Pride of dentistry in rural Devon

The Devon Centre of Dental Excellence is achieving outstanding business success and going from strength to strength. So what is the secret to his success? Centre owner Dr Badiani reveals all.

The ancient stannary town of Ashburton, on the slopes of Dartmoor, is hardly the place you'd think you'd find the leading referral dental centre in the West Country, but you'd be wrong. And Dr Mitesh Badiani, who bought the place in 1995, has more than demonstrated what a wise decision it was.

Today, the Devon Centre of Dental Excellence is the flagship practice for a group of practices including Plymouth, Bovey Tracey and Portland. More are in the pipeline and dentists are queuing up to join. So what is Dr Badiani doing that is having such an impact and how is he achieving it in what, at face value, is a sleepy rural community?

The answer is deceptively simple. Dr Badiani makes no decisions without carefully considering them. When he does, his commitment is total and his business acumen sure-footed. And above all, he ensures that the patient experience exceeds expectations. It's worth taking a closer look at how these values translate themselves into action.

Developing your product

The 'marketing' advice given generally to dentists by any number of 'experts' is seemingly endless with the majority of it simply being statements of the obvious. It does not take a genius to work out that there are established ways of communicating with patients, all of which are relevant and applicable to almost every practice. The genius comes, not describing and defining your market, but in developing a product that satisfies its needs.

In this respect, Dr Badiani's philosophy and skill are clear. It is not about creating a practice that simply flaunts its capability. It is about creating a practice that shows that it listens to and cares about what patients want.

A few examples highlights this point:

- The reception team greet everyone with a welcome that says 'we're glad you're here'. The smile endorses this greeting and is genuine. It isn't just a 'skin-deep' gesture. This can only happen in a practice where the staff are happy and is aware that patients recognise and take notice of body language.

- There are a variety of places (other than reception) through-out the practice in which patients may wait and relax. This provides personal 'space', encourages a greater affinity with the practice and builds the patient/dental team relationship.

- There is a delightful, spacious and calming garden, which, on a summer day, is a haven of calm and tranquillity. Patients are free to sit and relax there before and/or after treatment. Again it enhances the relationship.

- The toilets are spotless and stocked with supplies of toiletries for patients to use. These make a nicer touch than a bottle of disinfectant.

Dealing with anxiety

It is a sad fact that many people fear dental treatment. Dr Badiani, who mentors and trains dentists all over the country, says: 'We have for many years treated a great number of patients who are extremely nervous of dental treatment and
where a local anaesthetic is required, there are various methods we will consider. One of my favoured techniques is the WAND system, which is amazingly effective when used by a skilled, well-trained dentist. It reduces anxiety and is literally pain free. It is particularly helpful when treating children or those with needle phobia who we find often don’t even realise they’ve had an injection!

Another concern of some patients is radiation dosage. In reality, the risk to the patient may be minimal, but this does not necessarily allay fears and anxiety.

‘Low radiation dosage was one of the criteria I had in mind when seeking to upgrade to 3D digital imaging. I was worried that, by referring to the hospital, I was increasing patient concern and in many instances the diagnosis did not warrant the radiation dosage’, says Dr Badiani, ‘so I decided to see what the market had to offer!’

An exhaustive look at CT scanners ended with Dr Badiani choosing the Picasso Trio from Vatech and E-WOO. ‘Quite simply the quality, the software, the service and product knowledge are the best,’ he says, ‘and the Picasso is already enhancing our diagnostic capabilities across the range of specialist treatments we offer!’

Working as a team
Dr Badiani’s choice of the Picasso Trio exemplifies the policies of the Devon Dental Centre of Excellence to put quality above cost. He has surrounded himself with something of a “dream team” in the way of specialist clinicians and knows that they, too, want the best.

Dr Badiani himself concentrates on dental implants, IV sedation and cosmetic dentistry. He also mentors for Osteo-Ti and Ankylos. Andrew Pickering, Linda Blakely, Carol Robinson and Anna-Marie Smith offer general dental treatment and specialists include Professor Nico Louw (Endo), St John Crean (Oral and Maxillo facial), Amelia Jerreat (Ortho) and Matthew Jerreat (Perio and Restorative dentistry).

It is Dr Badiani’s view that individually and collectively we will benefit from 3D imaging. ‘While most treatments are straightforward, careful planning is always required and the exceptional quality of the Picasso images is second-to-none. I also value the information it provides for more complex cases where we need to work and assess as a team.’

Building referral business
A further benefit of investing in 3D imaging is that it adds to the service that the Devon Dental Centre of Excellence can provide to referring dentists.

Dr Badiani is very conscious of the trust that other dentists place in him. He recognises the concerns that any dentist has when he or she refers a patient: “When you build a referral practice, you have to do so clearly understanding that your role is to support and advise, never compete, he it consciously or unconsciously. You must strive to exceed the expectations of your colleagues in the same way as you do with your patients, always keeping in mind that they are all clients.”

In this way, referring dentists are seen as almost part of the team. They have access to the technology and share in the knowledge, facilities and skills available in Ashburton. Specialist training facilities are available and procedures can be watched at the viewing theatre as they take place and then discussed in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere.

For more information, contact Devon Dental Centre of Excellence at Croydon House, 28 East Street, Ashburton, Devon TQ15 7AX; call 01564 552 255 or email info@devondental.co.uk or visit www.devondental.co.uk

For more information on E-Woo Technology, call 020 8851 1660, email info@e-wootech.co.uk or visit www.e-wootech.co.uk.