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# PPA Call

**May 11, 2022**

## **The Art of Negotiation**

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The Practice Profit Accelerator call is where we dive deep into the most pressing questions we're hearing from teams across North America.

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Kevin: Good day, everyone. Welcome to the latest edition of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator team call. It is my honor and privilege to be here this month with the mighty Maegen. Maegen, how are you doing?

Maegen: Hello, Kevin. I always look forward to your introduction. Thank you for that. It's very nice to come on a call and be welcomed that way.

Kevin: Well, you deserve it, and I got to get you all fired up, revved up. We've got an important topic today that we're going to go over that I know you and I are both excited about. So, how's everything been? Is everything good?

Maegen: Everything's good. It's a sunny, sunny week for us. So, we're all in good spirits over here. How about you?

Kevin: Listen, I can't complain. And if I did nobody would want to listen, so we'll just save all that for another day. And let's get to it. So everyone, I've got to say, I'm really excited about this month. Maegen and I were offline talking, leading up to this conversation today, and we had thought of this idea of, okay, what could we do where the minute that everybody was done listening to our conversation, ideas, suggestions, thoughts, all those kind of things, where they could literally go and do something with it 30 seconds later?

And so that's where some of this motivation is coming from, along with, by the way, conversations we're having day to day, week to week with individual teams, the whole deal. And hopefully by the end of it, you will recognize the opportunity to be able to assess how it is that we continue to connect with our patients and how effective we are in getting them to go a little bit further down the pathway of their health.

And so as many of you know, I've been sharing many stories of late where I've been mentioning about studying all sorts of crazy types of people and industries, and all about conversation, and influence, and connectedness, and all this kind of stuff. And one of them that's been really the most fascinating has been in the art of negotiation, most specifically, in hostage negotiation. So one of our doctors had reminded me of a gentleman who I had been introduced to a long time ago, who I was always fascinated with his stuff, but I never read his book, by the name of Chris Voss. And he wrote this book called "Never Split the Difference" and I'm going to reference that a little bit today in where Maegen and I are going to go with this.

And there's others, as well, who I've been studying, for anybody who has any interest. There's a gentlemen name by the name of Chase Hughes, Bob Burg, David Rosen, many others. Those are some of the highlights. But today we're going to dive into a handful of the foundational principles that all of these people, what they've highlighted and offered with their professional advice on the attempt to help people connect and communicate more effectively.

And so for the purpose of our time today, like I mentioned, I'm going to reference some of the information that the author Chris Voss has talked about, because I was just impressed with his ability to be able to take the principles

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Kevin:

of what he did in the most stressful situation that I could think of and put it in a way where you could extrapolate that and turn it into everyday, real-life communication, obviously in the practice, that's why we're here, but also in your personal life. And so, this is going to build on the conversation Maegen and I had back in March. And so let's dig in.

The first of several points that I want to make here is, number one, your word choice and delivery are important, with your delivery being the true differentiator. And I know you guys have heard us talk about this often, and you continue to hear it. And we're never going to give up on it because it does matter. And so let me just read some words from the author, and then I'm going to have Maegen jump in, share some thoughts that she has with regards to experiences that she's been having of late, conversations she's having, and then we'll keep moving along.

And so here's what the author states. He says, "When delivering on a negotiating strategy or approach, people tend to focus all their energies on what to say or do, but it's how we are, our general demeanor and delivery, that is both the easiest thing to enact and the most immediately effective mode of influence. Our brains don't just process and understand the actions and words of others, but their feelings and intentions too, the social meaning of their behavior and their emotions. On a mostly unconscious level, we can understand the minds of others, not through any kind of thinking, but through quite literally grasping what the other is feeling."

