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walking  
for  
dentists.**

**How to win big in dentistry**

**SIMON HOCKEN & JONATHAN FINE**

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# What do you really want?

by Simon Hocken

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“The only thing between greatness and me is me.”

Woody Allen.





This chapter is all about you! We've seen it so many times where the owner is subconsciously the biggest roadblock to developing and growing a dental practice. If you don't want to be a roadblock you need to understand your behaviours, habits and, importantly, your values and beliefs.

**Don't panic, this isn't a heavy psychological assessment or counselling section, neither are we asking you to find a tree to hug. But we are going to help you:**

- Decide whether your life will be more or less happy and fulfilled if you create a successful dental practice
- Understand your preferred behaviours
- Understand what drives your current behaviours and results
- Identify whether you have the confidence and the drive to create a successful dental practice
- Consider whether you can influence and lead a team

We have provided you with some tools that enable you to understand yourself better and we are simply asking you to be honest during these assessments.

*Normally when I read this type of thing in a business book, I kinda go, “Yeah yeah, but take me to the point...” But it really is the point – if you don’t get this bit sorted out in your head you could spend a big portion of your life trying to be something that deep down you can’t or won’t do properly. Success is about a mindset.*



With the information you glean, you can clearly establish whether what you want to be when you ‘grow up’ is within your reach, and whether you have the capability to achieve your ambitions.

**By the end of this chapter you may:**

- stop reading
- sell your practice
- get a well-paid job as an associate
- take up kite surfing/cooking/plumbing in order to fill your new free time

If a version of this happens to you then, frankly, our book has fulfilled its promise. Running a business is not the same as being a dentist; they are two very different functions and skill sets. Life is too short to waste time on stuff you hate or are simply not very good at!

**The trouble with owning a practice and working in it**

As a school leaver, you were selected for university on the basis of your A-levels, not your ability to cut an accurate hole in a tooth. It’s also unlikely your university taught you anything about running a business.

In the outside world, people are promoted because of their track record and proven abilities.

But in the world of dentistry, any dentist can open a dental practice as long as they convince the bank they will get their money back.

Paradoxically, dentists who own, and lead, successful dental practices often end up doing less and less clinical work as their business grows. This suits some dentists, who welcome the opportunity to supplement their clinical skills with new business and leadership skills.

*Or in business because they have a natural ability or a self-taught ability to ‘trade’ – they like the process of creating wealth, they are often addicted to it, they enjoy building/creating and a high proportion of them will build their own companies.*

*Can you be both a great clinician and a great business owner? Yes, of course you can, provided you build an effective team – which is another hard-learned skill.*

But be warned, a similar paradox exists when owners insist on doing lots of clinical dentistry; they slow the growth of their practice by not having sufficient time, or energy, to develop the business to its true potential.

Here we demonstrate some tools and techniques, commonly used outside dentistry, which will help you figure out whether owning a dental practice is right for you and if you will be able to grow and develop your practice in the new world of retail dentistry.

### How to understand more about yourself

Having your own business will, periodically, consume almost all of your time and energy. That's just the way it is and don't believe any consultant who tells you otherwise! If there is a constant battle for your attention between work and the rest of your life, inevitably, something has to give.

*“This above all: to thine own self be true.”  
Polonius, Act 1 Scene 3, Hamlet.*

*Don't kid yourself; do you have a competitive spirit? Do you have a killer instinct? Do you really enjoy working hard? Are you prepared to compromise?*

Your life is more than your business and so the first step to deciding whether the life of a dental practice owner is for you is to get clear about your personal objectives. The wheel of life exercise will bring you significant clarity on your personal objectives and you might find, when you have completed this exercise, that you simply don't have time to run your own business.

A good reason to understand your motivations, behaviours, beliefs and values, and to assess your drive and determination, is to help you make good decisions and choices rather than just drifting into things. We suggest you use this information about yourself to choose how to spend your time.

Successful people, however you judge success, make good decisions and choices and they make a lot of them. Good decisions and choices give you the best chance to build your business while staying happy, healthy and sane!

*“Successful people also make tons of mistakes, but they accept them and move on – you really need to be able to do this.”*

**What makes us happy and content? Richard Layard, once the government's chief economist, wrote a book on happiness in which he collated research on the subject. He concluded that, in order of effectiveness, these are the elements that help us lead a happy life:**

1. the quality of our personal and family relationships
2. our financial situation
3. our work
4. our community and friendships-
5. our health status
6. having personal freedom
7. living by our values

**Some practice owners find the pressures of owning a business can lead them to sacrifice some of these elements such as:**

- personal and family relationships
- community and friendships
- their health
- having personal freedom

If you think you might be on this path, you might want to question the sense of owning your own business, as the money and work that it produces is unlikely to make up for your lost relationships or personal freedom.



