are simply part of the cost of doing business. Not my clients, who know how to remove each of these different stressors and thus free themselves from the pain that most dentists experience on a daily basis.

15. Be Recognized by Your Colleagues, Your Team, and Your Community as a Leader in Making a Difference in People's Lives.

It's said that anybody who goes to dental school for the money is not likely to finish dental school. You really have to love people, at least on some level, and you have to be motivated and even inspired to serve. That's true for practically every dentist in the world. The difference is that most dentists are stuck in survival mode, working endless hours so they can keep billing, just to keep their heads above water.

When you can cut your weekly hours down from, say, forty or fifty to twenty-five, that leaves you with plenty of time to serve the community. You can open your office one day a month to residents of a homeless shelter, a shelter for battered women, underprivileged children, or whomsoever you choose. If you are able to select the kind of dental work you would rather practice instead of the drilling, filling, and billing routine that most dentists endure, you will develop a reputation among your peers for that kind of work, and they will be far more likely to refer that kind of work to you. These are only some of the upsides to taking control of your practice and your financial life.

Your colleagues in your community will be well aware of the personality change you'll undergo, if complaining about patients, team, or the practice of dentistry has been a way of life for you. They'll notice your happier demeanor, and they'll sense that something radical has changed for you. And they'll want to know what it is.

16. Maintain Control Over Your Life and Practice No Matter What Breakdowns Come Your Way.

There's no such thing as a breakdown-free existence. Personal problems persist; not all patients are ideal. Life happens. But by taking control of so many aspects of one's life, practice, and finances, the breakdowns that do occur—and they are fewer and further between for my clients—simply don't matter as much. They don't represent the kind of significant setbacks that they might have been in the past. When you're in control of the big things, the little things eliminate themselves—or just don't matter as much anymore.

17. Have a Secure Future; Retire With Peace and Dignity and Leave a Legacy.

Most dentists have no plan for retirement. That's because they can't afford to retire.

They are so deeply imbedded in that financial morass of too many accounts receivable, anemic cash flow, and too many expenses at home that they can't even think about retirement. My clients do have plans for retirement. I ask

them whether they want to keep practicing dentistry ten years from now. Together, we work out exactly how many hours—how many highly profitable hours, that is—it would take over a period of how many years in order to retire at whatever age they choose. I show them that it's possible to sell parts of their practice to associates, bank the proceeds, and create investment assets with that money. There are a lot of things dentists would rather do other than practice dentistry all day long, all year long, or throughout their whole lives. I show my clients how to make all their dreams come true.

There you have it—seventeen aspects of the life you are entitled to lead. Freedom from financial pressure, a convivial and focused team, patients who show up for—and pay for—all of the treatment they need: when you put all this together, it adds up to the most elusive benefit of all—*freedom and peace of mind*. Throughout the rest of this book, I'm going to work with you in every aspect of your practice, so that you can make the same transformations my clients have made and you can reap the same benefits they now enjoy.

You've already done the hard work. You survived dental school. You've built a thriving practice. Now it's time to take the next step and get everything out of your education, experience, and hard work that you so richly deserve. In the next chapter, I'll begin to show you how to accomplish just that.

Take Your Practice to the NextLevel:

1. I want you to envision the life you're entitled to lead. It's a life in which your office operates smoothly, your team supports you as never before, your patients show up—on time—and pay for their care in advance, and your stress level radically diminishes. What would you be doing if you weren't stressed or worried about your business? What options would suddenly become available to you?
2. In the life you deserve, you'll no longer have to worry about late, broken, or cancelled appointments, accounts receivable, patients who cause more trouble than they're worth, or team members who disrupt your office. Instead, top professionals will be seeking ways to learn how they can work for you. Take a moment to envision the kind of life you want. Make a list of the things you want to accomplish, both within and beyond your business. Use this as a guidepost to where you want to go.
3. In the life you're meant to have, you'll be recognized as a leader in your field and a contributor to your community. You'll also have the income that will permit you to plan a lifestyle and retirement on your terms.

Now does that sound like a great life or what? Well, that's the future that you deserve.