Whoa, super powerful stuff. And anybody who's been through any of my discussions, you know I talk about when you're off, people know it. And especially your patients, even though they tend to not say anything. They just walk out the door and in their minds, they're like, "Man, what is going on with whomever?" And that's one of those moments where we got to rely on the team to pick us up and help us along, when we're having an off day. So I'm going to pause there. Maegen, what say you? What do you glean from this important point that the author states out about the feeling, the vibe, like we like to call it, that you're putting off on a daily basis?

Maegen:

I mean, it's got to be step number one, right? Before we even say any words, it's the first thing patients notice when you walk in a room. Even the way you answer a phone, you can tell when someone's really doing a hundred things and they pick up a phone. When you're on the other end, you can tell. So it's one of those things that absolutely there is something there. And then on top of that, word choice. He mentions that in that quote, that word choice is so important. So, it's a little bit of an art. That's what I want to say of all of this. And I think, Kevin, you set up our call really beautifully. And it's so true that some of these things, yes, it might be for hostage negotiation, but it's transferable. It's the art of communication. We're in the business of talking to humans and influencing them. It's the same thing.

So it's a really interesting concept to bring this to dentistry and to sort of pull it together. And for me, the thing that comes up that I talk a lot on calls with, and it's a strategy that I really love hearing our teams and how they apply this,

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Maegen: is the idea of being that encouraging voice for the patient. That's where the word choice and the energy come together, is we want to make sure that we're not that voice that's just there to be the order-taker. We don't want to sit back and then just listen to what the patient does and do what they want and we be totally neutral, because the problem with that is the patient is really dialed up with their discerning voice. In their head, they're thinking of all the reasons why they shouldn't do it. They're thinking of all the other expenses they have. They're thinking about all the dental work they're going to need and that they might be nervous about.

And so it's really important that we are mindful of that, that there's maybe a lot of negativity, a lot of fear, a lot of apprehension going on in our patient's mind. And we need to balance that out, so that they can make a good decision, so they can think of all the right things to properly decide for themselves. So, when we think of word choice and we think of energy, I have that little visual I like to use where you get to be the patient's shoulder angel. They're thinking of all the reasons why not to do it. We get to remind them why it's going to be worth it. We're not telling them what to feel. We're just giving them a reminder of, "Yeah, it's an investment, but my goodness, isn't it going to be worth it when it's already done? That's going to be wonderful once you're back to maintenance mode."

So these are things we want to just try and do is fill the room with that kind of voice. Remind them what they get for the investment, what the outcome and lifestyle benefit is going to be once they move forward with treatment and just get it done. And so that this is the way I would take from this, and the real tactical approach, is be that encouraging voice. You really make that decision that you're going to always bring in the reminder of why it's good.

So just some quick lifestyle impacts that come up often, better rest, more restful sleep once we get this appliance for you. You want to feel more beautiful. You want to have a functional, healthy mouth. You want to prevent future issues and proactively stay in maintenance mode. That's the smartest thing to do. It'll save you money in the long run. These are the kinds of reminders that we want to be filling the conversation with, because the patient's got all the good reasons not to do it. They need the scales balanced out. So Kevin, I'll pass it back to you, but I really think it's a great place to start, because everything is energy first and then the word choice after.

Kevin: Yeah, I love it, Maegen. And I love how you break it down into practical suggestions there and getting people to create a vision of situations that they've been in, because of course, let's face it. We run into the similar types of situations: chaos in the practice, schedule is crazy today, the schedule fell apart, we're running around like nuts trying to fill it. It's the same thing every day, it's just a matter of what time of the year it is, basically. And we also deal with the same situation with regards to patients. You got patient personality type A, B, C, D. It's like all these people, it's the same routine over and over again. It's just a matter of matching them up.