*Successful people also make tons of mistakes, but they accept them and move on – you really need to be able to do this.*

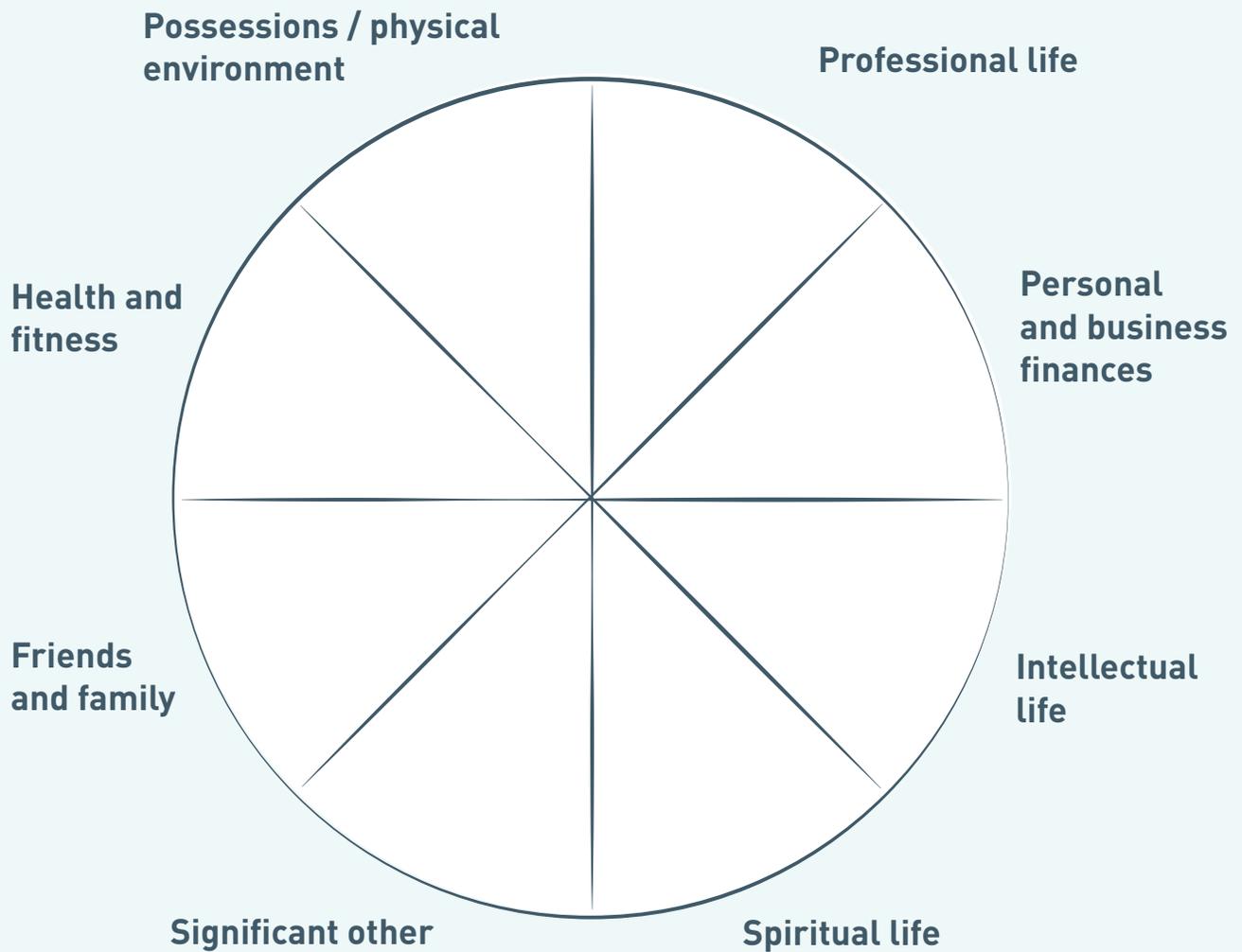
“Nobody on his death bed ever said, ‘I wish I had spent more time at the office’.”

US Senator Paul Tsongas.

**If you want to be happier and more satisfied with your life, it’s a useful exercise to audit how life is for you now. Here’s an effective tool to audit your satisfaction in eight domains of your life.**

**It’s called...**

# The wheel of life



*This is a brilliant exercise,  
you must do it.*



### **Assess each area**

The wheel approach assumes you will be happy and fulfilled if you can find the right balance of attention for each of the spokes. And different areas of your life will need different levels of attention at different times.

