Playing a bigger game for the future

You’ve got to make a concerted effort to step back and make time to plan your business’s future. Simon Hocken offers some tips

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sometimes ask our dental clients if they have ever considered whether the ‘game’ they are playing (professionally and personally) is ‘big enough’ for them. Evidence suggests it might not be. I can often see the look of weary resignation in their eyes and the frustration in their voice as they describe the circum-
stances and choices that cur-
rently make up their professional and personal lives.

Their frustration and resig-
nation at playing too small a game can also come from lack of business and financial success, an unfulfilled life at home or in their community. When I coach clients to envisage, ‘raising their game’, be it towards better clini-
cal skills, more business success or more personal fulfillment, their eyes light up with ambition and at last, I am working with an excited and energised dentist.

Changing times

Dentistry, dental practice and the ‘business of dentistry’ is changing fast. Rapid change always creates many opportunities and the good news for ‘game rais-
ers’ is that your time has come. What’s more, the public’s perception of dentistry and dentists is changing too. No longer do they see dentistry as being about pain relief, restoring teeth and preven-
tion. Thanks to the media’s (and our) obsession with looking good and makeovers, some of our clients are beginning to regard dentistry as a ‘look-good, feel-
good’ service, sitting comfortably alongside many other health and beauty services.

There are many opportunities for early-adopters and a lot of our work at Breathe Business in 2008 is around creating new business models for our clients. Some of them are finding opportunities by questioning the status quo. For ex-
ample:

For many years, dentists who work together in the same prac-
tice (as expense-sharing partners or associates) have behaved like market-stall holders, sharing the cost and benefits of a covered mar-
ket, while running micro-busi-
nesses which effectively compete with each other for patients (and sharing any profit generated by their hygienists). We believe this business model has always been ineffective and is no longer finan-
cially successful for the practice owners or robust enough to com-
pete with corporate dentistry.

More free time?

Some of our clients are becoming interested in the possibility of leveraging their time and their businesses. It is stressful to be the main or even the only fee earner in your business. Going on holiday or even on courses can feel like a rare luxury. Building a business where you are just one of several fee earn-
ners eases this situation and frees up time for business development and leadership. Changing your role and leaving the fee earning to your team in order to concentrate on building your brand is another path for the dental entrepreneur.

Here are just three examples of clients who are creating opportuni-
ties for themselves by raising their game:

1. The dentist who wants to open a new cosmetic practice in a rap-
idly expanding residential com-

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