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Kevin:

And so one of the things that I get often, because people, to their credit, they do ask me about this and they're very attentive to it. And they say to me, they say, "Kevin, well, how do I do it? When the day is just totally insane and I got to be in two places at once, how do you manage that energy and not bring the chaos with?" And I appreciate the ask, because it, to me, it is in alignment with this concept I've been talking about for a long time, which is the practicing of the pause. And the pause, again, it's not a five minute deal. It's literally like, "Okay, three seconds, boom, I'm back to center. I recognize that I let go of whatever happened before. And if there's still something left with it, I'll deal with it later. But right now, Mrs. Smith deserves my energy, my focus, my word choice," as we're talking about here.

And so, whatever that is for you, before you enter the room with the new patient, close your eyes, let out a breath, something. Each of you have to come up with your own deal, who struggle with this, and who just can't get in that moment. I'm very similar. Of course, I don't have the extreme pressure of having health on the line, but I literally go from call to call, to call, to call, to call, rarely with ever any breaks. I'm usually 10 seconds left before I got to dial the next phone number.

And when I'm in some of those situations where I'm either talking to somebody who has low energy and I'm trying to bring them up, so I'm exhausted after trying to exert more, or it was a little bit contentious or whatever the case is going to be, I have to do that too, so that when I pick up the phone and somebody answers and I say, "Hey, it's Kevin!" I want them to feel this burst of energy, so that one, they know it's me, because everybody has an idea of who I am and what I'm going to bring to the table. And if I don't, it sets up the conversation in a very interesting way and not for the positive.

And so it's like some of the things that we have to do is prepare for conversations, prepare for situations that we're about to enter into. And that's how you manage the energy, the vibe. It also allows you that moment to be able to collect your thoughts so that you get rid of anything negative going on and you're thinking now, forward thinking, positive thinking, the whole deal. Because as Maegen was stating, your word choice has to match your energy: positive words, forward-thinking words, matching, positive energy, excitement, enthusiasm to whatever level is natural and comfortable for you.

So some practical things to be able to take note of, to assess, and I'm going to remind you throughout this entire call, really wonderful thing to talk about as a team. Everybody's always asking me, "What can we do as team-building? What can we do to engage more as a team, get to build more empathy for each other?" Stuff like this is great.

So let's move on to the second point that the author talks about, and I summarize it up as: what temperature are you radiating? Right? So this goes along with the vibe, the energy, and what he states is this. He says, "When we radiate warmth and acceptance, conversations just seem to flow. When we

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Kevin: enter a room with a level of comfort and enthusiasm, we attract people towards us. Smile at someone on the street, and as a reflex, they'll smile back."

So here's an example: total stranger, don't even know who they are. You smile at them. Most people smile back. Now the ones who don't, let's face it, they just have miserable lives. And we still may have blessed them. They just didn't bless us back. Understanding that, that reflex, and putting it into practice is critical to the success of just about every negotiating skill there is to learn.

That to me, so it takes this whole vibe and energy, and goes one layer deeper into creating this temperature, this radiation of warmth, comfort. I love that he uses the word acceptance, because that is completely in line and congruent with what it is that we are trying to do in being influential with our patients, which is to get them to accept the state of the reality of their mouth, their problem, not ours. And number two, accept what the pathway is to get to health, and then three, accept the investment it's going to take once and for all to get them back to that state. And so it's a beautiful way for the author to advance the original concept and start to turn it into something else. Maegen, what do you say to that?

Maegen: It's funny, Kevin, because as we're talking about this, I want to take a moment here to just give a little shoutout to our team members who, let's just call it, maybe that warmth and bubbiness doesn't come so naturally. Okay? We'll call it that, and that's okay. Because everyone's got a different personality, and we need them all. So I want to give a tool, a very tactical tool for people that maybe your energy level isn't as high, and you just don't have as much to give, and how you can still tap into this concept of the what temperature are you radiating? Because there's another temperature that's very effective with patients, and that is when you have confidence in what you do, in how this is going to help them, and belief in the treatment, belief in the doctors.