The next step is to assess how satisfied you are in each area. Consider each area in turn, and on a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high), score how satisfied you are in each of the eight areas of your life. 0 is at the centre and 10 at the edge of the wheel.

Mark each score on the appropriate spoke of your life wheel. Join up the marks – does your life wheel look and feel balanced? The more spikey the wheel the more unbalanced your life is.

### **Think about your ideal level**

Next it's time to consider your ideal level in each area of your life. A balanced life does not mean getting 10 in each area: some areas need more attention and focus than others at any time.

And inevitably you will need to make choices and compromises, as your time and energy are not in unlimited supply! So, the question is: what is the ideal score for you in each life area? Plot the ideal scores around your life wheel too.

### **Take action**

Now you have a visual representation of your current life balance and your ideal life balance. What are the gaps? These are the areas of your life that need attention.

And remember that gaps can go both ways. There are almost certainly areas that are not getting as much attention as you'd like. However, there may also be areas where you're putting in more effort than you'd ideally like. These areas are sapping energy and enthusiasm that may be better directed elsewhere.

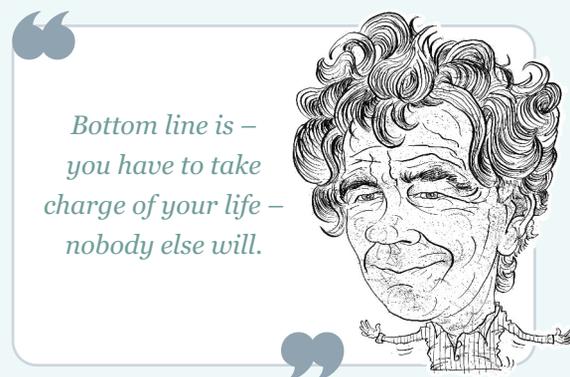
### **How do you want your life to turn out?**

The wheel of life exercise audits how satisfied you are now and what you would have to do to increase your satisfaction. The next step is to do something about it.

**As the Chinese proverb says:**

“Man with open mouth wait long time for roast duck to fly in.”

Many people let their personal and professional life just happen to them, relying on fate to deal them a good hand and their own skills in playing it. They often cite luck or circumstances as the drivers of their life rather than taking responsibility for the choices they make. For example, a dentist can buy or open a practice anywhere from Land's End to John O'Groats. They can work near the sea if they like water sports, live near the mountains if they like the mountain air, or live in London if they love the fast city life.



And yet many dentists buy or set up a practice in a location which doesn't really suit their passions and interests, inevitably spending years living a life of quiet desperation, dealing with the consequences of their choice.

A powerful way to envisage your life and make choices today that are relevant and important to how your life turns out is to do some reverse engineering! There are many ways to do this but a favourite of ours is this exercise:

**Imagine you are a guest at your own funeral, listening to the eulogies that your family and friends are giving about you and your life. What are they saying about:**

- what you achieved?
- whose lives you influenced?
- your character?
- your success?
- your legacy?

As you can imagine, this is quite an emotional exercise and quickly strips away the daily artifice, enabling you to identify what is really important and meaningful to you. Understanding this will, if you let it, influence your important choices from now on.

## Why do we behave in the way that we do?

And why do we make the choices we make?

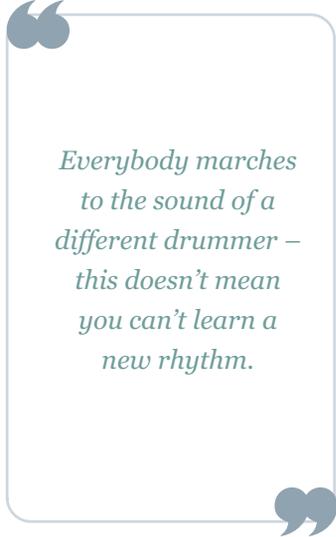
**If we understand this we can understand why we are successful in some areas of our lives and why we seem to sabotage other areas. We tend to live (or die) by our results. Of course, we constantly measure our results and society encourages us to do this in different ways including measuring:**

- material wealth
- status
- power and influence

So, why do we get the results we get? Our results are the manifestation of all of our behaviours – we reap what we sow! Our behaviours are driven by our beliefs and values and these are embedded in our conscious mind.

