

WINTER 2025-2026

# INFLUENCE

ÉLEVÉ

FOR DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

## GOING FURTHER TOGETHER

THE UNTOLD TRUTH ABOUT SUCCESS, STRUGGLE & THE POWER OF BELIEF

Featuring Zach Lund & Akwasi Frimpong - Olympians

## LEADERSHIP IN THE AI ERA

OPHIR TANZ

FOUNDER & CEO PEARL

## FROM DENTIST TO DISRUPTOR

HOW EMBRACING THE WHY TRANSFORMED MY CAREER

BY DR. AVI PATEL

## INFLUENCE AWARDS 2026

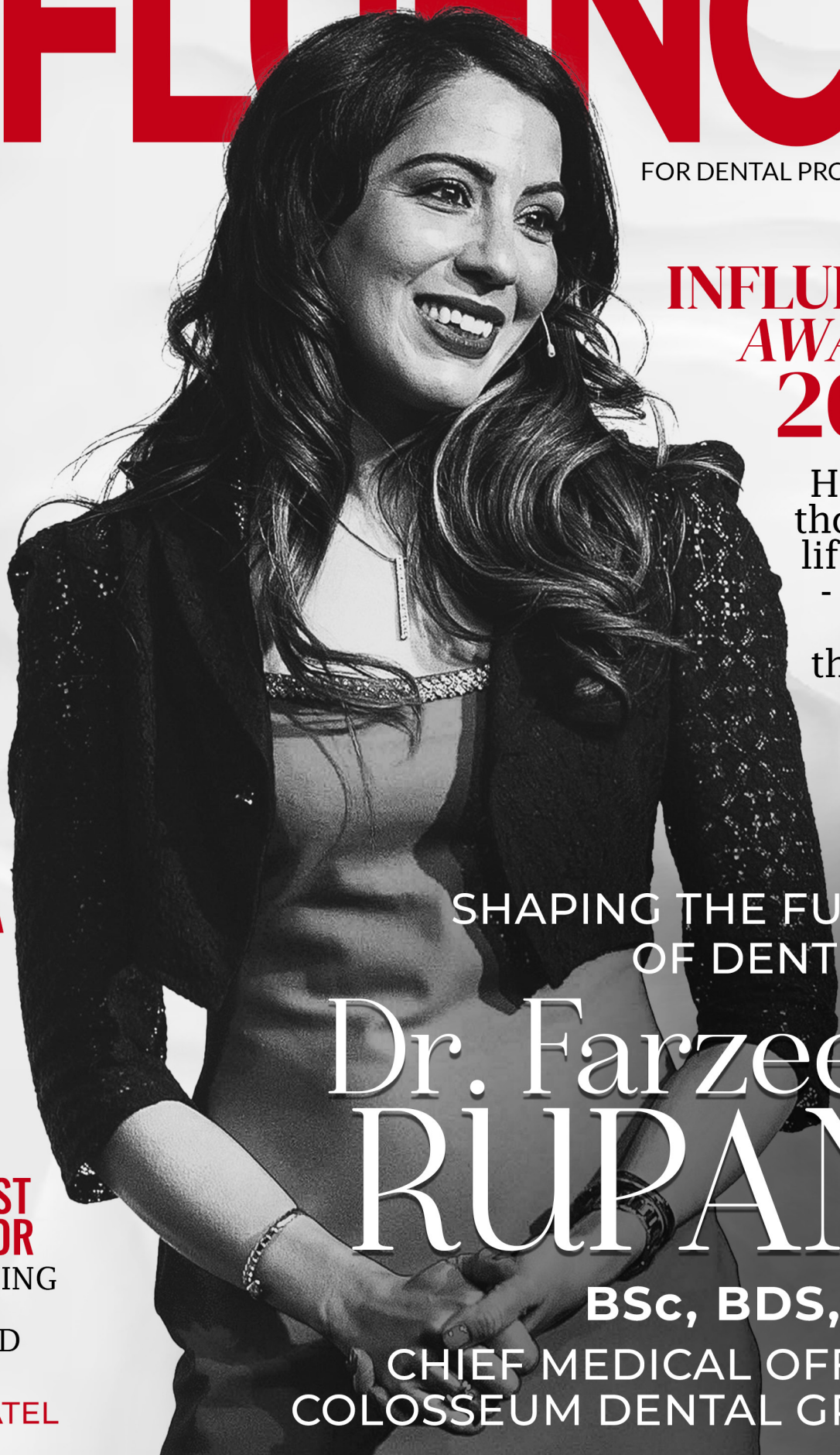
Honoring those who lift others - and the brands that raise the bar

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF DENTISTRY

Dr. Farzeela RUPANI

BSc, BDS, MSc

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER  
COLOSSEUM DENTAL GROUP





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**BRIAN A. COLAO**

Director, Dykema Dental Service Organizations Industry Group

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INFLUENCE**  
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Cover Story

## Shaping the Future of Dentistry Through Leadership, Culture, and Collaboration

By Dr. Farzeela Rupani, BSc, BDS, MSc  
Group Chief Medical Officer & UK Chief Medical Officer  
Chair, CDG Medical Board



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We're honored to spotlight those who not only rise, but lift others as they do.

Interested in contributing? Submit your story idea or editorial inquiry to [influentialdentalus@gmail.com](mailto:influentialdentalus@gmail.com)

INFLUENCE élevé isn't just a publication—it's a curated experience of transformation, one elevated leader at a time.

- 7 **Going Further Together:**  
The Untold Truth About Success, Struggle & the Power of Belief

---

- 10 **Expanding Your Mindspan**

---

- 18 **The New Gold Standard:**  
How One Elite Team in Yorba Linda Is Redefining What Excellence Looks Like in Dentistry

---

- 22 **Leadership in the AI Era**  
Ophir Tanz, Founder & CEO at Pearl

---

- 26 **More Than a Smile**  
Why Dr. Youmans Believes the Future of Care Begins Beyond Assumption

---

- 28 **What If Where We Learn Matters More Than What We Learn?**

---

- 30 **Extraction Jackson: The Power of Mindset**

---

- 32 **Quiet Strength Dr. Bobbi Stanley**

---

- 36 **The New Era of Chairside Implant Temporization for Esthetic Cases**

---

- 40 **Stop Leaving Money on the Table**

---

- 42 **Stop Switching Agencies: Reset the Relationship Instead**

---

- 46 **The New Era of Dentistry – And Why Clarity Behind the Scenes Matters More Than Ever**

---

- 50 **Shaping the Future of Oral Surgery Through Intention, Education, and Contribution**

---

- 52 **From Dentist to Disruptor: How Embracing the Why Transformed My Career**

---

- 54 **Rising Cost Pressures in Dentistry**

---

- 56 **10 Principles Elite Dental Practices Live By**

---

- 58 **Winter 2025–2026 Influence Forecast**

---

- 66 **Clinical Mastery Series with Dr. Adam Hogan**



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**Redefining  
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Celebrating  
Those Who  
Elevate Others.**



**I**NFLUENCE élevé is the premier magazine celebrating the most influential dental professionals and companies who are not only rising to new heights but lifting the entire industry with them.

Focused on leadership, innovation, mindset, and purposeful impact, INFLUENCE élevé spotlights those shaping the future of dentistry through collaboration, contribution, and the elevation of others. Through inspiring stories, thought leadership, and strategic insights, the magazine honors those who redefine success – not only by what they achieve, but by how they empower others to step fully into their potential.

At its core, INFLUENCE élevé *for Dental Professionals* is a movement – where legacy, leadership, mindset,

and elevation meet to ignite growth, fulfillment, and lasting influence across the dental profession and beyond.

INFLUENCE élevé is where legacy, leadership, and elevation meet.

When we lift others with intention, we don't just raise individuals—we elevate entire industries. Highlighting others, honoring mindset, and sharing what matters turns potential into legacy.



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# GOING FURTHER TOGETHER:

## THE UNTOLD TRUTH ABOUT SUCCESS, STRUGGLE & THE POWER OF BELIEF

By Julieanne O'Connor, Mindset Coach for High-Achieving Dentists & CEOs

Photography by Michael Ritucci



**T**here's a myth in both elite sport and dentistry that greatness is an individual pursuit—that the strongest, smartest, or most disciplined rise to the top alone. But the real stories—the ones that shape lives and legacies—tell a very different truth:

**We only go further together than we ever could alone.**

My work as a coach has given me a front-row seat to this truth through individuals like Zach Lund, a world-class skeleton athlete whose journey has been anything but easy. Yes,

he competed at the highest levels in the world and stood on podiums most people will only ever dream about—but what defines Zach isn't victory.

It's his willingness to rise from the darkest moments—the kind that break most people—and



do it with humility, humor, and a relentless belief in what's possible when you refuse to give up.

Athletes like Zach—and the elite performers he now coaches—understand something many professionals never fully learn: failures, heartbreaks, and setbacks aren't signs to stop. They are invitations to lean on the people who can still see your greatness when you've temporarily lost sight of it.

Mentors.  
Coaches.  
Friends.  
Teammates.

The ones who refuse to let you shrink into the version of yourself forged by fear.

Another powerful example of this truth is Akwasi Frimpong. His global movement, **Hope of a Billion**, isn't just a mission—it's a declaration that barriers can be broken when someone believes in you loudly enough and long enough. When Zach introduced us at the Olympic Training Park in Utah, Akwasi gifted me the official Ghana Olympic athlete attire. That simple moment—an unexpected gesture of inclusion—landed deeper than I could have anticipated.

It said: **You belong here. You are seen. You matter.**

Small moments like that can shift someone's entire identity. They can revive the part of us that

dares to dream when life has tried to convince us otherwise. And if that's true for elite athletes, it's certainly true for dentists and teams navigating burnout, leadership pressure, financial stress, clinical decision fatigue, and the invisible weight of always having to *show up strong*.

In dentistry, we're trained to lead with precision—but we're rarely taught what to do when confidence gets shaken, when numbers tighten, when case acceptance dips, when staffing challenges pile up, or when the emotional load of patient care quietly accumulates. That's when belief becomes more than a mindset.

### **Belief becomes a strategy.**

Zach's upcoming book on applying high-performance principles to everyday life echoes this truth: success isn't about medals, titles, or flawless execution. It's about the gritty, unfiltered willingness to get back up—again and again—with the help of people who refuse to let you forget who you are.

For dental professionals, the lesson is universal:

Your greatest breakthroughs will never happen in isolation. They happen in community. In collaboration. In the moments when someone else's belief becomes the spark that reignites your own—a mentor reminding you what you're capable of, a coach helping you shift perspective, a teammate steadying the culture when things feel heavy, or a leader creating an environment where people can rise instead of merely survive.

Because in the end, success isn't a solo marathon—it's a shared ascent. Built through the mentors who lift us, the teammates who steady us, and the moments of unexpected inclusion that remind us we're never climbing alone.

## **Stay Connected**

To explore the powerful work behind these stories, visit **Akwasi Frimpong's global movement, Hope of a Billion**, at [hopeofabillion.org](http://hopeofabillion.org)—a reminder that belief can scale across nations.

Learn more about **Zach Lund** and his work translating elite-performance principles into everyday leadership at [olympiclifecoaching.com](http://olympiclifecoaching.com), and catch his upcoming conversation on the *Influential Dental* podcast.

Join the ongoing conversation at **Influential Dental**, the podcast co-hosted by **Michael Keeter and Julianne O'Connor**, where belief, leadership, and human potential intersect with dentistry through honest conversations with clinicians, leaders, and change-makers shaping the profession from the inside out.

Together, we rise—higher, stronger, and farther than any of us ever could alone.

For event or keynote inquiries featuring **Akwasi Frimpong, Zach Lund, or Julianne O'Connor**, reach out anytime at [influentialdentalus@gmail.com](mailto:influentialdentalus@gmail.com).

# NV

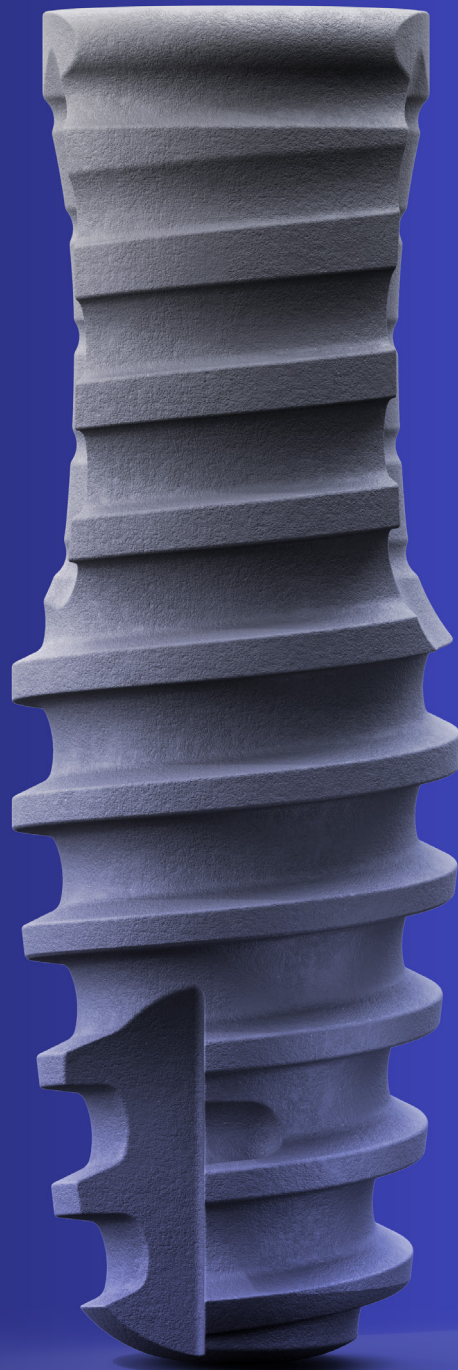
Respecting biology.  
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it matters.

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that create bone chips.

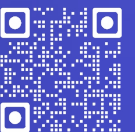
**Stress relief the bone  
needs.** The stability  
you want.

Cortical bone preservation is essential for long-term implant success. Thin buccal plates, often 1 mm or less, are the rule, not the exception, in modern implant therapy.

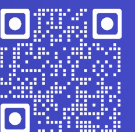
The Nuventus NV.C™ implant is designed to create more space coronally, reduce strain on the cortical plate and create bone chips during insertion.



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# NV NUVENTUS™

# EXPANDING YOUR MINDSPAN

## THE OVERLOOKED SKILL THAT SEPARATES GOOD DENTISTS FROM GREAT LEADERS

Most dentists work hard to protect their hands and bodies across a long career.