And we radiate that confidence in a very calm way. Very calm doesn't have to be super cheerleader or anything like that, but we're very solid in it. And when we talk to our patients, they can feel that. They can feel that you're telling them from a supportive way and you can even get away with being quite directive when you tell patients. "Hey patient, if I were you, this is what I would do and this is why." It doesn't have to be super bubbly, but we're still helping them. We're still supporting them. So when you think about what temperature am I radiating? It's only when we back off from our patients and we give in too quickly to their hesitation that we fail them. So when you're thinking of how can you increase the temperature that you're radiating, bringing out this warmth, if that doesn't come so naturally, I want to share this quick story that I think might help for people, again, to get that idea. A little bit off of dentistry, but I'll bring it back. As Kevin always says, we always bring it back.

So real quick, one of my oldest friends got married this weekend. And so I was really excited to celebrate with her. And I decided I would go to Sephora to get some new makeup for the wedding. So those of you that know Sephora, it can be a little overwhelming when you walk in. Okay? There's a lot of options

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Maegen:

over there. So I didn't really know what I was looking for. There was one thing I had an idea about, but I happened just by chance and luck, to find a person that worked there.

And this lovely lady was so calm. She was just so relaxed when she approached me. I would not call her bubbly, but she knew what she was doing. She was an expert in what she did. So when I told her what I was looking for, she walked me specifically to personalized matches. She explained to me why she thought it would be good for me and customized it to the things I was telling her. And when I thought what I was going to walk in and buy maybe one thing, I left with three, four products that really suited me, things I didn't even know to ask for, but I trusted her. I trusted her because she was really calm, and she was very supportive, and she was listening to what I was saying. She was using what I was looking for back at me and explaining why the product she was recommending would solve my problem.

Okay, does that sound like dentistry? It's the exact same thing. So we want to start to think about this idea, when we're talking about what temperature are we radiating. Are we giving our patients this attention where they feel like they can really trust us and they believe what we're saying? There's different ways we can approach this. It doesn't always have to be that stereotype. But really challenge yourselves. Just go a temperature up, really connect with the patient, really help them feel that we care about them by giving them that kind direction and being bold to push back on some of the things that they're saying to keep encouraging them. So Kevin, I'll give it back to you there, but hopefully that example came back to dentistry, and we can see the similarities of how we can continue to help and influence patients.

Kevin:

Listen, it was a wonderful example, and I believe some of the most powerful examples you can give are when we do step out of everything that we do on a day to day basis, because it becomes relatable in a different way. And that's one of the things I encourage people to do all the time is, when you're out and you're shopping or whatever you're doing, just pay attention and really be a student of how do people connect or how are they not connecting? How is this a wonderful shopping experience versus this one? And it can be for anything. It could be for a little gadget. It could be for something expensive. It doesn't matter. It's about how does somebody make you feel all along the way and build you up so that you have the confidence and belief that what you are going to spend your hard earned money on is going to be the solution to whatever it is that you want, need, or desire is.

And that's why it's so fun to be able to go outside of dentistry, and why I use a lot of examples that way, and Maegen does too. And then we encourage you guys to use these analogies that go outside of dentistry, because that's where people can make these connections. And it all starts to make sense. And Maegen, what I loved is how you just continued to expand upon the author's vision with regards to what this whole the temperature is, because you're right, there's probably 52 different temperatures that work. It's just a matter of how you effectively create an atmosphere where people are at ease, they're

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Kevin:

open-minded, they're willing to listen, and they believe that you've got their best interest at mind.

That's why we use all the time, which is the most basic of examples that there is, is think of somebody who you love and adore. And you're sitting next to them at a coffee shop, having a cup of coffee, somewhere having a glass of wine, whatever it is that you just feel super relaxed, super comfortable. And you are about to share some of those most monumental words of wisdom you've ever had in your life that could change this person's life. And that's the same kind of atmosphere that you want to create when you're with patients, because that's the kind of stuff that matters, that connectedness. And it's interesting because Maegen, as you were saying about how the lady was calm, she had you put at ease, and actually expanded your mind with regards to some things that could help you and you ended up buying more than you thought, is that dovetails into the author's third point, which is the most powerful communication tool is our voice.