Beliefs are simply the things we hold to be true in order to navigate our lives. They can be concerned with big ideas, like believing in the existence of God, as well as more practical matters, like believing it's a good idea to brush your teeth before going to bed.

In between these extremes, all of us entertain a wide range of beliefs, such as whether the world is a pleasant or miserable place, whether folk are intrinsically honest or dishonest, whether nice girls should drink out of pint glasses, whether children should be taught about sex by their teachers in school, whether sport should be mandatory in school and whether boxing and hunting should be banned. Every day we lead our lives guided by a complex interplay of beliefs, profound and trivial, objective or more subjective, guiding our thoughts and ultimately all of our choices.



*Everybody marches to the sound of a different drummer – this doesn't mean you can't learn a new rhythm.*

Understanding our values and beliefs is key to knowing why we behave the way we do, and our behaviours, of course, drive the results we get day in, day out. Many people decide they want better results (in any domain) and seek to do this by attempting to change or modify their behaviour. This is the basis of a diet to lose weight, which urges us to change our eating behaviours and therefore lose weight. It's clear that if it were that easy, many of us would lose weight.

**However, if we move back a link in the chain and look at the beliefs which drive eating, for example:**

- I deserve to eat well and drink a large glass of wine, I've worked hard all day
- One donut won't hurt
- A cooked English breakfast is a good start to the day

**And then change beliefs to something like:**

- There are other ways to reward my hard work besides food
- One donut will load my blood sugar levels and make me feel worse
- Too much food will continue to harm me

**It's fairly obvious the second set of beliefs is more likely to create weight loss than the first!**

Understanding what you believe about something, assessing the behaviours the belief creates and then, should you want to change a behaviour – for example, eat less – rewriting the belief, is a solid foundation for achieving your aims.

**How to determine your beliefs and values**

You don't need our help to determine your beliefs, if you run out of ideas about what you believe, ask your life or business partner to help you! You might want to try writing down your main beliefs around each of the eight domains in the wheel of life exercise.

Your core values are harder for you to identify. Values are the things that we hold to be important. They give meaning to our lives and are often expressed in abstract terms such as: family, order, creativity, communication, connection etc. Living a life that is consistent with our values means living a happy, fulfilled life. Having them challenged makes any day more difficult and much less enjoyable.

**Here's two ways to help you determine your core values. You should expect to find between six and nine values that are truly important to you.**

Describe a time (recently) when you got angry, irrationally angry.

Describe the circumstances, the narrative. Really remember it well.

Describe the behaviour of the person who your anger was directed at.

What would you call the opposite of their behaviour?

**This is the value.**

**Alternatively:**

Describe a time in your life, probably a half a day or day which, when you look back on it, represents a perfect time. This is called a 'peak experience'. Examples might include:

- your wedding day
- graduation day
- winning a competition
- a sporting achievement
- a time on holiday
- an experience with your family

When you look back on it you do so with a warm glow; it was a memorable, special day. Describe the day in detail, who was there, why, what was the narrative, how did you feel, why was it special, what was the situation? The reason you have such a fond memory of this peak experience is that you were getting several of your core values met on this day. If you tease them out of this memory, you will find two or more core values.

### Business values



*It might sound a bit strange but businesses have values too, which manifest themselves in the behaviours of the people that work there – think about the tone and style of the receptionist at your GP's surgery and compare it to the receptionist at your local Toni & Guy hairdressing salon.*



Your business will have a set of core values as well. Perversely, these are often better understood and articulated by your patients, who know what your business stands for; particularly if they have had reason to test the way it delivers to them. In order to understand the values of your business, ask yourself these questions:

**What do we always do for our patients?**

**What would we never do to our patients?**

**How do we behave when a patient is unhappy about something we have done?**

**My business's ideal core values are:**

**If you have stayed with this chapter this far, you now know more about:**

1. what is likely to make you happy
2. how satisfied you are with your life today
3. what you would have to do to become more satisfied with your life
4. how your beliefs and values affect your behaviours and the results that you are getting now
5. some of your beliefs
6. some of your values
7. some of the values you wish your business to have

## Let's take awareness of yourself to another level

Now we are going to ask you to learn more about your behaviours by completing one or both of these tests.

### The Kolbe psychometric test

[www.kolbe.com](http://www.kolbe.com)

This will identify your preferences for:

- getting information
- following through
- taking risks
- making things/being artisanal



*These exercises – they are not tests – are a must. They are highly revealing but weirdly will not tell you anything you don't already know about yourself deep down inside – don't skip them!*



### The Capio colours test

[www.capioelements.co.uk](http://www.capioelements.co.uk)

This will help you to understand your behavioural style and understand the likely behavioural styles of your colleagues.