Far fewer protect their mind — yet it's the asset that influences everything: leadership presence, decision quality, emotional steadiness and the ability to navigate complex situations.

You can often feel the shift when your mind starts to narrow: quicker frustration, reduced patience, jumping to worst-case scenarios, or feeling mentally tired long before the day ends.

This isn't burnout or lack of motivation. It's the natural tightening of your thinking patterns — patterns that can be trained, expanded and strengthened.

### What Mindspan Really Is

Mindspan is your cognitive healthspan:

- how long your mind stays sharp, and
- how wide your thinking becomes over time.

Just like muscles stay strong with use, the mind stays healthier and clearer when you continue to challenge, question and expand your perspectives. Left untrained, thinking defaults to shortcuts and reactive loops that quietly limit you.

### The Hidden Cost of Unclear Thinking

Most leaders aren't drained by their workload — they're drained by internal friction. This is what happens when you want to move forward, but your thinking patterns pull in another direction:

- avoiding conversations you know you need to have
- overthinking decisions that should be simple
- resisting growth even when you want it
- spinning your wheels because something "just doesn't feel right"

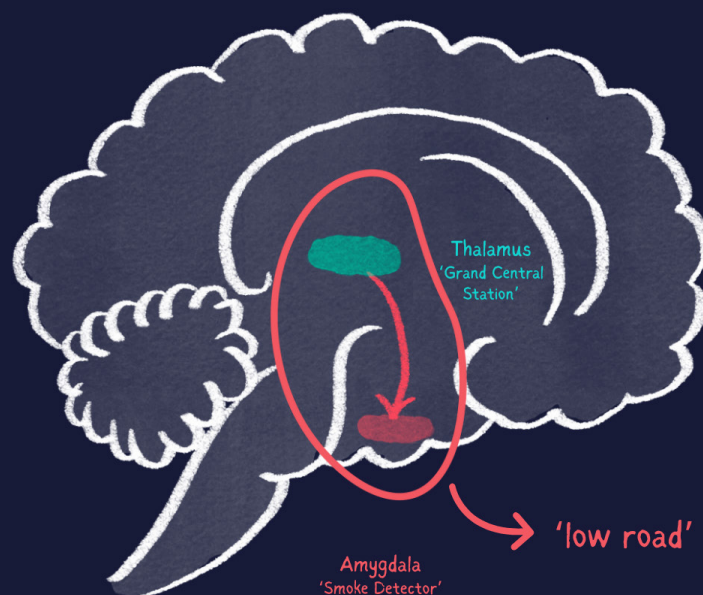
This isn't procrastination. It's unclear thinking.

Unclear thinking is one of the biggest invisible drains on a leader's time, energy and confidence.

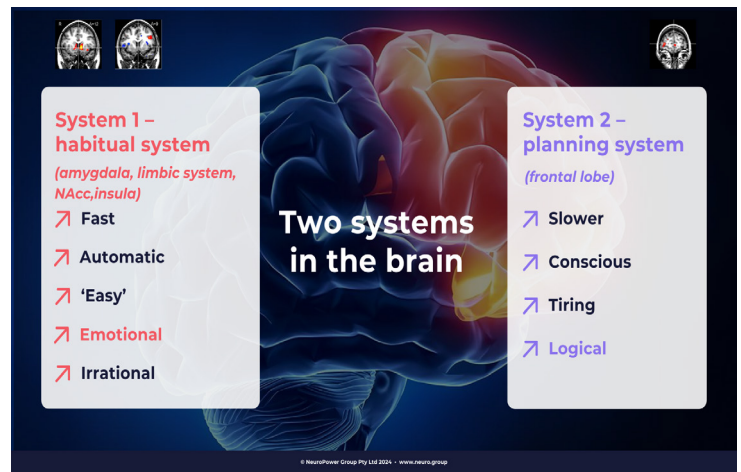
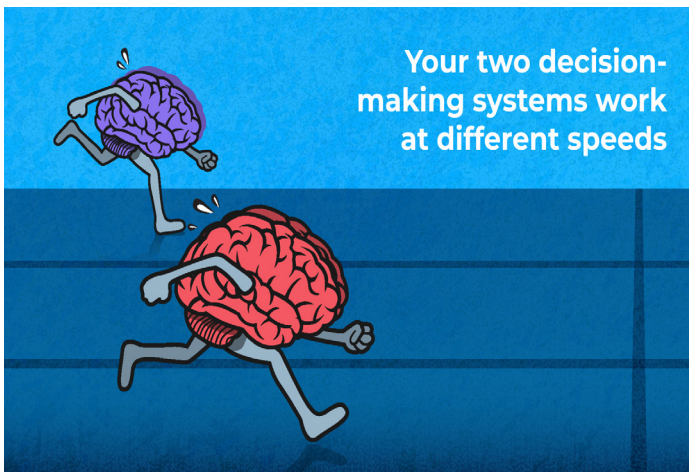
### System 1 takes the 'low road'



~80 - 90 ms



Sources: LeDoux (1996, 2000); Morris et al. (1999, PNAS); Pessoa & Adolphs (2010, Nat. Rev. Neurosci).



Once you learn to see your thinking patterns, friction disappears – and progress accelerates almost immediately.

### The Brain Behind Your Decisions

Neuroscience shows that your mind runs on two systems:

**System 1 – Fast, instinctive, emotional**  
Great for safety and quick reactions, but can misjudge situations under pressure.

**System 2 – Slow, deliberate, grounded**  
Responsible for judgement, clarity and leadership – but switches off when stressed or tired.

These two systems don't always work together nicely. For example you might know you need to exercise more (System 2) but you struggle to get out of bed in the morning to do it (System 1). When we are stressed, our emotional system can even fully take over.

So what do we do?

### A Clinical Analogy: Imaging Is Not Diagnosis

An X-ray gives you signals, not answers. Your emotions do the same.

System 1 generates internal “shadows” and alarms.  
System 2 interprets them.

Problems arise when leaders treat emotional signals as final conclusions instead of starting points.

### Four Practices to Strengthen Your Mindspan

**1. Run a Thinking Audit**  
Ask: “What story is my mind telling right now?”  
This shifts you from emotion to clarity.

**2. Name the Pattern**  
Catastrophising, perfectionism, assuming intent – label it.  
Naming reduces reactivity.

**3. Practise Second Interpretations**  
Your first thought is survival; your second is leadership.  
Ask: “What else could be true?”

**4. Shorten Recovery Loops**  
Leadership isn't calmness – it's returning to clarity quickly.

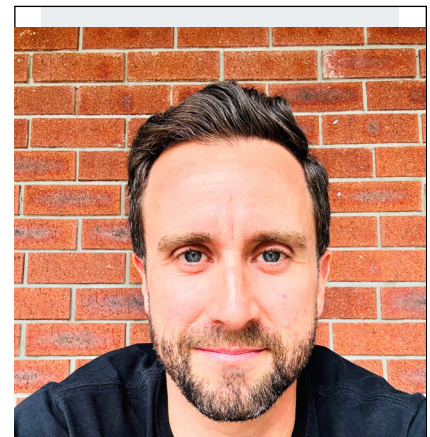
*“Most leaders don't need more motivation—they need clearer thinking. Once you can see your own patterns, everything changes.” – Zane Harris*

### Why This Matters

Clear thinking improves everything downstream:

- better conversations
- calmer leadership
- stronger practice culture
- faster, more confident decision-making

Your ability to think clearly, stay adaptive and make grounded choices will shape not only how you lead today – but how long you thrive tomorrow. Mindspan isn't something you have. It's something you train.



### About the author

Zane Harris is a CEO, founder and leadership strategist with a long-standing curiosity about how people think and make decisions. He has spent more than twenty years working with leaders across a dozen countries, helping senior teams navigate complexity and improve clarity under pressure. Zane is currently building NeuroPlus, a platform that uses AI to think with you rather than for you and Mindspan, a cognitive-fitness platform that helps people recognise hidden thinking patterns, break unhelpful mental loops and strengthen the mental habits that drive clearer, more constructive decision-making.

# Shaping the Future of Dentistry Through Leadership, Culture, and Collaboration

By Dr. Farzeela Rupani, BSc, BDS, MSc  
Group Chief Medical Officer & UK Chief Medical Officer  
Chair, CDG Medical Board

If you want to understand the future of dentistry, don't look at the boardroom.

Look at the operatory.

Across the globe, patient expectations are shifting, teams are stretched, technology is evolving faster than anyone predicted, and the dental workforce is navigating unprecedented demands. In this new landscape, one truth has become impossible to ignore:

**"The future of a dental organization is only as strong as the clinicians empowered to lead it."**

At Colosseum Dental Group—one of Europe's largest and most forward-thinking dental organizations—we have learned that **clinical leadership** isn't a luxury. It's a non-negotiable foundation for sustainable growth, exceptional patient care, and a thriving internal culture.

And our clinicians are proving it every single day.

## Why Clinical Leaders Matter More Than Ever

Clinical leaders hold a rare vantage point: one foot in the clinical world, one foot in the organizational world. They see and feel the daily pressures, the micro-decisions, the difficult cases, the patient emotions...the REALITY.

Administrative leadership is essential—but clinical leaders bring what no title alone can give: lived experience.

They are the translators, bridge builders, and culture carriers.

They are the "quiet giants" who step up not because they want power—but because they care deeply.

They are also the first to spot risks...  
...and the first to seize opportunities.

**"Clinical leaders don't guess what teams need. They know—because they've been there."**

They mentor less experienced clinicians.  
They calm the storms on challenging days.  
They elevate standards.  
They challenge outdated systems.  
They champion evidence over ego.  
And they make innovation feel *safe*.

## The Ripple Effect: How Clinical Leaders Transform Organizations

### 1. They Upgrade Patient Care Without Compromise

Clinical leaders protect the integrity of treatment by setting (and defending) high standards. When we piloted diagnostic AI imaging across our clinics, our clinical leads didn't evaluate success solely by profitability—they pushed for sensitivity, specificity, and true diagnostic accuracy.



**The future  
of a dental  
organization is  
only as strong  
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empowered to  
lead it.**

They balanced return on investment with return on integrity so that they could confidently stand behind innovation knowing that it would deliver optimal patient outcomes as well as increased case acceptance rates.

## 2. They Reduce Churn and Retain Talent

When I joined Colosseum in 2022, our clinician turnover in the UK market sat at 60%.

Within three years it dropped to 11% by changing the way we engage with our teams, underpinned by a strong focus on being clinically led.

Why?

Because clinicians stay where they are *understood*.

**“People don’t leave dentistry. They leave environments that stop valuing dentists.”**

Clinical leaders provide peer-to-peer support—mentoring, shadowing, establishing growth plans, case discussions, and unfiltered conversations that make clinicians feel seen. In a DSO with thousands of clinicians, it is easy to view them as “just another number”. Colosseum do not operate in this way, we believe in knowing our people and understanding them.

## 3. They Influence Growth in Ways No Marketing Campaign Can

Growth doesn’t happen from the outside in.

It happens from the inside out.



Our clinical leaders have expanded treatment modalities, built referral networks, and helped launch new service lines—all because they carry clinical credibility that opens doors.

## 4. They Create the Clinicians of Tomorrow

Study clubs.  
Case forums.  
Mentorship.  
Structured career pathways.

Talent isn’t just recruited.  
It’s cultivated.

One of my most rewarding experiences was watching a newly appointed clinical mentor redesign our internal implant referral workflow. The result?

A **10% increase** in implant delivery within six months—powered by clinician-led innovation.

## The Roadblock: Clinicians Aren’t Told They Can Lead

Dentists are problem-solvers by training.

We are communicators, decision-makers, pressure navigators, and empathy-fueled guides.

Yet too few clinicians ever make it into C-suite or senior leadership positions.

Not because they lack potential. But because no one shows them the path.

**“Clinicians are trusted with patients’ lives daily—yet rarely trusted with the organizations that serve those patients. It’s time to change that.”**

Leadership is a skill set.  
Not a personality trait.  
Not a title.  
Not an accident.

And the training must be intentional.



**People don’t leave dentistry. They leave environments that stop valuing dentists.**

## What Great Clinical Leadership Looks Like

### Protected Time (Not After-Hours Burnout)

We give our clinical leads designated non-clinical time—because leadership is a role, not a hobby squeezed between appointments.

### Structured Leadership Development

Communication training  
Conflict resolution  
Change management  
Performance coaching  
Mentorship frameworks

These aren't "extra."  
They're essential.

### Authority That Isn't Just Decorative

Leadership requires power to act—not power to observe.

One of our clinical leads completely restructured a practice's appointment flow after analyzing wait-time data. Without needing approval from head office. The result?



30% reduction in wait times  
Higher satisfaction  
Smoother days

That is the power of trust.

### Digital Champions Leading the Future

From intraoral scanners to CAD/CAM workflows, digital radiography to AI diagnostics, our clinical champions lead the charge. They don't just roll out tech—they embed it into the culture.



### Patient Journey Champions

Clinical leads map the patient experience, refine communication, guide consent processes, and help teams build emotional intelligence into clinical care.

Because patient loyalty is built on felt experiences, not procedures.

### The Human Side of Leadership: Relatability

Perhaps the most overlooked superpower of clinical leaders is relatability.

They've had difficult patients. They've faced clinical uncertainty. They've worked under pressure. They've had days that humbled them.

This creates authentic leadership that teams *actually* trust.

**"Authenticity isn't a leadership style—it's a leadership advantage."**

When clinicians follow clinicians, alignment becomes effortless.



## A Leader's Philosophy: Make Your People Dance

At a recent Colosseum conference in Helsinki, Jim Donald, former CEO of Starbucks, shared a line that struck me deeply:

**"The job of a leader is not to make the numbers dance. It's to make your people dance—who then make the numbers dance."**

That, in essence, is clinical leadership.

## How to Build Your Own Clinical Leadership Pipeline

### 1. Identify Natural Leaders

Look for clinicians who:

- ✓ Mentor naturally
- ✓ Communicate clearly
- ✓ Are trusted by peers
- ✓ Uphold high clinical standards
- ✓ Show initiative (without being asked)

### 2. Create Clear Role Definitions

Scope.  
Authority.  
Compensation.  
Outcomes.  
Protected time.

Clarity creates confidence.

### 3. Invest in Their Growth

Leadership conferences  
Mentorship  
Coaching  
Shadowing  
Education  
Peer networks

Leaders need scaffolding—not assumptions.