And so he says, "That's why the most powerful tool in any verbal communication is your voice. You can use your voice to intentionally reach into someone's brain and flip an emotional switch: distrusting to trusting, nervous to calm." Holy smokes, like if that doesn't talk about dentistry, I don't know what does. "In an instant, the switch will flip, just like that, with the right delivery.

And then the author goes on to talk about there's certain voice styles specific to the negotiating world, so he says most of the time you should use what he calls this, "positive, playful voice." And the author states that there's three different ones that are available to negotiators that are really effective: this late night DJ voice that's smooth and deep, and calm, and whatever the case is going to be. And then this positive playful, and then a direct and assertive voice, when sometimes patients need that too, right? It's like when it's time, they're giving you grief. And then you just got to take over and say, "You know what, Mrs. Smith? The reason we're telling you this is because it's the truth. You deserve it. And without it, this is going to get a whole lot worse." There's just these really beautiful moments that when we identify them and time them right, and know when to make an adjustment to our approach, can just be super, super powerful.

So anyways, the author goes on and he says, this positive playful voice, "It's the voice of an easygoing, good natured person. Your attitude is light and encouraging. The key is to relax and smile, smile, while you're talking. A smile, even while talking on the phone has an impact tonally that the other person will pick up on." This is so funny because we always joke about, "Hey, before you pick up the phone, smile," and I know a lot of people think that's really cheesy. It makes a huge difference. I promise you this.

When someone picks up the phone when I'm calling them, I guarantee you, I know what their facial feature looks like. It's so clear to me: the difference in their tone, energy, the whole deal as to whether or not they're smiling, something so simple. Here again, what could you do 30 seconds after listening

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Kevin:

to this? "I'm going to make a concerted effort that before I even open up my mouth, I'm going to put a little smile on my face, and I'm going to radiate some warmth and brightness. And I am going to connect with a patient more than I've ever connected before in my entire life." You just think of that vision and think of what it is.

And then the final point the author makes, and this is what's so important and why, and why, the voice, this concept of smiling, having this positive vibe and energy, see how it's all connected here? He says, "When people are in a positive frame of mind, they think more quickly and are more likely to collaborate and problem solve instead of fight and resist. It applies to the smile-er as much as the smile-ee. A smile on your face and in your voice will increase your own mental agility." So everybody wins when you take the time to get yourself composed. For some of us, it'll be a little theater because it's just not our natural way, but to do it where we're creating the right atmosphere because this author's last point is huge.

I hear all the time frustrated, "I couldn't get a patient to say yes. They just didn't want to make a decision." Well, did we create the right atmosphere for them to do that? Did we use the right words? How was our tone of voice? How connected were we? Were we the ones that blocked the patient from saying yes? Did we create doubt somewhere? Listen, this isn't meant to be a judgment. It's just meant to do high level things, which is all of you are, you're champions. We tell you this over and over and over again, because you are, and this is what champions do. They say, "Man, what are the little things that can make a huge, huge difference?" So Maegen, what say you on this topic?

Maegen:

It reminds me of this tactical tool, which I know you've talked about a lot, and I think Scott and myself probably have as well, but this concept of positive expectancy. Assuming it's going to work out, assuming that it's all good and that we're going to project ourselves to the future and where it looks good, helping our patients see that, helping them see what they're going to get. This is all part of that training of our voice.

So Kevin made a good point there, and I don't want to gloss over it. It's an important thing of what he just said of, "It's a little bit of theater." And theater isn't bad. Theater is called training our voice. It's called being a professional. We're doing it all the time. Kevin and I are trying to get better with our voice. We're working on it as well. So there's no shame in that. There's no shame in trying to figure out how we can speak in ways that are going to be more influential. In fact, that's actually something to be really proud of. And our patients appreciate it too, because we're helping them get healthier when we help influence them. So this is something really special, this idea of training your voice, really using that tool and helping our patients see the future.