These two tests will identify your preferences and what you need to have in place in order to work well and effectively. You can summarise your reports below, or print out and staple them into this book for future reference.

### Your results:

## Your leadership skills



*There are three types of leaders – natural leaders, manufactured or learned leaders, and the most common leader; a combination of the two. You are most likely to be a number three if you have got this far in the book – if you were type number one you would not even have opened it!*



Many of the problems business people and dentists struggle with involve disharmony within their team. Having a highly effective team in place allows you to deliver a consistent service, and leading your team requires a set of skills that few of us have.

Fortunately, good leadership can be learned and here are 10 characteristics we believe leaders need to have in place before they are able to lead others.

Score yourself out of 10 for each one. Be honest with yourself!

### Do you:

1. **Have a personal and professional vision?** – You know what your goals are and you have a strategy and plenty of tactics in order to realise your goals. Your personal and professional success is congruent.

/ 10

2. **Exhibit extreme self-care?** – This means taking great care of yourself first so you are in the best possible shape. It's about getting enough rest, enough recreation to recharge your batteries, being fit and well, and taking care that all your needs are being met. This means the best version of you will show up to lead your team. Be in no doubt, this is what your team will want – not the grumpy, tired, badly resourced version of you.

/ 10

3. **Lead by example?** – Like it or not, you set the standards. If you show up late, you give your team permission to show up late; if you gossip, if you are rude to patients, if you are untidy, if you over-promise and under-deliver, you give your team permission to do the same. If there is a problem with your team, it's because there is a problem with your leadership. If you consistently set a high standard of behaviour your team will really understand what is expected of them.

/ 10

4. **Listen and communicate well?** – Leaders inspire their teams by the way they listen and by the way they communicate their vision, every day. People are longing to be led and so many practices fail to deliver because of poor communication by the principal. A wise man once said: "All problems exist in the absence of a good conversation."

/ 10

5. **Remove tolerations?** – It's the little things that are wrong that drain our energy. Small discourtesies, stuff that doesn't work properly, things that don't get done well enough eventually exhaust us. Removing these irritants from your life will massively improve your energy, your attitude and will make you a better leader.

/ 10

6. **Show genuine appreciation?** – It is, of course, important to recognise shortcomings in team members so they can be helped to improve. The other side of this coin is appreciating their strengths. Appreciation must not only be felt, it must be exhibited. Great leaders do not sit in their offices, smiling to themselves about how great their teams are. They go out and tell their teams how great they are doing!

/ 10

7. **Train, consult, coach and mentor your team?** – Leaders are essential in helping team members develop new skills, eradicate their weaknesses and build on their strengths. The leader should provide the tools and support for the team to deliver top quality care.

/ 10

8. **Inspire people?** – Working to the highest possible standards takes dedication and vigilance. An inspirational leader will not only keep the team energised, but also communicate his or her unique vision and engender a focused, confident culture at the practice.

/ 10

9. **Innovate?** – Fresh and exciting ideas will not only keep your team on its toes, they will promote constant improvement. By breaking the old routine and venturing beyond your collective comfort zones, dental teams become more confident and approach their work with more enthusiasm.

/ 10

10. **Stay consistent?** – To err is human, but a great leader will always uphold the highest standards. If a mistake happens, learn from it and blame a system, not a person. Apologise quickly and fully to your patient and make recompense. Successful practices offer their patients a great experience. Anything less and your patients will vote with their money and their feet.

/ 10

When you have scored yourself, keep a copy of it and measure your improvement over the next three months, repeating every quarter. If you don't take anything else from this book, do this and it will change you in a very positive way; critically, it will sustain the change.



*Sorry, this is a very long interruption, but it's important...*

***Did you know you can learn to be an entrepreneur?***

*So, you've done the self-audits and now you have a bit more of a notion in your mind about your character, values, beliefs, motivations and priorities.*

*You will probably be starting to get a deeper inkling of whether leading a business is really for you. While you're at this stage, I'd like to share with you some insights into what makes an entrepreneur – which you may find surprising.*

*I want to leave you with an understanding as to how much of an entrepreneur you are right now, how much more of an entrepreneur you want to be and what you need to do to get there.*

*There is a popular misconception that the entrepreneur needs a brilliant idea or radical approach to a business opportunity to be an entrepreneur. This is not the case – an entrepreneur looks at what he has in terms of resource, finds an opportunity and simply tries to make it work.*