### 4. Give Them Real Power

Allow them to:

- ✓ Make decisions
- ✓ Implement changes
- ✓ Lead initiatives
- ✓ Own outcomes

And make mistakes! We learn the most from our mistakes.

Leadership without authority is performance without impact.

### 5. Create a Community of Leaders

Study clubs  
Cross-practice visits  
Collaborative problem-solving  
Recognition programs

Leadership grows faster in networks, not silos.



## The Future of Dentistry Belongs to Clinical Leaders

Tomorrow's dental organizations will be shaped by clinicians who lead—not just in the surgery environment, but strategically, culturally, and collaboratively.

Organizations that support clinical leadership will experience:

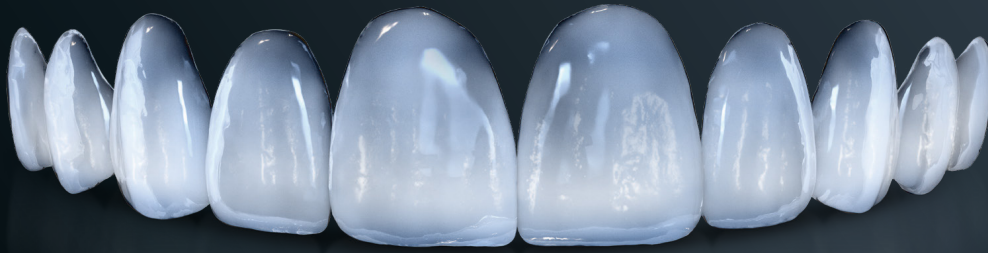
- ✓ Higher patient satisfaction
- ✓ Better retention
- ✓ Sustainable growth
- ✓ Greater adaptability
- ✓ Stronger operational resilience

Those that don't...won't.

**"Clinical leadership isn't the future of dentistry. It's the requirement for the future of dentistry."**

The practices that empower frontline clinicians today will be the ones defining excellence tomorrow.

And the movement has already begun.



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# THE NEW GOLD STANDARD:

## HOW ONE ELITE TEAM IN YORBA LINDA IS REDEFINING WHAT EXCELLENCE LOOKS LIKE IN DENTISTRY

In an industry where burnout is common, turnover can be high, and team tension often hides behind forced smiles, Yorba Linda Oral Surgery has done something few practices in America ever truly achieve—they've built an elite team that not only functions at a world-class level, but thrives with a rare blend of trust, humility, and mutual respect that feels more like high-performance athletics than traditional dentistry.

Under the guidance of **Dr. Daniel Yang**, this exceptional group is quietly setting a new precedent for what a great dental team looks like—one where personal leadership is expected, ownership is embraced, and collaboration feels effortless because it's rooted in something deeper than job descriptions: a shared commitment to each other, their patients, and the practice they proudly represent.

This is not just a team. This is a culture. And it's redefining excellence one interaction, one conversation, and one courageous micro-shift at a time.

### A Leadership Style That Builds Trust From the Inside Out

At the center of this transformation is Dr. Daniel Yang—known not just for his surgical mastery, but for the kind of leadership that elevates people.

Rather than directing from the front, Dr. Yang leads from within, giving his team something many practices overlook: **permission to think, grow, contribute, and take real ownership.**



Trust here is not a buzzword. It's a lived value.

Team members describe the environment as one where:

- Everyone contributes ideas.
- Every voice is heard.
- No one hides from accountability.
- And nobody is left behind.

It's a place where collaboration isn't choreographed—it's natural. Where confidence comes not from titles, but from shared commitment. And where support flows in every direction, not just from doctor to team, but team to doctor.

In a field as high-stakes and emotionally charged as oral surgery, this level of cohesion is not just refreshing—it's powerful.

## The Myth of “We All Have to Be Best Friends”

Here's one of the most surprising truths about the Yorba Linda Oral Surgery team:

**They didn't set out to become best friends. They set out to become extraordinary.**

And along the way, something amazing happened.

Because they refuse to engage in comparison, competition, gossip, or ego-driven conflict...

Because they celebrate differences rather than judging them...

Because they're united by a commitment to a shared mission rather than social alignment...

**Friendships have emerged organically—rooted in respect, acceptance, and a high-performance mindset.**

“

**Friendships have emerged organically—rooted in respect, acceptance, and a high-performance mindset.**

”

They work proactively rather than reactively.

This mindset didn't form overnight. It's the product of daily habits, gentle challenge, and a unique style of continuous team development that replaces “traditional training” with something much more empowering: **ongoing coaching and meaningful conversations.**

Instead of sitting in a room being told what they're doing wrong, the team engages in elevated discussions that inspire self-reflection and personal growth:

- What tiny shift could make our patient experience even better?
- What habit is holding us back from performing at the next level?
- What skill can each of us refine this week?
- How can we communicate more clearly and collaboratively?
- What would an extraordinary team member do in this situation?

It's not forced. It's not a lecture. It's real dialogue about real improvement—professionally and personally.

This is where the magic happens.

## The Practice Where Everyone Is a Leader

One of the most remarkable aspects of this team is that leadership is not a position—it's a behavior.

Dr. Yang has cultivated an environment where:

- Assistants lead through preparation, presence, and accountability.
- Patient coordinators lead

There's no expectation to be the same. No pressure to fit a mold. No requirement to see the world identically.

Instead, this team has mastered something rarely discussed in dentistry: **You don't need to be best friends to be excellent—but if you commit to excellence, trust, and acceptance, true friendships often appear anyway.**

This subtle but powerful distinction frees each person to bring their whole self to the practice, without fear of comparison or judgment.

It's emotional safety at a professional level—and it shows.

## The Culture of Ownership: “It's Not My Job” Doesn't Exist Here

Team members at Yorba Linda Oral Surgery don't wait to be told what to do.

They anticipate needs. They take initiative.



through compassion, clarity, and connection.

- Administrative team members lead by anticipating needs and elevating the patient journey.

No one waits for permission to be excellent.  
No one relies on a title to step up.  
Leadership is simply how things are done here.

This is the kind of internal structure that would make even top-performing DSOs take note—and it's why this team stands out as a model for what modern dentistry can be when culture is treated as the backbone, not an afterthought.

## Continuous Growth as a Lifestyle, Not a Requirement

Perhaps the most impressive part is the team's dedication to continuous development.

While many practices schedule "team trainings" reluctantly or sporadically, Yorba Linda Oral Surgery treats growth like a lifestyle. It's woven into the culture.

Their development is:

- Frequent
- Fluid
- Conversational
- Engaging
- Empowering
- And centered on mindset as much as mechanics



This is coaching—not compliance.

It's not "Fix this."  
It's "Let's explore what's possible."  
It's not "Here's what to change."  
It's "What shift would elevate you and the entire team?"

This creates a sense of **personal ownership**, something rare in dentistry and coveted by top-performing organizations across healthcare.

## Setting a New Precedent for the Future of Dental Teams

In a profession where extraordinary patient care depends on extraordinary teamwork, Yorba Linda Oral Surgery has built something rare:

**a team that is not only technically excellent, but emotionally aligned, culturally strong, personally**

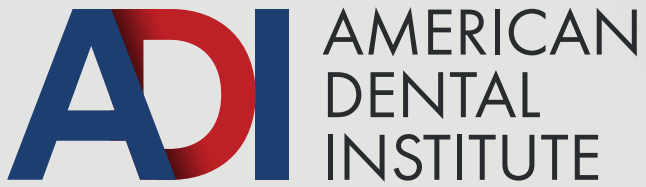
**invested, and united by shared values and shared vision.**

They're proving that:

- Micro-shifts create macro-results.
- Culture is not a perk—it's a strategy.
- Leadership is everyone's job.
- Acceptance unlocks performance.
- Comparison kills collaboration.
- And the best teams are not born—they are built with intention, trust, and commitment.

Under Dr. Daniel Yang's leadership, this team has become a living example of what is possible in dentistry when people are seen, valued, respected, and empowered to grow together.

This is not just a team. This is the future. And they're showing the entire industry what a truly elite dental team looks like—inside and out.



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# Leadership in the AI Era

Ophir Tanz, Founder & CEO at Pearl

I've spent most of my professional life building companies in the midst of rapid technological change. I've seen some technologies succeed and I've seen some fail. What I've come to realize is that the technologies that succeed are not always the ones that multiply complexities and possibilities, but rather the ones that simplify, narrow the field, and quiet the noise.

What do the successful ones have in common? They reduce uncertainty.

Not all technologies do. Some – for example touchscreen controls in cars, which make you take your eyes off the road – manage, either by the complexities of their interfaces or by the profusion of options that they offer, to make life more complicated rather than simpler. They multiply uncertainties.

I've encountered something similar in the world of entrepreneurship and business management. Early in my career, if someone asked me what leadership meant, I would have said it meant staying ahead of

change—keeping your eyes on the horizon to spot the next paradigm-shifting technological wave. That instinct was not entirely wrong. It helped me build companies for emerging markets that became obvious only later. But over time, and through more cycles of growth, correction, and reinvention than I care to count, I began to notice something subtler happening inside the organizations I was leading. The most consequential moments—the ones that determined whether teams moved forward with confidence or hesitantly, and whether customers trusted us or quietly drifted away—had very little to do with how advanced our technology was. Instead, they had to do with how much uncertainty was allowed to linger in the system.

Dentistry operates under conditions remarkably similar to ones I've experienced in business. Many dentists are, in fact, business owners as well as users of multiple continually evolving technologies. Decisions are made in real time. Stakes are high. Information is incomplete. And trust—between practitioner and patient, as between leader and team—is the currency that makes success possible.





“

Artificial intelligence is a powerful ally,  
but not because it thinks for us.  
Clarifying, paring away uncertainties,  
allows us to do our own thinking with  
greater ease and confidence.

What dentists experience daily, entrepreneurs experience over longer arcs: the constant pressure to make decisions before the picture is fully clear, and to lead others through ambiguity while not pretending that ambiguity doesn't exist. Successful leaders, I've learned (sometimes the hard way), seldom enjoy the luxury of certainty. Their most important task is to reduce doubt, cognitive load, unnecessary variance. When uncertainty proliferates, confidence erodes and communication becomes evasive or defensive. When communication falters, even the best decisions feel fragile.

Early in my career, I assumed that uncertainty was simply the price of innovation, something to be tolerated rather than combated. Teams would ask questions, and I would reassure them with vision. Customers would hesitate, and I would respond with enthusiasm. But enthusiasm is not clarity, and vision, however compelling, does little to steady people who are under pressure to get something accomplished right now.

I gradually came to see that the leaders I admired most were not the ones who spoke most convincingly about the future, but the ones who made the present feel navigable. They created environments where fewer decisions were left to interpretation, where standards were explicit rather than implied, and where people spent less time guessing what success looked like and more time building it.

The king of today's technologies is Artificial Intelligence. AI is almost always framed in the media as a disruptive force, as though its primary function were to accelerate change for its own sake. Having built AI-driven businesses for years, I find that framing not just incomplete but deeply misleading. The real value of AI, particularly in fields like medicine and dentistry, lies not in its novelty but in its capacity to absorb and diminish uncertainty. Thinking machines do not get tired or distracted. They do not carry ego or anxiety into

their judgments. Properly designed, they supply stability. They are not replacements for human expertise, but helpful assistants to it.

Dentists are often told, implicitly or explicitly, that succeeding in an AI-enabled future will require them to climb a new mountain of technological fluency. This strikes me as a fundamental misunderstanding of both dentistry and technology. The most impactful technologies in my own life – I think we've all noticed this – are the ones I understand least at a mechanical level. I don't know how Apple Maps calculates routes, but I trust it because it reduces uncertainty. I don't understand the cryptography behind modern banking, but I rely on it because it allows me to transact with confidence. In each case, the technology earns its place not by demanding my attention, but by freeing it.

By the same token, dentists should not be obliged to adapt themselves to technology. Technology should adapt itself to the cognitive realities of dentistry. When tools introduce new challenges, alerts, and workflows that demand constant supervision, they are not advancing the profession; they are taxing it. Dentistry is already cognitively dense. Added complexity that does not yield a net reduction of effort is not progress—it's noise.



Shiny, conspicuous technologies can be seductive, but in my experience the most successful organizations are not the ones that adopt the most technology, but the ones that adopt the right technology and then let it disappear into the background. They protect their employees' attention. They preserve decision-making bandwidth. In other words, they reduce uncertainties. When teams know what is expected, when standards are consistent, when ambiguities are quietly removed, performance improves without theatrics.

There is a calm that emerges in such environments. Patients feel the elimination of unnecessary uncertainty. Teams internalize it. And leaders, freed from the constant burden of second-guessing, are able to focus on what actually matters.

As technologies continue to evolve, dentistry will undoubtedly change, just as every industry does. New tools will appear. Expectations will shift. Some old complexities may be replaced by new ones. But the dentists who thrive will not be those who chase every innovation or master every interface. They will be the ones who ask a more fundamental question: Does this make the practice clearer, steadier, more trustworthy for the people who depend on it?

Leadership, whether in a startup or in a DSO, is ultimately about creating conditions in which people can do their best work without being impeded by uncertainty. Artificial intelligence is a powerful ally, but not because it thinks for us. Clarifying, paring away uncertainties, allows us to do our own thinking with greater ease and confidence.

Having seen companies rise and fall, technologies crest and collapse, I've come to believe that the future belongs not to those who plunge into innovation for its own sake, but to those who ask, "Will this make me better at what I do?" For them, reducing uncertainty is not just good leadership. It's good business.



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# MORE THAN A SMILE

## Why Dr. Youmans Believes the Future of Care Begins Beyond Assumption

**L**egacy Institute was born from a realization that fundamentally changed how I practice dentistry: **we don't just treat teeth, and we don't just treat people—we treat both, together, as part of a living system.**

Behind every smile is a system, a story, and a root cause waiting to be understood. Legacy Institute exists for clinicians who feel that pull to go deeper—to practice dentistry that honors the whole person while respecting the complexity of the mouth itself.

For decades, dentistry has often defaulted to symptom management. The tooth hurts, fix the tooth. But the better question is always *why*. Why is this happening? What system is failing? Dentistry, when practiced at its highest level, is investigation—not assumption. At Legacy, we train ourselves and others to view dental issues as signals, not isolated failures, and to develop creative, critical problem-solving as a core clinical skill.