So going back to this idea of positive expectancy, what does that mean? That means we start training our voice to speak in a way, assuming they're already going to do it. So talk as if it's done. "Once you get the appliance, you're going to enjoy restful sleep." "Once we get your mouth restored, it's going to be wonderful to be eating steak with your family, like you told us that you

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Maegen:

really miss.” We help them see these things. We help remind them what it’s going to feel like in the future. That’s positive expectancy, projecting to the outcomes. So really train our voice to bring that into the conversation. It’s going to be incredible to be able to help them see that part. When they get really fixated on what they have to give up now. What’s the sacrifice now? This positive expectancy helps.

And the other thing I want to add real quick, going back to that Sephora example, but I want to show you, I’ll bring it back. But the thing I really appreciated that she did was she showed me her favorite product. And she showed me for example, what it looked like on her. And then she showed me what my match would be. So this was really helpful, because it developed trust. I believed her when she was showing me what she enjoyed and what she enjoyed about it, so I could see for myself, and then helping me customize it to me. So think about this in dentistry, and I know a lot of you do this, where using your own testimonial. Talk about why you’re happy you got the work done. Talk about why your patients are happy when they move forward and what it sounds like and some of the feedback that you’re getting from them.

These are the things that really help our patients, again, start to think about this from an encouraging place. So that’s what I want to talk about is customize it. Keep tying things back to things your patients are telling you are important. If they tell you saving money is important, “Great, let’s do the treatment. It’s going to save you money in the long run.” They tell you that they’re really busy, “Great. Let’s bundle your appointments. Let’s save you a visit. We don’t want you to have to come in twice.” So let’s start using and thinking creatively, how can we use this positive expectancy and tie it back to the patient, customize it back to the patient. Kevin, back to you.

Kevin:

Such a great point, Maegen. And I love it. It reminds me of the concept of, “expect to win.” We want to win every day. Well, how do we do that? We expect to win. We go into it with the attitude that we are going to make it happen. And so I love that you brought that point in. It supports everything so well. And it’s interesting because if you take a step back, it’s all about us managing our own minds, because we’ve got to believe it. We’ve got to be excited about it, all those things. It starts with us. And that’s really the last point. And I’m just going to tease this one, because we’re running out of time here. This topic’s so important, I’m actually writing about it for my message tomorrow, and I’m going to add one more point in my message tomorrow. So if you don’t usually do it, here’s your opportunity to read Kevin’s message of the week. Okay? And if you’re listening to this after, which a lot of people do, of course, it’s going to be the Thursday, May 12th message.

And the concept is very simple: what you give is what you get. So depending on how much effort you want to put into it is how much effort you’re going to get back from the person you’re having the conversation with. How much warmth you’re putting in, how much warmth you’re putting back. How much excitement you’re putting out, how much excitement you’re getting back. It’s a very simple concept, yet super powerful.

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Kevin: **And so look for it tomorrow in your email box with my message. In the negotiating world, they call it mirroring, very different than what most people think it is. So that's my tease for that.**

**Maegen, I'm going to give you a chance here for final thoughts. Thanks for being here today. Powerful conversation as always.**

Maegen: **It was a good one, Kevin. Lots of tactical tips. So share it with us, let us know what you try. We always love to hear your feedback, and we're proud of you for continuing to hone your craft. We really see it that way ourselves, and we know you do too. So thank you for taking it seriously, and we know this will help with your influence. So keep in touch, and until the next one, thank you for listening.**

Kevin: **Maegen, thanks for being with us and exuding your brilliance. That's why you are the mighty Maegen. Everybody, thanks for being on the call with us and listening in. It's been another edition of the Practice Profit Accelerator call. Until next time, let's go get them, everybody. We'll talk soon.**