*An entrepreneur has absolutely no fear of failing; in a way, the entrepreneur anticipates failure and typically will have three other options waiting in the wings ready to drop into service if the first idea falls over.*

*The second misconception is that entrepreneurs are born – again, this is simply not the case. This is a learnt skill, and admittedly some people fail to learn, some are not very good at it and some have no desire to learn what sits outside their natural comfort zone.*

*In reality we all sit somewhere along a scale that will shift to different positions at different stages in our lives. Entrepreneurism is a learnt skill which eventually becomes a habit and ultimately a mindset – for life.*

*Your character or 'preferences' in terms of behavioural style will, of course, heavily influence your attitude to risk. If you are an associate and currently work for an entrepreneurial principal then the chances of acquiring an entrepreneurial mindset are substantially greater than if you are working for a traditional old-school practice.*

*Please do not fall into the trap of thinking that entrepreneurial means exclusively private practice. Some of the biggest dental fortunes today are made in larger low-skill-set NHS practices.*





### ***The seven components of the entrepreneurial mindset***

**1. Risk** *The overriding driver behind making business, or indeed life decisions, is understanding and mitigating risk. Risk is not just the reason why people don't do things; perversely, it's also the reason why people do them – the gambler loves the adrenaline rush of rolling the dice or waiting for the next card; it's the anticipation, the uncertainty, that drives them on to the next gamble or risk.*

*We are all risk takers to a greater or lesser degree, we all take risks every day, driving at 85 when the limit is 70, flirting with the attractive lady in Boots or dressing in a low cut top (that's the ladies). We all get a bit of a rush when we take a chance and it sort of spices up life.*

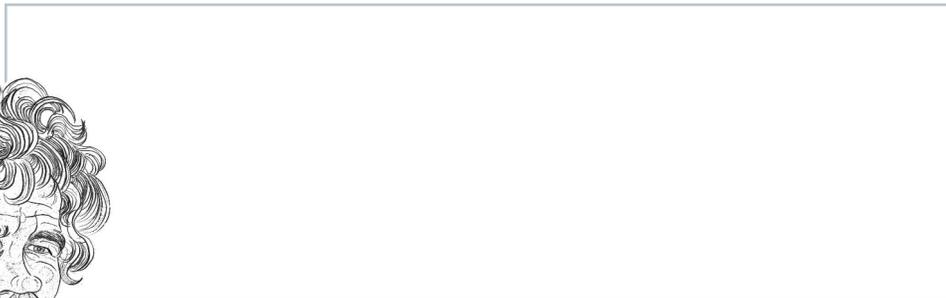
*Strangely, not taking a risk can have a long term depressing effect on your life, creating an irritating merry go round of thoughts in your head when things go wrong or are flat in your life: why oh why did you not take that associate job in Sydney back in 2001? If you had done you would not be in this miserable NHS practice in Clapham on a rainy Tuesday afternoon in February with a waiting room bursting with ungrateful, dull, smelly patients...*

*Your attitude to risk shapes your whole life. I am not suggesting you have to take it to have a happy life, but you do have to take risks regularly if you wish to be an entrepreneur.*

***“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.” Mark Twain.***

*The first step to understanding risk is to objectively list all the implications of taking that risk. Start with the reason you are taking the risk in the first place: what is the objective?*

*Now list the consequences if it fails totally: the costs, the wasted energies, the impact on morale. Now – and this is the tricky bit – list all the unforeseen consequences associated with taking the risk.*

