

# Perspectives in practice...



We are led to believe that dentistry is changing. **DR NILESH R. PARMAR**, one of the few dentists in the UK to have a degree from all three London dental schools, believes the change has already happened...

**T**HE times are changing...

We hear that phrase a lot don't we? We hear it from our colleagues, patients, the Government, the CDO, everyone! Dentistry is changing... or is it?

I'm here to tell you that it has already changed. It just happened very slowly with a stealth like nature of an American warplane. So, what exactly has changed, I hear you ask. Well, to be honest, it took the observations of a close friend of mine, who isn't a dentist; she's a psychologist, to make some interesting observations about our "beloved" profession.

Firstly, there are a lot of alpha males in dentistry – all of us with our chests puffed out and strutting our stuff in every type of way imaginable. We may even be on par with our orthopedic surgeon colleagues on that issue.

Gone are the days of the dentist being a nameless man in a white coat

who wouldn't introduce himself to the patient. We are now on dental websites (guilty), have our faces on lots of PR pieces (guilty), have our own Twitter profiles (guilty), and even have awards to massage our egos even more and demonstrate our dedication and passion to the industry (err, guilty, twice). A few even make it on TV too (not yet!).

Secondly, we have a huge, close-knit community. Dentistry is unique when compared with medicine, optometry and physiotherapy, in that we have huge conferences, which are extremely well thought out and produced, along with smaller, more regular meetings and study groups. We even have dental publications that are not solely scientific-based, but are in fact closer in structure to light read magazines.

The dawn of the "business coach" has evolved in dentistry too. Whether we love them or loathe them, owning a dental practice is running a business.

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VT schemes have slowly made steps towards preparing vocational trainees for the big bad world of business. Ultimately, business coaches are there to try and help dentists run their practices as efficient and profitable enterprises, whilst still providing an ethical service.

Thinking of getting outside help to streamline a dental practice was never thought of when I was a dental student. Now, it's standard practice!

We (as a profession) have realised that it's a competitive market, and although we have the ethical obligations and responsibility brought about from being a medical specialty, we are still running a business and still need to put food on the table and roofs over our heads. Making money by simply doing dentistry is no longer a dirty thing to do... it's just sensible!

## Social media: Is it good for teeth?

Unless you have been living in a cave for the last five years, you would have heard this phrase. Everyone is doing it; even my friend's guinea pig has a Facebook account. It's fascinating how the fabric of society has changed because of a few websites. We've all gone digital mad! Walk into any coffee shop (Starbucks is my choice, tax, what tax?!), and you won't see many people talking anymore; the art of conversation is dead and has been replaced with the art of tweeting, status updating, smiley faces and #hashtags.

Whether you love it (me) or hate it (my English teacher), it is here to stay, so we as a profession need to embrace it and figure out how it can be made to work for us. It's worked for countless other people, so surely it can be applied to

dentistry, can't it?

## Ice White Charity Xmas Party

Hopefully, by now, you've heard of the charity Christmas party I organised in December in order to raise money for CRISIS, the charity for the homeless. The idea came about one day when I was out with my friends, and we had run up a rather huge bar bill. It made me think... If dentists are good at doing one thing (aside from dentistry), it's having a good time and running a huge bar tab – why don't I try to use this to give something back and raise money for a good cause?

Slowly, the idea grew and the Ice White Party had over 350 attendees raising over £3,000 for charity in one night!

When I was trying to plan things, my main task was to keep the costs low. I was kindly given some money by my two main sponsors, Enlighten and Astra Tech (Dentsply Implants), which needed to be used wisely. The printing and sending of invitations would have been too much of an exercise for just one person, so I turned towards social media.

Once the final details were completed, I set up a Facebook events page and within one week, I had over 200 people attending. Not one paper invite. Not one tree was harmed in the direct advertising of this event. All updates, detail amendments and guest lists were done only online.

When the big night came, people came in their droves, already knowing what to expect, with pockets full of money to donate. It was a fantastic night, which may even become a yearly event. I would recommend that all the other dental events be organised in this fashion. It's slicker, quicker and carbon footprint friendly. ■