Location, location, location!
Alex & Abby – Michael Dental Care, Cheltenham

I
t the future’s bright for a certain well-known mobile phone company, then the same can be said of a fairly recently qualified couple who have opened their first practice on the outskirts of Cheltenham. Alex and Abbey Michael are everything that the future of UK dentistry is founded on: young, enthusiastic and with a heartfelt commitment to providing patients with great dental care and excellent treatment when required.

Alex and Abbey met at Cardiff Dental School from where they completed VT training in Swanssea and Bromsgrove respectively and were awarded their MFGDP qualifications in 2004, marrying later the same year. When the opportunity to take over the Cheltenham practice arose they realised it was too good to miss and took over in October 2005.

Location, location, location – it’s a key factor in the success of any business and one thing is certain, Michael Dental Care is perfectly situated. On the outskirts of Cheltenham, the practice is easy to reach, has parking facilities on its doorstep and is 5 minutes from the M5, meaning it draws from a very wide catchment area that includes most of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. Some patients even come from as far as Cornwall in the West and London in the East.

So why do patients travel quite far to get their dentistry at Michael Dental Care, - well Alex and Abbey have a very simple but very powerful approach to dentistry and to life in general and have built up respect and credibility even winning over the patients of the previous practice. On the other hand was not so easy. Co-ordinating everything was the difficult part; staff, stock, equipment, managing the cashflow, the list is endless. But we’ve been very fortunate in the help we’ve received in all these areas from Henry Schein Minerva and our local rep Sally Dawson, who is just an amazing person.”

Sally, Henry Schein Minerva’s local Field Sales Consultant, met with Alex and Abbey by pure chance at Dental Showcase in October 2005, just as the practice was due to open. She explained the ways in which she and Henry Schein Minerva would be able to help in their new venture, - not just by supplying consumables, but by her helping them on a consultancy level.

Part of this role was to complete an audit to give Alex and Abby an insight into which products they are using most regularly - information that Alex has found invaluable.

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As we were starting a new practice, obviously cashflow was and remains a key priority for us and we operate a “just in time” ordering process so that we don’t have money tied up in stock we don’t need. Sally’s audit made this much easier - I now order everything on-line, my previous orders are listed which speeds the process up and because we know we can rely on next-day delivery we can maximise our cash flow and credit terms.”

Sally has also provided staff training in sterilisation procedures, helped with marketing ideas and in short has been there to help solve problems they have faced in their early days. And their relationship remains as strong as ever.

“Sally has just been fantastic. Nothing is ever too much trouble for her and we have really come to rely on her expertise and advice.”

Alex and Abbey have a very similar style of dentistry which they are comfortable with. This personality and zest for life not only hones well for Michael Dental Care but also for the future of dentistry itself.

Alex and Abby took over the fairly run down practice in autumn 2005 and in the last 2½ years have transformed it. Alex admits the start up was tough.

“There is so much to think about, the clinical aspects are fine, - that’s what we’ve been trained for, but the business side was not so easy. Co-ordinating everything was the difficult part; staff, stock, equipment, managing the cashflow, the list is endless. But we’ve been very fortunate in the help we’ve received in all these areas from Henry Schein Minerva and our local rep Sally Dawson, who is just an amazing person.”

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Michael Dental Care has attracted around 1000 new patients in their first 18 months of being open and attribute a lot of their marketing activity to encouraging referrals from existing patients – a strategy that has so far proved very successful.

“Our belief is that nice people know other nice people, so we ask our patients to pass our details on to their family and friends – so far, 80% of our new patients have come via this route.”

Alex and Abbey have a dynamic, efficient and very welcoming practice which reflects their personalities and enables them to practice a style of dentistry they are comfortable with. This enthusiasm and zest for life not only hones well for Michael Dental Care but also for the future of dentistry itself.

For more information email: me@henryschein.co.uk