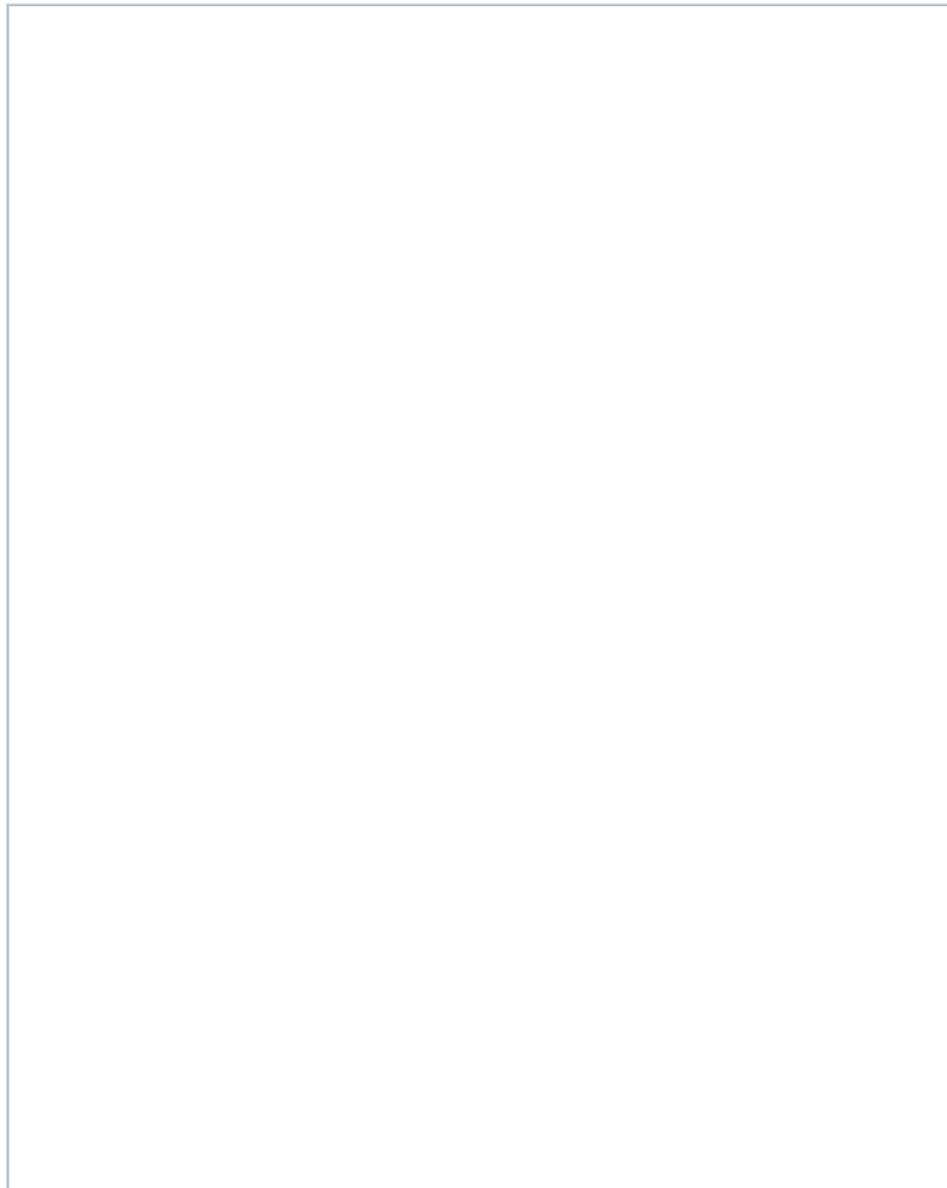






*Is it a big list? Great. You have now put yourself in a place where you manage or mitigate the risk because you have anticipated every single possible outcome or consequence. You are in control.*

*The next step is to build a remedy or a workaround for each of the possible outcomes. Yes, I know it's tiresome, but I promise that you will end up feeling totally different about taking the risk, however large.*



*Realistically it would be highly unusual for a particular risk to be a total failure. The most likely scenario is that only 40 per cent of the expected new patients you have in your plan actually show up.*





**2. Motivation** *The bottom line is: do you want to play it safe and be a ‘Steady Eddy’ or do you want to take a chance and be remarkable?*

*Getting this bit right in your head is fundamental to your approach to your business. However entrepreneurial you are in character and behavioural style, if you don’t really want it you are going to struggle to achieve it. And, frankly, we need Steady Eddies – like the captain flying the plane to take you and your family on holiday.*

**3. Continuous building and development** *I found it difficult to come up with a better phrase, but continuous building and development describes the notion of taking various apparently unrelated elements or situations and creating something bigger.*

*The perfect illustration for this philosophy is Jeff Bezos, the guy who created Amazon. Bezos runs the world’s largest e-retailer, yet he did not invent the internet and e-retailing had already been invented by the time he came on the scene.*

*The reason behind Amazon’s success was not part of his plan – the business model was all about tax avoidance at first. In the US, online retailers don’t have to collect sales tax in states where they do not have a physical presence, which provided Amazon with a significant price advantage.*

*But Bezos was not going to stop there. When he happened to meet a guy who told him about predictive analytics, he thought he’d try making it work with his product, and this happened to be a stroke of genius.*

*As customers, we all love the idea of being offered yet another book on our obscure but favourite subject. As an e-retailer it’s the perfect differentiator that simultaneously makes the shopping experience memorable and turbo charges sales while at the same time engendering outstanding loyalty and lifetime customer value.*

