

Smiling Perfectly?

Report on Strategies for Success by Amarjit Gill BDS

We all know that, by organising certain elements of our practices, we should be able to reap rewards of effective management and efficiency. A three-day event held in Alton Towers, England, *Strategies for Success*, was certainly tailored to increasing ethically practice income, by understanding and implementing well-established practice management strategies. In fact the presenters, Ashish Parmar and Rahul Doshi, were so confident on delivering this promise that they guaranteed with a course fee money back offer. Don't we like irresistible offers like this?

habilitation costing anywhere from £10,000 to £50,000.

But even if you see your future a million miles away from this, doing good family dentistry under the NHS, you will still need to embrace some commercial skills. Within the next three years in the UK at least one person per practice will need to be fully au fait with business. From April 2009 Primary Care Trusts can expect a business plan to accompany your case for seeking NHS funds in order to win contracts for NHS funding. As far as post code lotteries go, you will have to question the value of working with winning PCTs.

into a sentence or two—the Mission Statement

- Then, as the lifeblood of any business is to make a profit you should be able to write how you'll do this, (both in words and figures)—the Business Plan
- You need to check how your dream is materializing into reality in terms of money—Cash Flow forecast

The presenters then covered the '21 Laws of leadership'. After all, you do need to take your team with you. This was suitably stated as "anyone can steer a ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course". The whole subject was very ably covered without losing delegates, despite the soporific effect upon reading.

In considerable detail, they covered how properly to price a fee per item service. This is something very few of us do. Stories abound of colleagues:

- who foolishly relate their private fees to the NHS, not realising that these bear little resemblance to reality
- set their fees to match or exceed those of their pals or nearest dentist that their staff are asked to call
- tweak them by what car their patients are driving.

This is a bizarre way to do business and one that threatens to speed up the treadmill for those who intend to negotiate with the PCTs, in two years.

The presenters next defined an ideal team as 'a committed group of individuals working cohesively towards a common set of goals'. The goals were those identified by the Principals, which were understood and agreed by the team. This section covered on motivating and training the team, with one of the team role playing too.

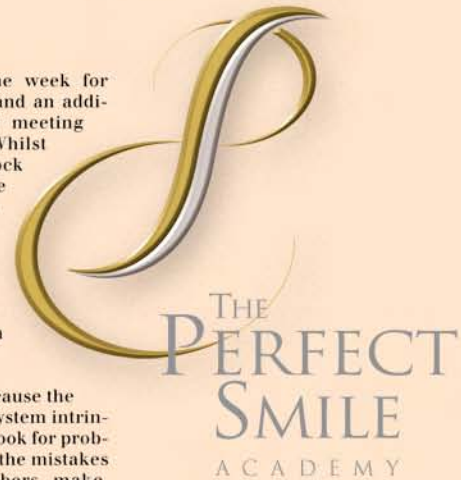
Unlike most speakers on practice management that I've heard, they proposed two team meetings a day, one meeting

at the end of the week for a whole session and an additional four hour meeting every month. Whilst this might shock many of us, the point was clear this kept them working cohesively as a team and their financial plans built in of this level of non clinical work.

Maybe it is because the old fee per item system intrinsically makes us look for problems, that we see the mistakes that team members make, more than the great things they do too. But that is not the way to motivate people. Ken Blanchard's book "Whale Done" was hailed as a reference to encourage others as a default position, instead of 'the fault' position! Whilst working conditions looked excellent there was no shyness in stating how they share their fruits of the labours with the team, yes I am talking bonus systems.

The management Guru to all management gurus is widely regarded as William Deming. One of my favourite quotes from him is 'what gets measured, gets improved'. This was aptly shown by the dynamic duo. Perhaps more important to private practice is the number of new patients. For instance a simple analysis of the appointment book focusing on the reasons for new patients visiting the practice should be instructional on where to focus the marketing spend. If people sourced you through the Internet, then you should be ensuring that the practice website is as user friendly as possible, whilst eloquently reflecting your values. As an aside, this is now generally deemed to be more effective than Yellow Pages at generating new business!