**“Dentistry, when practiced at its highest level, is investigation—not assumption.”**

The mouth is not separate from the body. It is an ecosystem. Bite, airway, microbiome, inflammation, and neurology all intersect here. We often ask both patients and providers, *“What is actually happening in your mouth—and how is it affecting the rest of your body?”* That question guides everything we do. It's why our work begins with oral bacterial cultures and a functional, integrative medicine lens—grounding care in data rather than dogma.



This same systems-based thinking extends to the technologies we choose to integrate. At Legacy, our technology partners—including BTL, with platforms such as **EXOMIND** and **EMFACE**—support our belief that neurological balance, muscular function, and facial dynamics play a meaningful role in overall health, recovery, and patient experience. Technology, when used thoughtfully, should illuminate systems—not override them.

Our modular approach to periodontal therapy allows dentistry to evolve alongside the patient, measuring progress instead of simply completing procedures.

**“The mouth is not separate from the body. It is an ecosystem.”**

Legacy was intentionally built in the heart of the Rocky Mountains as a space for clarity, learning, and collaboration. We practice functional dental wellness through a mind, body, and spirit framework inside a state-of-the-art facility designed for deep focus and meaningful connection. This is



not a volume-based model, nor is it driven by fear. Absolutes rooted in fear don't move dentistry forward—systems do. Nuance, preservation, and humility matter.

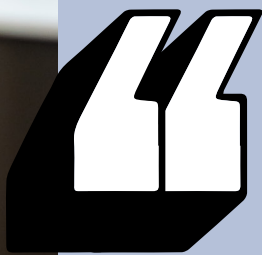
**“Absolutes driven by fear don't move dentistry forward—systems do.”**

What truly defines Legacy, however, is the people. Our institute operates as a collaborative practice, bringing together dentists, physicians, nurse practitioners, RNs, CRNAs, dental assistants, and physical therapists—all aligned under one shared philosophy: **knowledge is meant to be shared freely, and insecurity has no place in the future of healthcare.**

**“Knowledge is meant to be shared freely. Insecurity has no place here.”**

Legacy is my invitation—especially to clinicians seeking mentorship without ego, growth without noise, and dentistry with lasting impact. We built this institute to train practitioners to think differently, see more clearly, and raise the standard together.

If you feel that pull, you're already part of the conversation.



**Knowledge is meant to be shared freely. Insecurity has no place here.**



# What If Where We Learn Matters More Than What We Learn?



**F**or high-achieving doctors, education is often compressed into crowded schedules, fluorescent conference rooms, and relentless information delivery. Yet neuroscience continues to point to a quieter truth: **learning sticks when the nervous system is regulated, not rushed.**



When the brain feels calm and supported, the prefrontal cortex—the center for focus, judgment, and long-term memory—functions optimally. Elevated stress activates the amygdala, narrowing attention and limiting retention. In other words, pressure may produce attendance, but it rarely produces transformation.

This is where retreat-style learning environments offer a meaningful shift. Spaces designed with intention—natural surroundings, slower pacing, and room for reflection—create conditions where confidence can develop alongside competence. Research in adult learning psychology

consistently shows that confidence accelerates skill integration and improves decision-making, particularly in complex, high-stakes professions like dentistry.

**“When doctors feel supported, grounded, and unhurried, learning becomes sustainable—and confidence follows naturally.”**  
— Dr. Jedediah Huss

More clinicians are beginning to explore educational experiences that restore as much as they teach, seeking environments that align growth with well-being. Places like those envisioned at [restoredsmilescourses.com](http://restoredsmilescourses.com) reflect a broader movement—one that recognizes learning as not just an intellectual act, but a human one.

Perhaps the future of mastery isn't louder or faster—but more intentional, more grounded, and ultimately, more enduring.



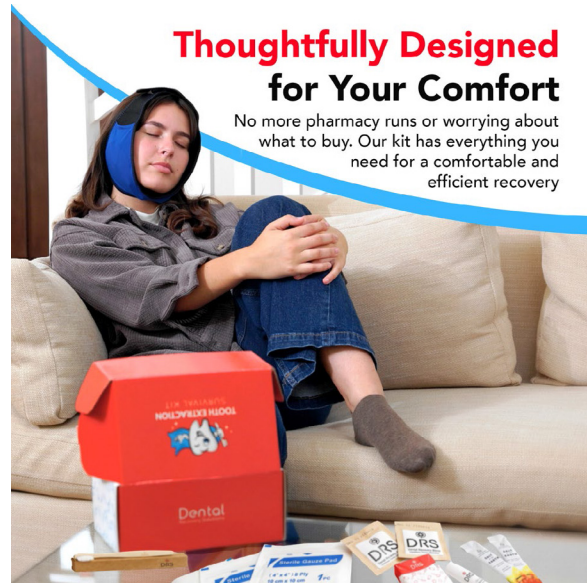
# DENTAL RECOVERY SOLUTIONS

## TOOTH EXTRACTION KIT

Transform your patients' post-extraction recovery experience while simultaneously elevating your practice's influence with the Extraction Recovery Box from Dental Recovery Solutions. Curated by Dr. Daniel Yang, a board-certified oral surgeon, this comprehensive kit is thoughtfully designed to enhance healing and comfort.

Each box includes everything a patient needs for a smooth recovery: a reusable ice pack with a hands-free head wrap, sterile gauze, blunt-tip irrigation syringes, electrolyte packets, pre-measured salt for rinses, tea bags to aid hemostasis, soothing lip balm, and an ultra-soft toothbrush. Clear video tutorials accompany the kit, empowering patients to confidently manage swelling, alleviate pain, and accelerate healing.

Strengthen your practice's brand and build lasting patient loyalty by adding your custom logo and branding to the box. For clinicians committed to providing exceptional, compassionate care, this premium kit is a ready-to-deploy solution that extends your high standards beyond the chair.



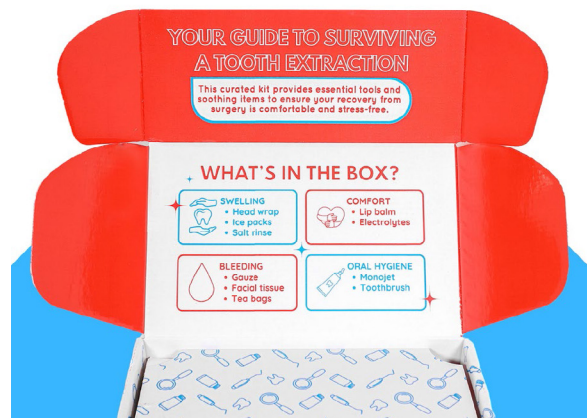
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# EXTRACTION JACKSON: THE POWER OF MINDSET

By Julia L. Jackson, DMD

Success starts long before anyone sees it.  
It begins in your head—before the car, before the white coat, before the title.

**B**ack then, we were just four girls from Philly trying to find our way. We didn't have much, but we had each other—and the belief that we were meant for more. Our pagers weren't just gadgets; they were symbols of connection and identity. We were on call for our dreams.

For me, mindset wasn't optional—it was survival. Every time someone told me I couldn't do something, it became fuel. Every time I walked into a room where no one looked like me, I decided I'd be the reason they remembered my name.

Years later, when I became Dr. Jackson, that same fire guided me.

The operating room became my arena. Extraction after extraction, I learned precision, patience, and pride. I didn't just remove teeth—I removed doubt. From my patients. From my peers. From myself.

People ask me what drives me. It's simple: purpose. My goal isn't just to win—it's to prove that discipline, humility, and confidence can coexist. You can shine without burning out. You can stay hungry without being reckless.

Success, to me, isn't luxury—it's mastery. It's being so good at what you do that peace follows you into every room you enter.

And as for me?  
The party still doesn't start till I show up.

## The Party Doesn't Start Till I Show Up

On a hot summer Saturday night in Philadelphia—the city of brotherly love and sisterly affection—my friends decided it was time to have a little fun. The Fabulous Four—that's what we called ourselves. That night marked the beginning of my very first brand.

Each of us wore a pager clipped to our hip—like doctors... or maybe like criminals. My code was 44. Arielle's was 41. Jennifer went by 42, and Vena was 43. We looked like misfits—totally unique, yet bound by shared values and the same hunger to become something more.

I was the tomboy of the group. My "gangsta" mentality was armor—protection for the shy, underdeveloped feminine side I kept hidden. But beneath it all, my mindset was unwavering. My determination unshakable. My conviction to succeed nearly impossible to explain.

"I have a dream—by any means necessary."



That night, my girls declared it was party time. And as everyone knew, the party didn't start till I showed up.

Mindset is a powerful thing. What's inside you shapes what surrounds you. My father drilled one lesson into my head early: never let your emotions control your actions. The flip side? When you master your mind, you can influence your environment. I learned how to do exactly that.

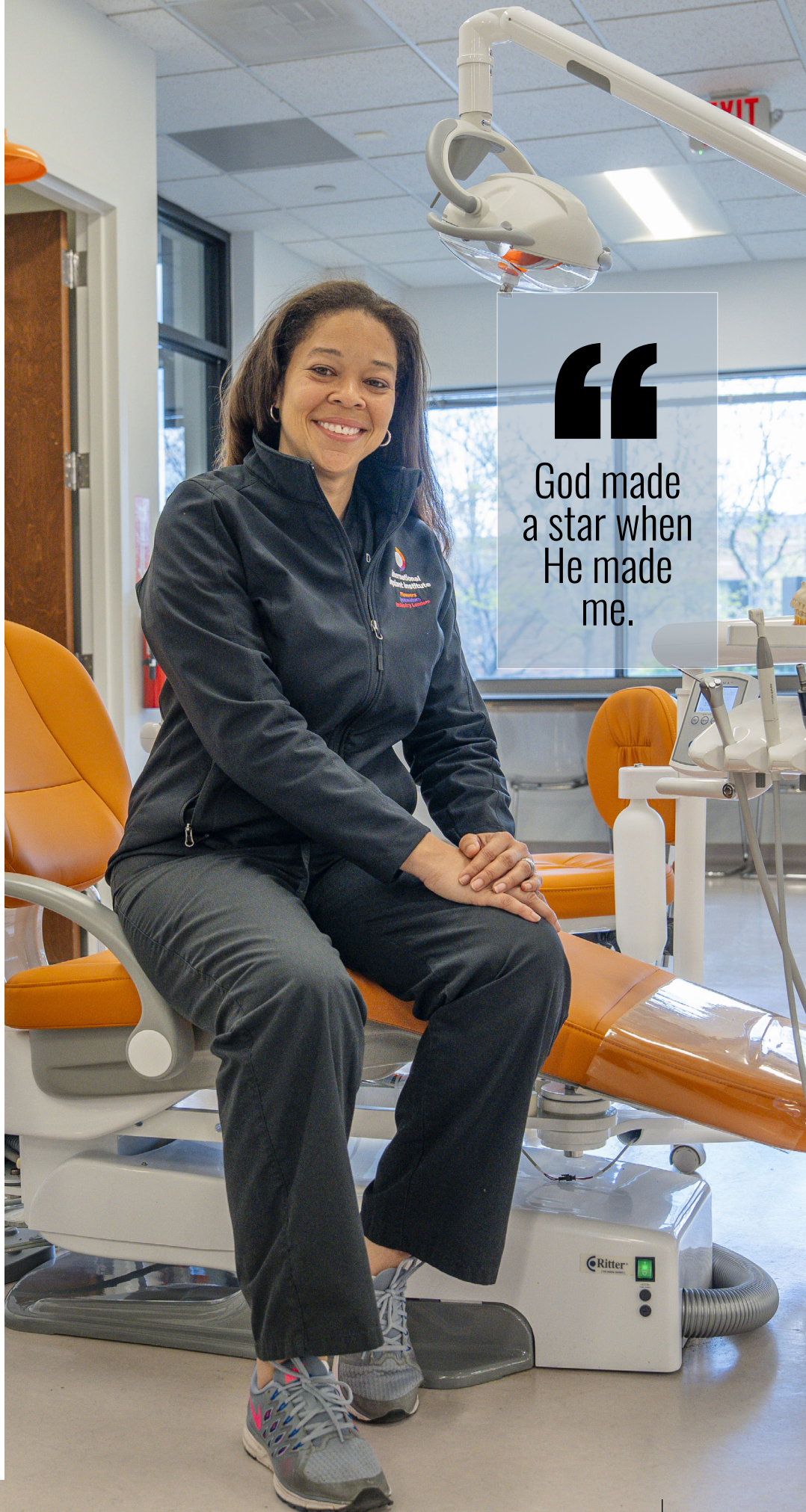
Fast forward to today. When I pull up to the office, music sets the tone. Teddy Swims fills the car as I take a deep breath before stepping out. No prep. No huddle. No stress. I was born for this.

They don't call me Extraction Jackson for nothing. The surgeries don't start till I show up—and patients feel it. I earned the nickname because I extracted more teeth than anyone in my dental school class. And honestly? I liked the sound of it. Confidence never hurt anyone.

That's the mindset of winners. Winners don't quit—and quitters never win. I take pride in making people smile. There hasn't been a tooth yet that's defeated me. Four third molars under sedation in under twenty-five minutes, from IV to suture. It took fourteen years of training to make it look effortless.

My ego? Controlled.  
My mindset? Unbreakable.  
My lifestyle? Modest—living beneath my means.  
But my appetite for excellence? Ferocious.

God made a star when He made me.  
That same mindset now fuels how I lead my team, care for my patients, and show up every day with purpose.



“

God made  
a star when  
He made  
me.

# QUIET STRENGTH:

## HOW W&H'S POWER EDITION HANDPIECE HELPS DENTISTS PROTECT THEIR HANDS, ELEVATE PATIENT COMFORT, AND PRIORITIZE WHAT REALLY MATTERS

By Dr. Bobbi Stanley, DDS –  
Stanley Dentistry | Co-Founder, Stanley Institute

There is a moment in every clinician's career when tools stop being just tools. As the years go on, after thousands of hours performing dentistry, you become deeply aware that your equipment has a long-term impact not only on efficiency and clinical outcomes, but on your hands, your body, your energy, and ultimately your lifestyle. It determines how well you serve patients — and how long you get to keep doing what you love.

That's why when I find something that truly makes a difference, I pay attention. And lately, nothing has made a greater impact on both my clinical experience and my daily wellbeing than W&H's Power Edition Handpiece.

Originally engineered to cut through zirconia restorations, its torque and cutting efficiency were the initial headline features. But in real-world dentistry — the kind where patients are anxious, teams are stretched, procedures are long, and doctors' hands take the brunt of the workload — the Power Edition has proven itself to be more than a powerful instrument. It has become a

tool that supports longevity, mindfulness, and the lifestyle dentists need to maintain a full, rewarding career.

