“As dental coaches, we are servants in a noble profession”

An interview with Kirk Behrendt, founder and CEO of ACT Dental. By Iveta Ramonaite, DTI

Dental consulting and coaching services provide advice on dental management and marketing and help dentists grow their practices. Just recently, Dental Tribune International spoke with Kirk Behrendt, founder and CEO of ACT Dental, about his experience as a dental coach. In this interview, Behrendt talks about some common mistakes in dental practice management and discusses the role that social media and continuing education play in dentistry.

Mr Behrendt, could you tell us something about yourself and about what prompted you to found ACT Dental?

I fell into the dental profession by accident. I worked for a few dental labs after graduation and this experience lit my fire for the dental profession. I love people and I’ve always wanted to be a teacher, so I wanted to create value for the people in this awesome profession. I spent a few years at a consulting firm, where I had a ton of fun and became one of the top sales representatives. It was actually when I saw the movie Jerry Maguire that I realised that I could do this on my own. I grew ACT Dental one client at a time, and here we are, 23 years later.

As dental coaches, we are servants in a noble profession. I’m so grateful for the opportunities that have led me here. Our tagline “better practice, better life” rings true every day. We’re so excited to be doing purposeful work, truly helping to change people’s lives.

In your experience, what are some of the biggest management mistakes that dental practices make?

The biggest mistake that a dental practice can make isn’t a tactical decision; instead, it involves thinking. It’s not really the problems themselves that matter, but rather how the team looks at those problems. Dentists limit themselves with thoughts like “I have to practice in an insurance-only environment” or “I purchased this business, so I need to run it as it was always run.” These aren’t actual problems once you sit down and decide how you want your business to operate.

The most catastrophic scenario for a dentist is waking up to realise that the practice isn’t being run in the way he or she wants to run it. People go into dentistry for a reason, and part of that reason is often the flexibility it affords you outside of work. It’s up to you to create the practice you have envisioned and to build the perfect team.

Social media is an integral part of the digital age. How can dental professionals effectively use social media to build their dental practice?

Like it or not, your online presence is something patients take into consideration when choosing a dentist. They are seeking out your digital footprint. Regardless of whether you participate, they are making assumptions about you and your practice based on what they find on the internet. Authenticity is critical to building a strong social media presence. If there’s a misalignment between what’s on your social media and what’s on your

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site or in your office, people will pause. Telling your own story and using your own images will help to build trust between you and your patients before they even set foot inside your office.

What role does continuing dental education play in ensuring high standards of care in dentistry, and what opportunities are open to dental professionals who want to engage in continuing professional development?

Continuing education is crucial to the future of dentistry. Once you assume you know it all, you’re dead. It’s important to keep learning, to keep thinking and to keep challenging yourself. Dentists must continually refine their thinking both in order to learn about changes in the field and to keep growing personally and professionally.

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Fortunately, there are now more opportunities than ever for continuing education in a variety of formats. We’re no longer constrained by time and geography. Webinars, virtual conferences and online courses are all easily available. But continuing education can also be as simple as creating a Facebook group with your colleagues to share the latest news and to ask each other for help. Dentistry is a profession of passionate lifelong learners, and the opportunities are endless.