Once the new patient walks through the door, there are protocols in place to ensure



that their whole experience is nothing less than outstanding. This is backed up by tons of training including the team reading and discussing books on identifying the 4 different patient personalities and the art of selling. Are you impressed or shocked yet? Whatever your thoughts, we were updated on the '20 Keys to Customer Service success'. If we accept that the future of dentistry will be more of a business then surely this is appropriate?

You might have noticed that whilst this dynamic duo promote themselves as clinicians, helping us to become formidable smile designers, I've tried to emphasize the underpinning management that supports their TV highlighted skills on transforming peoples' smiles. Without a well-run practice, if you intend to offer treatment plans in thousands and especially tens of thousands of pounds, you will be on a slippery slope. What you are admitting to is ignorance of the way that your patients will 'see' you. Ask anyone what they think of a great smile delivered in a shabby practice, or by disinterested staff. In fact many people judge places by the condition of the toilets and don't think I'm kidding.

As far as understanding the clinical element of this three



Your hosts Dr Rahul Doshi and Dr Ashish Parmar, partners of The Perfect Smile Studios and the Perfect Smile Academy.

I first met Ash and Rahul when we presented at the 2005 UK National Conference for Private Dentistry. At the time, some thought their concepts were difficult to achieve. However, in the interim many practices, especially in London, have already started operating along the lines mentioned, with a typical full mouth re-

So whatever dentistry you will offer, it pays to find out how to operate your practice. With that in mind our presenters simplified the concept and made it clear that:

- First you need to know what you're setting out to achieve—the Vision
- Then you should be able to summarise those thoughts



day conference goes, Rahul and Ash very capably covered all the angles. We learnt about:

- Biological failures
- Periodontal problems
- Black triangles – (not related to the Bermuda one either)
- Role of occlusion
- Microleakage
- Tooth preparation techniques
- Tips on easy but great impressions – the foundation of great lab work

Many people discount the role and value of dental materials in successful dentistry. Yes I know it sounds boring but it's essential to getting superb results. Some speakers cover this subject in depth in relation to adhesive dentistry, but these speakers covered the whole subject in great depth. They even had a list of their preferred materials in their superb delegates' handbook.

Naturally as we move into the consumer market patients don't just want to know the theory of what we could do, they also want to know what you've actually done. That means we need to provide simple and clear evidence of 'before and after' photographs. So we covered the pros and cons of film versus digital, the role of magnification ratios and using Adobe Photoshop CS2 software. Clinical photography with a digital SLR camera, image correction and PowerPoint creation for Case Presentation purposes were covered in detail.

Naturally the latest thoughts on smile design were covered taking into consideration position of teeth in all three dimensions, their relationship with the soft tissues of the lips and cheeks and the way that this fitted into a formula that created the treatment plan that one now presents to a patient.

In short, Ash and Rahul totally acknowledged that everybody's levels of knowledge and expertise is different. A 'hot tip' for one may be old news to another. But nevertheless, it only requires one pearl of wisdom to make a profound change in your working life and these guys gave in abundance. Talking to other delegates convinced me that they were going to get great evaluations.

However, if you are of the disposition where your patients count more than the state funding system, then you need to be exposed to management thinking, specifically imported from those successful private dentists in the States, and interpreted into English by these two presenters. With the clinical experience they evidently possessed and generously shared, this was a great few days to invest in developing my practice.