### **A Quieter Operator = A Calmer Patient**

Dental anxiety often starts with sound. The high-pitched whine of traditional handpieces is one of the most universally recognized triggers of fear in dentistry.

Last week, a mother remained chairside as her adolescent son underwent restorative care. Completely unprompted, she said something that made me pause:



The Power Edition enables the kind of lifestyle I teach and model at Stanley Institute — a lifestyle where the clinician's wellbeing is not optional; it is foundational.

“The handpieces in this office are so quiet. I thought I might need to leave [the operatory] because that noise usually bothers me — but this is pleasantly surprising.”

In that moment, I realized just how dramatically the Power Edition handpiece changes the in-room experience. The sound reduction is not a marketing feature — it is a quality-of-life feature. Patients are calmer. Parents stay in the room. The environment feels more peaceful. And when the environment is peaceful, dentistry becomes more human.

## Ergonomics Designed for the Career Dentist

If you’ve practiced long enough, you know:  
Your hands are your livelihood. They are also the first part of your body to appear in your retirement planning.

Dentists often develop arthritis, joint strain, hand fatigue, and repetitive-use injuries — especially during long, complex restorative or cosmetic cases. What makes the Power Edition

handpiece different is not just its power, but how it distributes that power:

### 1. No Chatter, No Rattle — Just Glide

There is an unmistakable smoothness when using this handpiece. No vibration. No chatter. No micro-rattle in the wrist or fingers.

This alone reduces fatigue significantly, especially in multi-hour esthetic, implant, or full-arch procedures.

### 2. Minimal Pressure Required

Because the handpiece is so strong, the clinician does not have to press, force, or muscle their way through hard materials.

The tool does the work — the doctor simply guides it.

This is a subtle shift, but clinically and physically it changes everything. Less strain. Less grip force. Less tension held in the forearm. Less exhaustion at the end of the day.

### 3. A Genuine Advantage for Aging Hands

As dentists age, many quietly battle stiffness, decreased grip strength, or early arthritis. Rather

than giving in or giving up certain procedures, the right ergonomics allow clinicians to extend their career with confidence, without sacrificing quality.

This handpiece makes it possible.

## A Tool That Supports the Lifestyle of a High-Performing Dentist

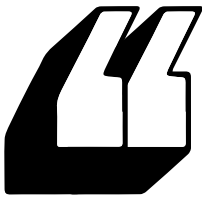
Dentistry is demanding. We balance multiple identities every day:

- clinician
- business owner
- team leader
- educator
- parent, spouse, athlete, caregiver

To do all of this well, your body cannot be depleted by your work. You need energy left after the last patient. You need freedom from chronic pain. You need tools that work for you, not against you.

The Power Edition enables the kind of lifestyle I teach and model at Stanley Institute — a lifestyle where the clinician’s wellbeing is not optional; it is foundational. When you protect your body, you





We teach dental professionals how to incorporate smarter systems, digital innovations, and equipment that improve predictability, profitability, and personal wellbeing.



protect your career. When you work efficiently, you protect your time. When you work comfortably, you protect your joy in the profession.

This is the mindset shift our industry needs: Prioritize the tools and systems that allow you to practice longer, healthier, and with greater intention.

## Why This Matters for the Future of Dentistry

We spend so much time focusing on digital workflows, new materials, and restorative innovation — and those advancements are essential. But if the clinician behind those tools is fatigued, uncomfortable, or struggling physically, the entire system breaks down.

The future of dentistry must include:

- equipment that protects the clinician
- technology that enhances patient comfort
- ergonomics that extend careers
- and workflows that reduce physical burden

The W&H Power Edition handpiece is an example of technology that

aligns beautifully with these priorities. It enhances efficiency, reduces strain, quiets the operator, and allows dentists to work with confidence and longevity.

## What We Teach at Stanley Institute

At Stanley Institute, where my husband Dr. Rob and I train dentists both nationally and internationally, one of our core messages is simple:

A better clinical result begins with a better clinical experience — for both doctor and patient.

We teach dental professionals how to incorporate smarter systems, digital innovations, and equipment that improve predictability, profitability, and personal wellbeing. The Power Edition aligns perfectly with what we value:

- tools that reduce unnecessary stress
- tools that elevate the patient experience
- tools that support long careers
- tools that contribute to a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle

Dentistry is not just a profession. It is a physical craft. And craftsmen must protect their hands.

## Final Thoughts

As the profession advances, we have a responsibility to evaluate technology not just by how it performs on a tooth — but how it supports the lives of the people who use it.

The W&H Power Edition handpiece has become my daily reminder that great dentistry should feel effortless, comfortable, and sustainable. That a quieter operator leads to calmer patients. That a smoother, vibration-free tool protects our hands. And that the right equipment can extend careers, reduce burnout, and elevate the way we experience our work.

In a world where dentistry is growing more complex, tools like the Power Edition remind us to simplify, protect ourselves, and prioritize what truly matters: the patient, the clinician, and the joy we find in creating beautiful, healthy smiles.

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# THE NEW ERA OF CHAIRSIDE IMPLANT TEMPORIZATION FOR ESTHETIC CASES

By Navneet Arora D.D.S., M.P.H.

In implant dentistry, temporization plays a pivotal role in shaping treatment success—particularly in esthetic cases. When patients undergo implant placement, the need for a temporary restoration is often immediate. These temporaries do more than fill space; they influence patient comfort, protect surgical and restorative integrity, and help guide ideal soft-tissue healing until the final prosthesis is delivered.

The importance of temporization cannot be overstated. It directly affects the patient experience, treatment efficiency, and the predictability of esthetic outcomes.

## Why Temporization Matters

Above all, temporization enhances patient comfort during the healing and osseointegration phase. In cases involving immediate implant placement—especially in the esthetic zone—clinicians have traditionally relied on removable solutions such as flippers or Essix retainers. While common, these options often compromise comfort, esthetics, and long-term outcomes.

Removable temporaries may appear convenient and cost-effective, but they frequently require multiple adjustment visits and rarely meet patient expectations. Fixed provisional restorations—such as crowns placed on temporary abutments—offer a superior alternative by preserving function and appearance during healing. However, they often demand significant chair time and restorative expertise, leading many surgical specialists to avoid them altogether.

Historically, fixed temporization has been time-intensive and technique-sensitive, placing it outside the comfort zone of many implant surgeons.

## A Simplified Chairside Solution

Today, that barrier has changed.

Modern digital workflows now make it possible to plan, place, and restore

implants in the esthetic zone while delivering a **screw-retained temporary restoration with minimal additional chair time**—often comparable to placing a healing abutment.

This streamlined approach is made possible through two key innovations:

1. **The Nobel Biocare N1 Implant System with the N1 Base**
2. **The SprintRay MIDAS Chairside 3D Printer**

Together, these technologies allow clinicians to integrate surgical precision with immediate, predictable temporization.

## Step-by-Step Workflow for Immediate Chairside Temporization

### Step 1 – Comprehensive Examination and Data Collection

Begin with a full-mouth periodontal evaluation, followed by CBCT imaging, intraoral scans, and high-quality clinical photography to support accurate case planning.

### Step 2 – Digital Case Planning

Import CBCT data, intraoral scans, and photographs into DTX Studio software. Using AI-driven planning tools, position the implant ideally—typically 4–5 mm subgingival from the zenith of the free gingival margin (FGM).

### Step 3 – Guided Implant Placement

Execute the surgical plan using either static guided surgery or dynamic navigation systems such as X-Guide for precision placement.

Follow the N1 drilling protocol:

- Pilot drill at 2000 RPM to subcrestal depth
- Final drill at 50 RPM without irrigation to achieve bone compaction and optimal depth

### Step 4 – Base Placement

Profile the crestal bone to eliminate interference, then place the N1 Base—available in 1.75 mm, 2.5 mm, or 3.5 mm heights—and torque to 20 Ncm.

### Step 5 – Digital Impression

Attach a scan body and capture an intraoral scan. Upload the scan to your preferred laboratory portal or use RayWare AI to design a screw-retained temporary crown compatible with the N1 Base.

### Step 6 – Chairside Printing

Send the design to the SprintRay MIDAS 3D printer for a rapid 6–9 minute print. Post-process by inserting the appropriate Ti-base (NP or RP), washing, and curing the restoration in the NanoCure unit for approximately five minutes.

### Step 7 – Delivery

Seat the printed temporary crown on the N1 Base and torque the screw to 20 Ncm. Verify occlusion, make necessary adjustments, and confirm fit with a final periapical radiograph.

## Case Selection Criteria

As with any advanced procedure, appropriate case selection is critical for predictable outcomes:

1. **Primary Stability** – Achieve  $\geq 35$  Ncm insertion torque and an ISQ value of 65 or higher.
2. **Site Selection** – Confirm intact socket walls, absence of infection, and adequate bone volume.
3. **Implant Positioning** – Use guided surgery or navigation to ensure

precise placement suitable for immediate temporization.

4. **Occlusal Considerations** – Eliminate centric and eccentric contacts on the provisional crown and confirm a stable posterior occlusion.
5. **Patient Factors** – Ensure good periodontal health, oral hygiene, nonsmoking status, and patient compliance. Patients must understand the limitations of a fixed provisional on an immediately placed implant.

## The Impact of Modern Temporization

Beyond patient comfort, temporization plays a critical role in long-term success. It helps preserve soft-tissue architecture, supports an ideal emergence profile, and protects the surgical site—while significantly improving the patient’s quality of life.

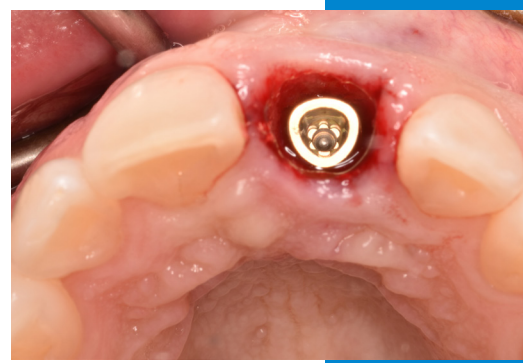
Where temporaries were once considered purely functional, advancements in digital design, materials, and chairside 3D printing have elevated temporization into a strategic and esthetic phase of implant therapy.

## Conclusion

Temporization in implant dentistry is no longer an afterthought. It is a powerful bridge between treatment planning, surgical execution, and restorative excellence.

With innovations such as the Nobel Biocare N1 Implant System and the SprintRay MIDAS Chairside Printer, clinicians can now deliver custom, screw-retained temporaries efficiently, predictably, and within minutes—without compromising clinical outcomes or workflow.

As digital dentistry continues to evolve, chairside temporization will remain a cornerstone of modern implant therapy—enhancing both the patient experience and the clinician’s ability to deliver esthetic excellence with confidence.



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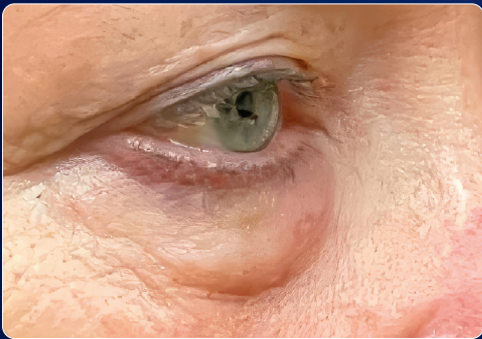
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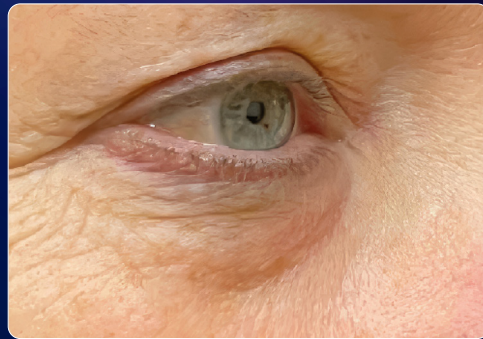


BEFORE



3 MONTHS AFTER 4<sup>TH</sup> TREATMENT, COURTESY OF: SUZANNE KILMER, M.D.

AFTER **EMFACE**\*



\*EYES

BEFORE



AFTER 4<sup>TH</sup> TREATMENT, COURTESY OF: CHRIS W. ROBB, M.D.

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# STOP LEAVING MONEY ON THE TABLE:

## A Mindset Shift for Dentists Navigating PPO Negotiations

By Gavi Cohn, Partner Apex Reimbursement Specialists

For many dental professionals, rising expenses and shrinking reimbursements feel like an unavoidable reality—just another stressor in a profession already stretched thin. But one of the biggest mindset traps is believing that insurance companies hold all the power.

They don't. And reclaiming that power starts with seeing negotiations not as confrontation, but as advocacy—for your practice, your patients, and your wellbeing.

### Build Your Foundation with Clarity

Begin by creating a simple, clear insurance profile: every PPO plan, how you're contracted, and when you joined. Many carriers reassess fees every 24 months, which means you naturally have



negotiation windows—most dentists just don't realize they're there.

Identify the recruiters or network managers associated with each plan. Instead of viewing them as gatekeepers, see them as partners in ensuring patients receive quality care. That mindset shift alone makes communication more collaborative and far less stressful.

### Identify Your Leverage (You Have More Than You Think)

Every practice has unique strengths: location, specialty services, availability, reputation, patient experience. These aren't "nice to mention"—they're legitimate negotiating power.

Prepare a professional, confident letter that communicates the value you bring to their network and why current fees no longer support the level of care your patients deserve. Use your top revenue-producing codes—usually 25–40 procedures that reflect 90% of production—to anchor your case in facts, not frustration.

And don't forget to update your UCR schedule annually. Outdated fees hurt your negotiating position more than most doctors realize.

### Master the Negotiation Dance Without Stress

When you receive a proposal, resist the instinct to accept instantly. Pause. Review the numbers.

Compare them to your top codes. If the increases don't support quality care, submit a counter. You should always counter at least once.

Once an agreement is reached, request the official fee schedule with all identifying details. For at least two months, verify the new fees are being paid correctly—your peace of mind and financial health depend on it.

### Stay Ahead With a Leadership Mindset

Fee negotiation isn't a one-time event. It's part of your long-term leadership in protecting your practice's sustainability. Revisit contracts every 18–22 months and continue advocating for what your work is worth.

A note of caution: antitrust rules prohibit collective negotiation among independent providers, but that doesn't diminish your personal negotiating power.