*It made Amazon take off.*

*The imperative of continually building provides ever more opportunities. It’s a bit like a practice opening at the weekend for emergency treatment and discovering there is a significant number of new patients that would really like and happily pay a premium to see the hygienist on a Sunday afternoon.*





**4. Be happy about making mistakes** *Get ready, you are going to make loads of mistakes in your business career. Running a practice is not an exact science. Think back to the 1980s and Sir Clive Sinclair's C5, which sadly became the decade's biggest laughing stock, or Coca Cola's disastrous launch of 'new' Coke in 1985.*

*You will make loads of mistakes in your practice this year. Feeling the icy water of reality down your back – telling you the clever new pay plan with your star associate is not going to work for you – means you have to change it and fast, however painful.*

*The reality is that failing quickly is not really that bad, it's inconvenient but you will get over it. Failing slowly is deadly and it's bloody depressing. A simple tip is to always have a plan B and C before you change things – if nothing else it will lift your confidence level.*

*Entrepreneurs make loads and loads of mistakes. They don't get hung up by it, they just move on to the workaround or next idea swiftly – but they always learn.*

**5. Learn quick** *When things go wrong, take them apart quickly and work out what bit failed to perform. Did you fail to sell it in to the team? Did you misinterpret the patients' needs? What was the failing component that brought the aircraft down? Equally, when things go right, what is the particular element that people really liked, and how can you develop it?*

*The entrepreneur learns quick, but always shares the results – good or bad – with the team in order to make the boat go faster.*

**6. Respond to changes** *In 2007 Nokia was at its peak and almost invincible. It was 'the' cool brand and had been for the previous 10 years. It had an estimated 32 per cent share of the global feature phone market where the margin averaged a robust 36 per cent. But Nokia failed to enter the smartphone market quick enough, leaving the space wide open. Apple and latterly the unstoppable power of Samsung rapidly filled it.*





*In 2012 Nokia finished the year with an 8.6 per cent share and a margin equivalent to 18 per cent. It responded to the rapid change in the market with a range of great products but it was too late. Apple and Samsung had stolen the space so Nokia are now fighting a rearguard action and will be until the next significant mobile innovation disrupts the market, forcing change again.*

*Often as a company grows the sparks for innovation fade, or as the practice reaches its zenith (in the eyes of the owner) it fails to develop or take any risks by responding to marketplace opportunities, like a new pharmacy opening two doors down... How would the entrepreneur take advantage of that?*

**7. Work smart** *Entrepreneurs are often gifted with a false sense that only they can perform tasks, only they have the ability to get things really right. Of course, this is completely bonkers and has a massive adverse impact on their effectiveness.*

*The 80/20 rule always applies. Typically 20 per cent of your activity generates 80 per cent of success – however success is determined.*

*Spending hours trying to make your diary sync between your laptop and desktop when the right person could achieve that in three minutes is daft when you could have spent the afternoon growing the business directly.*

*Be smart, know what you are good at, know what you are bad at and play to your strengths. Carefully develop or recruit people that complement your strengths and mop up your weaknesses.*

*Work out when your most productive time slot is. Everybody has one, mine is between 6am and 11am – my productivity and ability to think diminishes rapidly after that time.*

*The entrepreneur above all else knows himself and treats himself as a machine, will always make sure he is in top condition both physically and mentally, and may often display a touch of hypochondria!*



### **How to be a good associate (the principal's perspective)**

If you think you'd be happy as an associate, that's great – why not do it well and be happy?

I was a terrible associate. For 10 years during the 1980s, I was purely interested in my own agenda, I complained about my principals, I came and went when it suited me and when I set up my own practices, I stole their patients. For all of this, I'm truly sorry.

Looking back, I wish I'd understood both sides of the argument. I would have been a better associate.

As a practice principal, I soon realised that good associates were the key to my success. Back then, there was little choice when it came to recruiting associates.

There were far too few dentists in the UK to meet the demand and associates could write their own remuneration package and contract (if they could be bothered to have one).

Now the game has changed and in every area of the UK there are many, many applicants for every associate job. Principals can choose associates who are more than willing and flexible to run their principal's agenda, as well as their own.

So, associate skills and behaviours matter, of course they do. Principals now have more applicants to choose from, so if you are an associate looking to hang onto your job, or looking for a great new position, there is a 40-point guide at the back of this book that can help you impress.

If you are a principal, or a practice manager, you might want to discuss some of my preferred associate behaviours with your associates. If you're an associate and you disagree with my list, I'd love to hear from you!

### **Workbook material from this chapter:**

#### **How To Be A Good Associate – Simon's 40-point guide**