The three days of jam packed entertainment, fun and

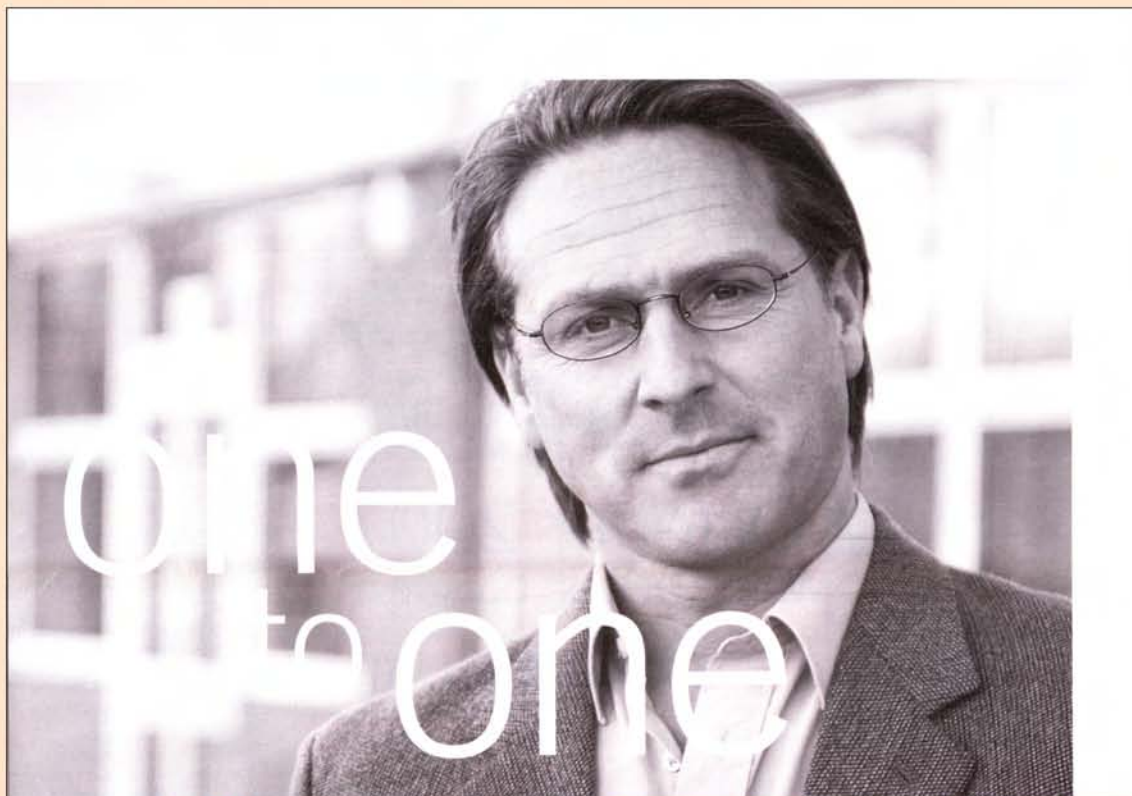
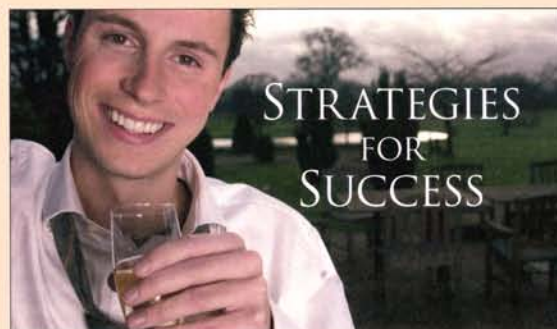
a learning experience provided a great foundation on which to build. Sure, being clinicians there is a great urge to be doing rather than listening, but they offer hands on courses too. One day, when I make some more time free I will share my opinions on that with you too.

Box about the presenters to follow

If you cannot wait, Dr Parmar and Dr Doshi run their popular Aesthetic Hands On

Course from their state-of-the-art Studios in Hertford. The "AMAZING Secrets and Strategies to Success" Course will be repeated only once in 2007 (in London on September 28th and 29th). Book early to avoid disappointment! ☐

Feel free to visit www.theperfectsmile.co.uk, or contact Laura Horton on 01708 460990 find out more information or to book onto a Course.



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