### The Bottom Line

Insurance companies negotiate every day.

The question is whether you do.

Your practice contributes real value to their network, and you deserve fair compensation that supports excellent patient care and a lifestyle free from unnecessary financial stress.

**The chair time stays the same—but your confidence, clarity, and revenue don't have to.**



**Don't leave money  
on the table—  
your practice  
deserves better.”**

— Gavi Cohn



# Stop Switching Agencies: Reset the Relationship Instead

By Jonathan Fashbaugh

Improved relationship and communication may be the answer to your marketing problems. Without a clearly shared vision, even talented agencies tend to use the same marketing systems and creative work for every dentist they serve. For some dentists, this works. Often it doesn't. The real issue is usually a lack of clarity between where you want to go and what your agency believes you hired them to do.

When that happens, your instinct is to switch marketing companies. Unfortunately, rebooting your marketing means hidden costs: disrupted campaigns, lost traction, Google and AI recalibrating your signals, and a dip in momentum. These hidden costs add up, and if you're not careful, you begin again without solving the underlying disconnect.

As an alternative, consider a "switch" to your current marketing company where you reset the relationship and establish a better mutual understanding of what your vision is for the campaign. In this

relationship reset, you're not taking on the role of marketing expert. You need to trust your experts to do what they do best. But you need to point your experts toward a goal before they set out to do the work.

Imagine hiring a contractor without telling them which room to remodel. Without clear communication and clarity about the goals you want to achieve, you can't expect the outcome to match your expectations. The same applies to working with a marketing agency. Your brand is your baby, and you need to guide its marketing.

## "Switching" Without Starting Over

Start with an honest, curious video call.

- Share your concerns about misalignment
- Clarify your vision and goals.
- Examine their data and welcome their insights.
- Seek renewed connection rather than someone to blame.

If you feel like the agency isn't listening or that there is still a major disconnect, call out what's not making sense to you. Ask them to help you understand.

For example, if you tell them that you're not getting new patients, and they say that the campaign is working very well, it's okay to ask them to connect the dots. Maybe they are celebrating the long-term progress of a brand awareness campaign when you're expecting direct response, generating leads. This is a huge opportunity. Ask what adjustments would bring things into alignment and how they can build on the investment you've already made.

After that, if your intuition tells you that the fit still isn't right, then it's probably time to explore other options. But most of the time, this reset process is what you really needed. The marketing team will better understand you, and you'll have a new understanding of the gameplan.

## Support The Reset

Follow this up with regular accountability meetings with the marketing company and with your internal team. Listen to your incoming calls, track the number of patients seen, as well as your monthly marketing spend-to-production ratio for the six months before this "switch" process and for 6 months after, as well as for the same time periods during the previous year. You should see momentum return, and you'll find you've grown as a leader in the process.



Most of the time, this reset process is what you really needed.



Jonathan Fashbaugh is the founder of Pro Impressions Marketing, a dental-marketing agency that's helped dentists build authoritative online presences since 2010. Jonathan is also the author of *The Marketing Mix That Works: A Comprehensive Marketing Manual Designed To Help Dental Offices Grow* and co-author of *The TMJ Trifecta: Solving Your Pain Puzzle*. His articles have also been published by Dental Economics, Inside Dentistry, The Ortho Tribune, Dental Sleep Practice Magazine, and other trade publications.

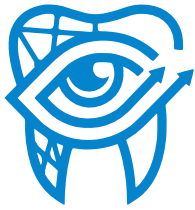
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# THE NEW ERA OF DENTISTRY — AND WHY CLARITY BEHIND THE SCENES MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

By Krishnamoorthy Manickam,  
President & Co-Founder, Inventory  
Sight LLC



**D**entistry is evolving—and not just in how we treat patients, but in how we experience our work. What was once a traditionally conservative profession has rapidly embraced digital workflows, integrated care, and data-driven decision-making. Practices are expanding, DSOs continue to scale, and patient expectations have never been higher. Yet beneath the surface of this progress lies a quieter truth: **how a practice operates profoundly shapes the quality of life of the people inside it.**

For years, inventory management lived in the background—handled between patients, scribbled on notepads, tracked in spreadsheets, and too often managed reactively. In a simpler era, that approach was enough. Today, it's a source of unnecessary friction. When supplies run short or overstock piles up, the result isn't just a logistical issue—it's stress, distraction, and disrupted flow. Mental bandwidth that should be reserved for patient care and leadership gets consumed by preventable problems.

Modern dentistry demands more precision—not only clinically, but operationally. Rising costs, tighter margins, staffing challenges, and multi-location complexity have made clarity essential. Practices that thrive aren't just efficient; they're intentional. They design systems that reduce decision fatigue, protect focus, and support teams so clinicians can stay present where it matters most.

This is why smarter inventory management has emerged as a meaningful differentiator. Technologies that offer real-time visibility, intelligent tracking, and predictive insight remove guesswork from the equation. When supplies are aligned with actual usage—without excess or shortages—teams operate with greater confidence and calm. The practice feels lighter. The day flows better.

The benefits extend far beyond numbers on a spreadsheet. Streamlined systems reduce stress for teams, improve communication, and create an environment where providers can lead instead of react. Patients feel the difference too—through smoother appointments, consistency of care, and a sense that the practice is truly in control.

In this new era of dentistry, success isn't defined solely by innovation at the chair. It's shaped by what happens behind the scenes—by systems that create clarity, protect energy, and support a sustainable, fulfilling professional life. When operations work intelligently, dentistry becomes not just more efficient, but more human.



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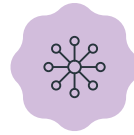
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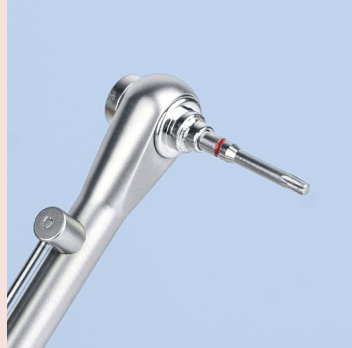
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The



**conmetior**



**Approach**



By  
Frank Charles Pope  
&  
Jean-Christophe Pope



In every profession, there are moments when you realize something isn't quite right. Not catastrophically wrong. Just off. A gap between what you need and what you have. Another daily frustration you've learned to work around, but eventually, the workarounds become part of the work.

Frank-Charles Pope noticed those moments every day—during surgeries, while restoring full arches, sitting chairside with clinicians across the U.S. He had spent decades in the world of dental technology, from esthetics to implantology, watching the industry evolve. And yet, as digital tools and high-tech equipment flooded the market, the basics, such as the hand tools, the simple devices, the things that connect the brain to the hands, had barely changed.

And so he asked a question: "Why is no one improving the small things?" The story of Conmetior begins with that

working with tech giants of the Bay Area, he saw first-hand what the power of thoughtful branding, design, language, and identity could bring to a business. Where Frank-Charles saw how to fix the clinical problem, Christophe saw how to shape the message, the meaning, the story.

Together with Isabelle Pope, Frank-Charles' wife, providing operational expertise and logistics, they created Conmetior— a family company grounded in craftsmanship, clinical insight, and strategic clarity. They didn't set out to build a product line. They set out to restore something that was quietly disappearing from dentistry: precision born from necessity. And just as importantly, they built it around a shared belief: "If something can't be measured, it's just an opinion." In an age where speed and software are sometimes mistaken for skill, this belief grounded them. It became a guiding principle, not only for how

move forward decisively.

Each product wasn't just a new instrument, but rather a proof point. A small shift that gave clinicians more control, more peace of mind, and better outcomes in the moments that mattered most. What sets Conmetior apart isn't just the instruments. It's the mindset.

This is a company built on the idea that what's in your hand affects what's in your head. That an organized tray clears mental space. That a precise instrument changes the tone of a surgery. That the right torque or the right reading isn't just clinically helpful but emotionally grounding. In a profession as demanding as dentistry, where the stakes are high and the margin for error is small, these details matter. They ripple outward: through your mood, your patient interaction, your energy at the end of the day.

What began as a quiet mission in a

## They built Conmetior around a shared belief: "If something can't be measured, it's just an opinion."

very question, but it doesn't end there. It became a quiet mission: to design and build tools that made a clinician's day easier, more efficient, and less stressful. Instruments that reduced uncertainty, brought order to the tray, and calm to the mind. Thoughtful, refined tools made by someone who had walked the walk.

Frank-Charles had already lived a full career. He trained in Europe, built esthetic cases for top doctors, led a major lab in California, and mentored hundreds of technicians. But in the second half of his career, something shifted. He didn't just want to build beautiful restorations, he wanted to build something lasting.

Enter his son, Jean-Christophe Pope. Raised around the rhythms of dentistry and design, Christophe had a gift for communication and a vision for how to express ideas clearly. Earning his stripes

they designed tools, but for how they approached the future of dentistry. The first answers came in the form of tools that transformed daily frustrations into confidence and clarity:

A vertical dimension gauge that gives doctors a fast, consistent, and accurate way to measure their patients' VDO. An implant finder that eliminates the need for opening a flap altogether. Where surgeons once had to make a cut, now they can locate an implant safely without the scalpel. It's faster for the clinician and gentler for the patient.

An electric torque driver that frees a doctor's hands, giving clinicians more control, more speed, and less fatigue.

A digital implant stability tester that replaces guesswork with measurable certainty—reducing the risk of failure and giving the doctor the confidence to

garage has grown into a trusted brand serving thousands of doctors across North America and beyond. From single-practice clinicians to global key opinion leaders, Conmetior can now be found on trays in operating rooms everywhere. And yet, the DNA remains unchanged. Every product still begins with a conversation about what slows a doctor down, what clouds their thinking, what makes a long day harder than it needs to be.

The answers still come back to the same belief Frank-Charles voiced at the beginning: "If something can't be measured, it's just an opinion." Conmetior has become a benchmark for how thoughtful design and clinical rigor can intersect. A brand that proves the smallest details can have the largest ripple effects. Because in dentistry, as in life, it's the invisible things that often make the greatest difference.

Shop and learn more at [conmetior.com](https://conmetior.com)

# SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ORAL SURGERY THROUGH INTENTION, EDUCATION, AND CONTRIBUTION

Oral surgery is advancing at a remarkable pace. Clinical techniques continue to evolve, technology is reshaping what is possible in the operatory and research is expanding the boundaries of care. Yet for many of us, the way our profession learns, shares knowledge, and prepares for the future is not evolving with the same level of intention.

To meet these evolutionary needs within oral surgery innovation—and as a part of oral health more broadly—we created the Paradigm Innovation Institute (or more simply, Pi2).

We launched the Paradigm Innovation Institute with a simple, but important, belief: the future of oral surgery should be shaped by those who practice it. Not through fragmented education or isolated expertise.



And not through systems that lag behind how surgeons actually learn and grow over the course of their careers.

At its core, Pi2 is grounded in stewardship. As an oral surgeon myself, I believe education, research, and innovation are not standalone initiatives, but rather responsibilities shared across generations of clinicians. Advancing our profession requires more than individual excellence; it requires intentional infrastructure that allows knowledge to be captured, refined, shared, and passed forward.

Education sits at the center of this vision, but not as a single experience or moment in time. Pi2 approaches education as a multi-dimensional system—one that reflects how oral surgeons develop over decades, not just during training. The system includes hands-on clinical learning, real-time case capture, structured curriculum and easy content access, leadership development, and the ability to share expertise beyond the walls of any one institution.

For early-career surgeons, this means access to learning grounded in real-world practice, not abstraction. For experienced clinicians, it creates space to contribute knowledge, refine standards, and help shape how the next generation learns. Education, in this sense, becomes a living exchange rather than a static transfer of information.

Importantly, Pi2 was designed as a purpose-built platform for the oral surgery profession; one that brings together physical space, digital infrastructure, and a collaborative learning community. It includes environments for hands-on clinical education, spaces for research and testing new technologies, digital systems for capturing and sharing real-world expertise, and a network that connects surgeons across career stages. The intent is not scale for its own sake, but depth.

That distinction matters. Oral surgery and other dental specialties have long been defined by mentorship, rigor, and shared accountability. As our profession grows more complex, preserving those values requires systems that reinforce, rather than dilute them. Pi2 exists to support that continuity by aligning education, research, and technology around a common purpose: advancing oral surgery with intention.

On its path forward, Pi2 serves both those advancing the specialty today as well as the next generation of surgeons. For residents and early-career clinicians, it provides exposure to expertise that may otherwise be limited by geography or access. For established surgeons, it offers an opportunity to contribute meaningfully, to share experience, refine best practices, and help define what excellence looks like in a changing landscape.



Through education, research, and technology, Pi2 helps elevate oral surgery's collective voice. It reinforces my conviction that our profession is strongest when knowledge is shared openly and leadership is expressed through service rather than position. This is not about prescribing a single way forward, but about creating space for thoughtful progress informed by those closest to the work.

More than a facility or program, Pi2 reflects a mindset around lifelong learning. Being an oral surgeon is not just a role; it is a commitment to patients, to peers, and to the future of the specialty. That commitment extends beyond technical skill to how we think about education, leadership, and contribution over time.

In a field defined by precision and trust, progress depends on intentional systems that honor both tradition and innovation. Pi2 was created to be one of those systems that support how oral surgeons learn, lead, and contribute across the arc of their careers. By grounding education in real practice, elevating research, and embracing technology with purpose, Pi2 offers a way forward that keeps our profession anchored in its values while preparing it for what comes next.

The future of oral surgery will not be shaped by any single institution or individual. It will be shaped by the collective choices we make about how we teach, how we learn, and how we contribute. The Paradigm Innovation Institute exists to support that responsibility by creating infrastructure that enables our profession to define its own future, together.

Dr. David Rallis, DDS, MD received his undergraduate education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He attended dental school at the University of Nebraska Medical Center earning a Doctor of Dental Surgery in 2004. He then completed medical school at Mayo Medical School, and a general surgery internship and oral and maxillofacial surgery residency at the Mayo Clinic.

To learn more about Pi2 and its mission, visit <https://www.pi2edu.com/>

# FROM DENTIST TO DISRUPTOR:

## How Embracing the Why Transformed My Career

By Dr. Avi Patel



**W**hen I first started out, I was just like any other dentist—head down, focused on becoming the best clinician I could be. But as I grew in my career, something shifted. I realized that my real passion wasn't just in the clinical work; it was in sharing what I knew and helping other dentists find that same sense of fulfillment.

I started out small—just posting videos on social media, talking about clear aligners, and trying to break down the barriers that kept so many dentists from exploring new possibilities. What I didn't expect was that these simple, honest videos would turn into a movement and eventually into an entire program that's now helping

hundreds of dentists transform their practices.

But let's be real—none of this came without challenges. Putting yourself out there is never easy. I dealt with all the usual suspects: self-doubt, imposter syndrome, and the fear that maybe I was stepping too far off the traditional path. But the thing that got me through was having a rock-solid connection to my "why." I knew that if I could help even a handful of dentists find more freedom—of time, of income, and of fulfillment—then it was all worth it.

The truth is, whether you're in dentistry or any other field, the easiest path doesn't exist. What exists is the path you create by

staying true to your reason for doing it. For me, it's about making aligner education accessible and helping dentists unlock new opportunities. And every step I take is tied back to that vision.

So if you're out there wondering how to carve your own path, just know that it's okay to evolve. It's okay to grow beyond the chair, beyond the single office, and beyond what you thought your career had to look like. I'm here to support you in that journey, and if you want to connect and learn more, you can find me on Instagram at @doctor.avi, on LinkedIn, or on my website: [www.clearaligneradvisor.co](http://www.clearaligneradvisor.co).


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# RISING COST PRESSURES IN DENTISTRY: WHY STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS MATTER MORE THAN EVER



By Kevin Arakelyan, CEO, Upcera Dental America Inc.

**A**fter twenty-five years in the dental industry, I've seen the market shift in countless ways—but nothing quite like what we're facing today. Whether you're a supplier, a dental lab, or a dental practice, the challenges aren't isolated anymore. Rising costs, staffing shortages, and patients delaying treatment have created a shared reality for all of us.

And in that shared reality, one truth has never been more clear: **we cannot win alone. Collaboration isn't optional—it's essential.**

Dental practices are navigating real pressure. Insurance reimbursements aren't keeping pace with overhead, hiring is more competitive (and more expensive), and patients are thinking longer before committing to care. More than ever, offices are leaning on suppliers and labs—not just for products, but for consistency, guidance, and honest communication. Price matters, of course, but reliability has become its own form of value. When the day is packed and patients are waiting, partnering with people you trust makes all the difference.

Dental labs are balancing their own set of challenges. Material costs—from zirconia to alloys—continue to rise, while expectations for faster turnaround times haven't changed. Add in shipping delays and fluctuating inventory, and the pressure becomes real. A lab's ability to deliver high-quality work often depends on the strength of its partnerships upstream. In this environment, a dependable vendor

isn't merely helpful—it becomes a strategic advantage.

Suppliers are feeling it too. Manufacturing and import costs are unpredictable, global lead times shift overnight, and customers want more transparency than ever. Dentists and labs want clear timelines, stable pricing, and realistic expectations. The supplier who simply "takes an order" is fading into the past. Today's success depends on showing up as a true partner—anticipating challenges, supporting customers proactively, and creating a sense of stability in an unstable climate.

What ties all three sectors together is a simple but powerful

understanding: **our success is interconnected.** When one area struggles, all feel it. But when communication is open and partnerships are strong, the entire ecosystem becomes more resilient. We reduce waste, prevent misunderstandings, and adapt more gracefully to a rapidly changing market.

After decades in this field, I'm more convinced than ever that the businesses destined to thrive are the ones that invest in relationships—real, long-term, mutually supportive relationships. In a time when so much feels uncertain, partnership is the one advantage that remains steady.



**In this new era of dentistry, we rise by standing together.”**

— Kevin Arakelyan

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# 10 PRINCIPLES ELITE DENTAL PRACTICES LIVE BY

## HOW HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS UNLOCK POTENTIAL, PURPOSE, AND PRIDE

1

### 1. SEE PEOPLE BEFORE YOU MEASURE THEM

Elite practices don't reduce people to production numbers or job titles. They recognize talent, effort, personality, and heart first—because when people feel seen, performance follows naturally.

2

### 2. BUILD CONFIDENCE AS A DAILY PRACTICE

Confidence isn't a personality trait—it's a skill that can be reinforced. Elite teams actively build one another up through language, trust, and belief, knowing confidence changes how patients feel the moment they walk in.

3

### 3. ALIGN INCENTIVES WITH WHAT ACTUALLY MATTERS TO PEOPLE

Not everyone is motivated by money alone. Elite practices personalize incentives—flexibility, growth opportunities, recognition, autonomy, or time—because motivation works best when it's meaningful.

4

### 4. ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BE THEMSELVES, NOT "DENTAL PERFECT"

The best practices don't ask people to shrink into a role. They invite individuality, creativity, humor, and humanity—creating teams patients connect with and trust.

5

### 5. TREAT GROWTH AS IDENTITY, NOT AN EVENT

Elite practices don't "do" personal development—they live it. Growth conversations happen regularly, not just at reviews, reinforcing that becoming more matters as much as producing more.

6

### 6. LEAD WITH BELIEF, NOT CONTROL

High-performing leaders don't micromanage—they create belief. When teams feel trusted and capable, ownership replaces compliance and excellence becomes self-driven.

7

### 7. MAKE PURPOSE TANGIBLE, NOT THEORETICAL

Purpose shows up in how people are spoken to, supported, and celebrated. Elite practices connect daily work to something bigger—impact, service, pride, and contribution.

8

### 8. NORMALIZE REST, REFLECTION, AND RESET

Elite teams understand that sustainable excellence requires space to breathe. They normalize rest, encourage reflection, and protect energy—because burnout blocks potential.

9

### 9. LET WINS BELONG TO THE WHOLE TEAM

Success isn't hoarded at the top. Elite practices share credit freely, celebrate together, and reinforce that every role contributes to the outcome—clinically, culturally, and emotionally.

10

### 10. CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE PEOPLE RISE

The true mark of an elite practice isn't how impressive it looks from the outside—it's how much people grow on the inside. Confidence increases. Careers expand. Self-worth deepens. And people leave better than they arrived.

#### Final Thought

Elite dental practices aren't defined by perfection. They're defined by **belief, belonging, and the courage to develop people—not just systems.**



*Elite practices don't build perfect people—they build people who believe in themselves and each other."*



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# Winter 2025-2026 Outlook

A clarity-forward reset for dental professionals: simplify signal, stabilize energy, and build influence that lasts.

## THE SEASONAL SHIFT

Winter isn't about pushing harder—it's about **holding steady**.

This is the season to quiet the noise, reinforce what's working, and design systems that don't rely on adrenaline to succeed. Precision matters more than speed. Calm leadership compounds.

Think fewer decisions. Better decisions.

### WINTER MANTRA

*"I lead with steadiness. I choose clarity over chaos, depth over distraction, and consistency over force. I set the tone—and the tone sets the results."*

## WHAT'S GAINING MOMENTUM

### Trust Compounds Quietly

Patients don't need more explaining—they need to feel grounded. One intentional follow-up conversation or a single shared treatment decision can do more than ten touchpoints.

### Teams Mirror the Nervous System

Your regulation is contagious. When leaders pause, listen, and ask before directing, teams become more confident, autonomous, and aligned.

### Small Cleanups, Big Relief

One smoother handoff. One clearer role. One meeting removed. Winter rewards subtraction—it frees up mental bandwidth and restores margin.

### Energy Is the Real Metric

Notice how you start the day and how you end it. Your emotional bookends predict performance more accurately than production reports ever will.

### Learning Goes Short and Sharp

Winter learning sticks best in small doses. One concept. One script. One mindset shift—applied immediately.

## THE 5-MINUTE WINTER RESET (Weekly)

- **Anchor:** Name one thing that feels more stable than last month.
- **Scan:** Where is tension showing up—schedule, people, or you?
- **Release:** Choose one thing to simplify or stop entirely.
- **Lead:** Send one message of clarity or appreciation.
- **Breathe:** Slow inhale, longer exhale. Let your body catch up to your intention.

## INFLUENCE INSIGHT

Winter leaders don't rush to prove—they **create conditions**. When your presence is calm, your systems become resilient. When your systems are resilient, your influence scales—quietly, sustainably, and with integrity.



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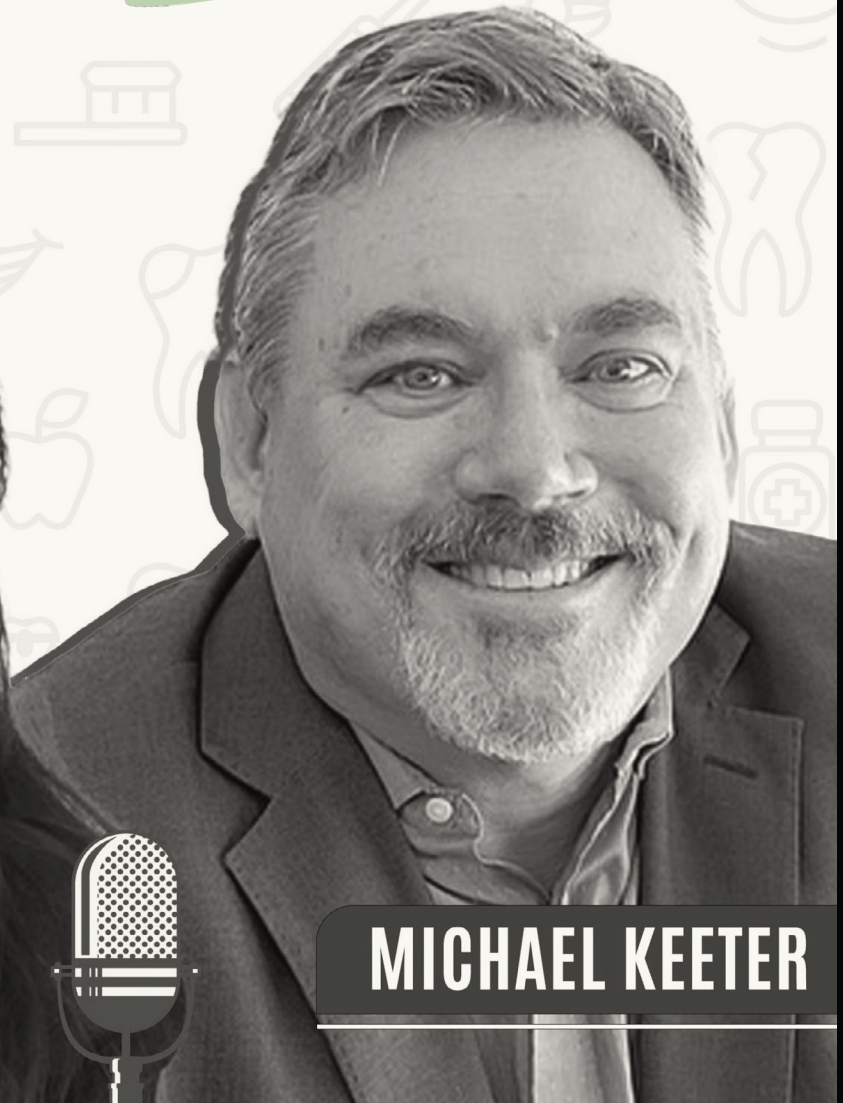
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# You're Allowed to Want More (And Feel Good Doing It)



## The Mindset That Changes Everything

Why high-achieving dentists don't need to prove themselves to grow



Here's something high-achieving dentists and associates don't hear often enough: you don't have to earn your worth every single day.

Many driven professionals operate with an invisible rulebook—be responsible, be excellent, don't complain, keep producing. It works... until it doesn't. At some point, success stops feeling exciting and starts feeling heavy, repetitive, or oddly flat.

That's not burnout. That's outgrowing an old identity.

Mindset growth at the next level isn't about fixing what's broken—it's about giving yourself permission to expand. To want fulfillment and achievement. To enjoy confidence without apology. To lead without shrinking or over-functioning.

### THREE WAYS TO PRACTICE THIS SHIFT—STARTING NOW:

#### 1. Separate your value from the scoreboard.

At the end of each day, name one decision you handled well that had nothing to do with numbers. This retrains your brain to recognize competence beyond production.

#### 2. Replace pressure language with ownership language.

Notice when you say "I have to." Experiment with "I choose to." This small shift restores autonomy—and autonomy fuels confidence.

#### 3. Lead from clarity, not comparison.

Before reacting, ask: *What feels aligned for me right now?* When decisions come from self-trust instead of external validation, communication softens and leadership becomes magnetic.

When dentists reconnect to self-worth instead of self-pressure, something changes. Creativity returns. Teams respond. Patients feel it. The work gets lighter—not because it matters less, but because *you matter more*.

High achievement doesn't require self-sacrifice as a personality trait. It requires alignment, ownership, and the courage to be fully yourself.

And that's a mindset worth practicing.

“You don't become more valuable by proving yourself—you become more powerful by trusting yourself.”

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# THE PARADOX OF HAVING IT ALL— BY LETTING GO

By Julieanne O'Connor,  
Mindset Coach for High-Achieving Dentists & CEOs

**H**igh achievement often comes with an unspoken contract: push harder, hold tighter, stay vigilant. For dental professionals and CEOs, success is usually built through discipline, responsibility, and relentless follow-through. But there's a paradox few talk about—one that quietly determines whether success feels expansive or exhausting.

The paradox is this: **the more you cling to control, the less fulfilled success becomes.** And the moment you loosen your grip—clarity, confidence, and momentum begin to return.

Letting go doesn't mean disengaging or lowering standards. It means releasing the internal pressure to carry everything alone. Many high performers unknowingly tie their identity to outcomes—production numbers, case acceptance, growth metrics, or public perception. Over time, this attachment creates tension. The nervous system stays in "prove it" mode, and even wins feel fleeting.

True fulfillment doesn't come from doing more. It comes from **creating space**—mentally, emotionally, and strategically.

When leaders let go of micromanaging every detail, teams step up. When dentists stop forcing certainty in every consult, trust deepens. When CEOs release the need to have all the answers, innovation

expands. Letting go allows others—and better ideas—to meet you halfway.

This shift is not passive. It's intentional. It's choosing presence over pressure. Direction over force. Wisdom over urgency.

I've coached countless high-achieving professionals who believed they needed to push harder to reach the next level—until they realized the next level required a different internal posture. One rooted in calm authority. One that understands that **peace is not the reward for success; it's the foundation of sustainable success.**

The irony is that when you stop gripping the wheel so tightly, you gain more traction. Decisions become cleaner. Communication becomes clearer. Energy returns. And success starts to feel like alignment instead of effort.

Having it all isn't about accumulating more—it's about subtracting what no longer serves you: fear-based control, over-identification with outcomes, and the belief that your worth is tied to constant performance.

When you let go of what's draining you, you make room for what truly matters—impact, connection, and a version of success that feels as good on the inside as it looks on the outside.

That's the paradox.  
And it's where real leadership begins.



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**Dr. Bobbi Stanley, The Stanley Institute  
(Cary, NC)**



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## INFLUENCE DOESN'T WAIT FOR PERMISSION

### INTRODUCING THE INFLUENCE AWARDS

Influence isn't about being seen. It's about what changes because you were.

In dentistry, influence takes many forms. Some lead quietly—shaping culture, connection, and community one conversation at a time. Others use visible platforms to open doors, shift perspectives, and create opportunity. What matters is not visibility, but impact.

The **Influence Awards** exist to recognize those who elevate the profession by elevating people.

This is not the announcement of an event. It is the introduction of a standard.

Over the coming year, *INFLUENCE Magazine* will observe—and invite the dental community to help identify—the individuals and teams whose influence is felt through mentorship, collaboration, leadership, curiosity, service, and contribution. This includes both unsung leaders and recognized voices whose actions consistently lift others and move dentistry forward.

Influence will not be measured by followers or popularity. It will be measured by impact, integrity, and how others rise because of you.

#### WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR

Those who:

- Elevate others through mentorship, advocacy, or opportunity
- Shape cultures rooted in trust, excellence, and belonging
- Use their voice—quietly or publicly—to expand possibility
- Strengthen communities and create lasting, meaningful impact

#### Community Nominations

Because influence is often best recognized by those it touches, we invite thoughtful nominations from the dental community.

Nominations are not votes. They are stories of impact.

If someone comes to mind, nominate them. If a category doesn't exist yet, suggest it.

Send nominations to: [influentialdentatus@gmail.com](mailto:influentialdentatus@gmail.com)

#### INFLUENCE AWARD PILLARS

- Culture Shaper
- Mentor & Multiplier
- Bridge Builder
- Quiet Innovator
- Influential Voice
- Rising Voice
- Legacy Leader

This Winter Issue marks the beginning of a year-long observation and nomination period. In December 2026, those whose influence has proven undeniable will be recognized.

Until then, we're listening. We're watching. We're collecting stories.

Because influence doesn't wait for permission. And those who lift others—quietly or visibly—deserve to be seen.

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# WHERE DIGITAL DENTISTRY FAILS WITHOUT PROSTHODONTIC AUTHORITY

## CONDYLAR CENTRIC RELATION & VERTICAL DIMENSION IN THE DIGITAL ERA CALIBRATING FULL-ARCH, FIXED, IMMEDIATE PROSTHETICS FOR PREDICTABILITY

Adam M. Hogan, DDS, FAGD, ABOI, USMC

### Introduction

Full-arch, Fixed, implant dentistry is now one of the most digitally driven arenas in clinical practice. Photogrammetry, stackable guides, dynamic navigation, and AI-driven design platforms have transformed how we plan and deliver care. Yet none of these technologies replaces the clinician's responsibility to diagnose and control the fundamentals of occlusion—particularly condylar centric relation (c-CR) and vertical dimension of occlusion (VDO).

These two variables govern function, esthetics, phonetics, and biomechanics. Ironically, while they are among the oldest concepts in prosthodontics, they are also among the most misunderstood and neglected in modern full-arch workflows. The more digital our systems become, the more critical it is that clinicians understand condylar mechanics and vertical dimension with clarity and discipline.

This article reviews the reasons c-CR and VDO must be foundational in full-arch prosthetics before, during, and after surgery as well as how digital workflows can either support or sabotage these

principles based on how they are applied.

### Condylar Centric Relation: A Joint Position, not a Tooth Position

In this discussion, “centric relation” is deliberately referred to as Condylar Centric Relation (c-CR) to emphasize that it is a joint position, independent of tooth contact. Despite many decades of literature, clinicians and specialists still disagree on CR because it sits at the intersection of biomechanics, philosophy, training bias, and diagnostic ambiguity. Different disciplines use CR for different purposes, leading to different interpretations. When the jargon is stripped away, however, modern centric relation can be described simply as: the most anterior-superior position of the condyle–disc complex, fully seated and braced against the articular eminence, in a repeatable, ligament-guided position independent of tooth contact.

In full-arch implant dentistry where natural teeth and periodontal ligaments are absent this reference position becomes even more critical. Implants are rigid and cannot adapt. Full-

arch prostheses resist micro-movement. The condylar position becomes the primary adjustable variable in the reconstructed system.

Bypassing or approximating c-CR creates avoidable iatrogenic stress. Common consequences include occlusal interferences, uneven loading, midline shifts, screw loosening/fracture, material failure, and postoperative TMD symptoms. In contrast, when the diligent clinician determines, verifies, and preserves a balanced c-CR before, during, and after surgery, many of these complications can be minimized or entirely prevented.

### Why c-CR is More Critical in Digital Dentistry as Opposed to Analog

Digital workflows rely on a stable reference frame. Every step from scanning, design, articulation, printing, and milling assumes a repeatable hinge axis, a predictable arc of closure, and a defined c-CR and VDO. The living human patient does not behave like a simple virtual hinge, but the software assumes that they do.

If the clinician submits inaccurate jaw relations, an unstable c-CR,

an arbitrary VDO, or a false pseudo-CR created by guidance or muscle engrams then every downstream step becomes precisely wrong. The prosthesis may look beautiful in the design software yet be fundamentally incompatible with the patient's joints and musculature. Digital dentistry is less a solution than a mirror. It does not fix poor technique nor does it compensate for poorly trained clinicians. Rather with extreme prejudice, digital dentistry reflects errors with unforgiving accuracy.

### **Vertical Dimension of Occlusion: The Master Variable**

Vertical dimension of occlusion (VDO) is arguably the single most powerful variable in full-arch All-on-4/All-on-X prosthetics. It defines the entire prosthetic envelope—both functionally and esthetically. VDO determines how much restorative space exists between the bone and the occlusal plane, which in turn governs framework thickness, connector height, zirconia or PMMA integrity, tooth proportions, pink esthetics, and hygiene access. Too little VDO produces weak, over-bulky prostheses, collapsed lower facial height, and compromised esthetics and phonetics. Too much VDO overstretches tissues, distorts facial proportion, increases muscle strain, and destabilizes occlusion and prosthesis. The patient's facial thirds, smile design, lip support, incisal display, and overall esthetic harmony are all directly tied to this one decision.

Functionally, VDO dictates mandibular posture, TMJ loading, elevator muscle activity, excursive pathways, and occlusal scheme. Because implants lack periodontal ligament proprioception, the occlusion must be engineered, not discovered. VDO must harmonize with c-CR to avoid a myriad of complications such as overload, screw loosening, posterior strain, and long-term prosthetic failure. Phonetics, especially S, F, and V sounds, depend on a proper tooth-to-lip relationship, itself a function of VDO. Airway stability and tongue posture are also influenced by VDO, making it central to patient comfort and physiological adaptation.



In edentulous, posterior-edentulous, or terminal dentition patients, there is often no reliable pre-existing reference. VDO must therefore be carefully diagnosed, tested in the provisional phase, and confirmed esthetically and functionally before finalization. Vertical dimension is not a single numeric value; it is a biologic relationship integrating esthetics, biomechanics, and patient comfort. When properly established and verified, it supports a stable occlusion, a durable prosthesis, and a highly satisfied patient.

### You Cannot “Design Your Way Out” of a Bad Jaw Relation

A common misconception in the digital age is that a misaligned bite can be “fixed digitally” by the laboratory. Digital software is a replication tool, not a corrective one. A scanner or design platform can only work with the information it is given. If the interocclusal record is inaccurate, if the patient was guided into a pseudo-CR, or if the condyles were not fully seated, the software faithfully reproduces those errors.

Vertical dimension and c-CR are biologic realities, not digital constructs. A VDO chosen by guesswork or esthetic ambition, without facial and functional analysis, cannot be redeemed by CAD. In fact, digital workflows often magnify inaccuracies precisely because they remove some of the soft correction that analog workflows once provided. A millimeter error in a record becomes a millimeter error in the design, the try-in, and the final prosthesis.

Digital dentistry enhances accuracy and efficiency only when the foundational records are correct. In full-arch prosthodontics, digital technology does not rescue weak fundamentals. It exposes them.

### Digital Dentistry: New Tools, Old Responsibilities

Digital workflows have greatly improved our ability to record, transfer, and reproduce VDO

and c-CR, but only when these relationships are properly diagnosed and prescribed by the clinician. Photogrammetry can capture multi-unit implant positions with remarkable precision, yet it tells us nothing about joint position. Intraoral scanners eliminate many impression distortions but cannot verify whether the mandible is seated in a stable c-CR. Digital facebows and virtual articulators now stand where mechanical articulators once did, but both analog and digital articulators are only approximations of a living hinge with infinite possible positions.

The classic phrase “garbage in, garbage out” is more relevant than ever. Historically, analog errors could sometimes be softened by wax adjustments, technician intuition, or re-articulation. Digital workflows strip away many of those compensatory steps. When records are wrong, CAD/CAM reproduces error with exacting fidelity and the result is often a beautifully milled but biomechanically compromised prosthesis.

Digital dentistry does not eliminate the need for clinical judgment; it amplifies the consequences of its absence. Poor c-CR or VDO records are not fixed by scanning. They become permanently embedded in a highly precise dataset that drives every subsequent decision. In a practical, evidence-based workflow, the clinician must first determine the final desired c-CR and VDO, verify them clinically and radiographically, and only then capture digital records. CBCT is used to confirm balanced condylar positions. Facial thirds, lip competence, and patient comfort validate VDO. Once these analog fundamentals are stable, facial scanning, photography, and intraoral scans are obtained at the final prescribed jaw relation and submitted to the laboratory for design.

### Case in Point: A c-CR/VDO Failure and Digital Reconstruction

A recent case at Full Implant Choice (Virginia Beach, VA) illustrates the

consequences of neglecting c-CR and VDO. A patient presented with a five-year history of complications following full-arch immediate-load treatment. The original therapy included extraction of all remaining teeth, placement of six maxillary and five mandibular implants, and conversion to an analog immediate prosthesis, later restored with a bar-supported PMMA and “Hollywood-style” smile, big teeth and broad.

Five years ago, although initially delighted esthetically, the patient soon experienced repeated acrylic fractures, frequent “bridge loosening,” and persistent discomfort on the maxillary left. Examination and CBCT revealed complete failure of the two posterior maxillary implants, with bone loss, erythema, pain and purulence, as well as ailing mandibular implants with crestal bone loss.

History, CBCT, and clinical evaluation of coached c-CR revealed that the original case had been restored at an incorrect VDO and in a non-seated joint position. CBCT showed the left condyle translated and inferiorly positioned when the patient closed into the existing centric occlusion evidence of an unstable, non-physiologic relation (see figure 1.) Revision surgery and prosthetics involved complex explantation, re-implantation with bilateral pterygoids, posterior-inferior



Figure 1: Pre-operative Evaluation of Left Condyle in Preoperative CO

zygomatics, and anterior nasal-crest engagement in the maxilla, and four basal implants in the mandible, the key to success lay in correcting the jaw relation.

Dr. Hogan selectively reduced the existing prostheses to re-establish a harmonious VDO based on facial proportion, muscle relaxation and joint position. The patient immediately displayed a more relaxed appearance, with passive lip closure and reduced temporalis strain; changes she had not realized were possible. At this corrected VDO, the patient was guided into a stable c-CR, recorded with putty, and scanned with CBCT. The new imaging demonstrated bilaterally seated condyles (see figure 2 and 3.) With joint stability established, digital records were captured and submitted for design. Post-surgical CBCT confirmed both implant positions and condylar centricity, and the revised prostheses functioned predictably.

This case underscores that long-term success in full-arch reconstruction depends as much on accurate jaw relations and vertical dimensions

as on surgical execution or digital sophistication.

### **Conclusion: Digital Future, Analog Foundation**

Full-arch implant dentistry is evolving rapidly, but no amount of scanning, software, or photogrammetry can replace the anatomy of the temporomandibular joint or the principles of occlusion. Condylar centric relation and vertical dimension are not outdated prosthodontic relics; they remain the pillars of modern digital full-arch dentistry.

When clinicians control condylar position and VDO with discipline, then digital workflows deliver prostheses that are precise, durable, and comfortable. When they do not, technology simply reveals and amplifies underlying flaws. True expertise in full-arch prosthodontics still begins with mastering analog fundamentals and then using digital tools to express those fundamentals more accurately, not to bypass them.

As I tell my team and students:  
“Patients live in surgery, but practices live or die in prosthetics.”

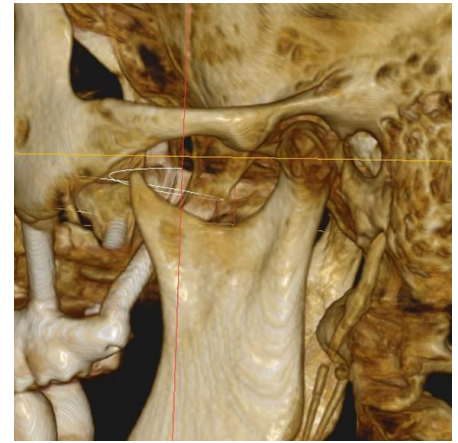


Figure 2: Pre-surgical Condylar positions before revision surgery



Figure 3: Pre-surgical Condylar positions before revision surgery

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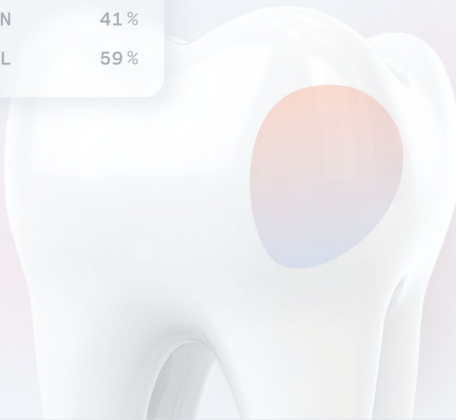


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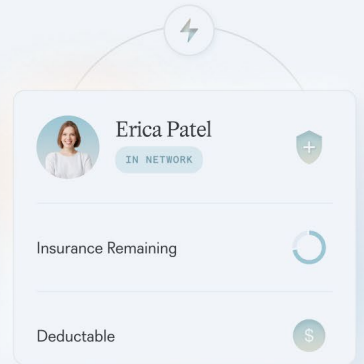
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