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Deciding Your Future and Recognizing Victories

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- Kevin: Good day and welcome to the latest edition of The Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator podcast...the one and only, Scott Manning, welcome to the show!
- Scott: Kevin, happy to be here and excited to kick off the fourth quarter and this very fun month of October and moving into fall for so many, well, for everybody. Some feels like fall and some doesn't. And yeah, let's see what happens. We got a very...what do you call that? I don't know, sentimental topic today, so let's see what we can do.
- Kevin: Sounds good. Well, my friend, today, I want to spend a little bit of time on our podcast here discussing a topic we covered with all of our doctors and their spouses and significant others who came with them at this year's retreat, which we held in San Antonio, Texas. And the topic is based in having a clear understanding of what I'm breaking out into three things. First, future is decided by honoring the past, reflection, and acknowledging the present, what I like to say, "keen awareness," which gives the platform to create a clear vision for defining and designing, key word, just designing our victories.
- Secondly, recognizing what a victory is, and equally important, number three, recognizing what a victory is not! And here is a specific quote that you used in the retreat guide that we created for everybody. And here it goes, and then I'm going to turn it over to you. "But before the future is decided, the past must be honored, the present acknowledged, and then and only then will you see clearly to the victories you will be most compelled and called to fight."
- So Scott, if you would, take it away by expanding on the foundation that I just built for everyone listening here, because this was, in my opinion, a breakthrough moment early, early on day one for so many at the retreat.
- Scott: Well, yeah, look, I mean, thanks for saying that. Happy that you feel that way and that people got something out of it. I just say, Kevin, it's all about nuances, because people live in the past and they say history repeats itself. Well, there's no reason, obviously, unfortunately, they have a lot to say about that today, obviously. We say, "Why is it?" Well, it's because most people, they're always in limbo. They're always searching for greener grass, but because they blindly fly towards some illusion of a future betterment, they forget about the things that led them to where they are. And I guess what I love about how you tweaked this, and I think made it better than what I said, and you referenced it actually in your brilliantly, "help everyone respond optimistically" hero speech, is that it doesn't matter whether the past is good or bad, better or worse, happy or sad.
- It doesn't matter if it was victories beyond belief or a dismal failure of things we'd like to forget, that everything can be teaching moments, everything can be learned from. And if in fact we don't and it's not really held sacred, well, then we constantly are building this linear path of the same mistakes, the same detours, the same limiting beliefs and preconceived notions of which most of all were, as they say, false evidence appearing real fear anyways.

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Scott:

So the quote is really about...and I'll just start in the middle, but state of reality, let's not kid ourselves, here's where we're at. It's a great place, or we're a little bit challenged right now, but it's all relative. Present success is relative to whatever we said in the past we wanted to achieve. And then it's also relative to, well, now that we've arrived here, we can envision something different for the future.

Perhaps it doesn't have to be, again, these labels of emotion, better or worse, happy or sad, good or bad. These are all just the weather. The weather. Why does it have to be that? Can it just be different? Can we just evolve? And the only way to do that is learning from the past. So I guess what I would just say to you is...well, by the way, this has direct application to how we transform patients' health. But it's really a matter of are we running away from the past, or are we running towards our future? At the same time, are we honoring learning, reflecting on carrying with us the principles and lessons of the past, but using those things as tools, as building blocks, as leverage points to then be able to build on where we are to create a better future?

And that to me, you have to do it all. You cannot just say, well, this is the whole New Year's thing. That's New Year's resolution! Well, the first thing you ought to be doing is you ought to be taking last year's resolution and then comparing where you are on December 31st and then rubbing those two baby's together like sandpaper and then saying, "Okay, now what?" Most people are just happy with the new list. There's no merit, there's no integrity, there's no accountability to, well, what was the list in the first place? And this is human nature, this is history, this is civilization. And not to get too deep on everybody, and I say you must make the decision to be enlightened by the past, to use it as an asset, not a liability. And then at the same time, not stay stuck in it. Then, to challenge the status quo, to break down the barriers that you build around you, the baggage, release the baggage of the past because you also gain that.

So you have to figure out what we're going to run through the garbage disposal and what we're going to keep out and use. And that only comes from this, as Kevin would say, "moment of pause," to sort of look at everything holistically. So I would say that's what I want to say. And the other thing, Kevin, and what makes this so vital, is this is the living of the definition of insanity. And it's no different than patients. We let patients stay as they were because we're basing it on what has been said, talked about, done, denied in the past, instead of saying, "Okay, here's what we tried, here's where we were, but now we're talking about something brand new and fresh." And this is really about reimagining the future by learning from and leveraging and I said, "honor," in the quote, the past. Most people, Kevin, they're trying to win next year's battles based on last year's goals. What the fuck? That's just stupid.

So it really should be the reverse. Next year's goals, learning from last year's battles. And that's why people just constantly ram their head against the wall or they get arrogant. It's either one. The most successful people are constantly frustrated. The fly-by-night, once-in-a-while successful people are constantly arrogant.

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Scott: And so the only way to do this is to go back to our beautiful words: hungry, humble, the book says smart, we say hustle. And this rinse and repeat, well, we say that all the time, but really you got to understand is rinse and repeat the behaviors, the principles, the actions, but the core, the subject matter, the goals, the journey probably ought to change a little bit, but I'll let you do something with that mess.

Kevin: I got to tell you, Scott, there is so much that has come from that. I'm feverishly writing notes, which I do every time we do one of these. And so I'm just going to pick a few. I'm going to go back to the statement where you had said, and everybody says history will repeat itself. I forget the exact quote on it. People love to have these little catchy little quotes and they sound all nice and somebody said them to be sounding smart, or whatever the case is. What I say to it is, history is bound to repeat itself if we're not actively involved in influencing a new, different, positive direction. If we're trying to avoid mistakes of the past, it's the active participation part of it that's important, which is why reflecting on history, not obsessing over it, staying mired in it, is so important because we have to go back and say, "Okay, this happened. These are the things we did where it happened. I don't want that happen again, so I got to make sure I'm not doing those things." So it's active participation, which you could apply really to anything.

The other thing that's really interesting is as you were describing the future and things of the nature, I said it a little bit differently than you during my presentation, where I had said this: "Your past will prove your future and your future will prove your past." And the reason that I point this out is because it's what we are doing to prepare for what we're going to do that will give us the fighting chance to actually achieve the outcome that we are defining, in this case, that's why we talk about victories, defining clarity, designing, example. I was in a conversation here actually I think it was today, where a doctor and associates were reflecting past because the associates were like, "Whoa, we're not really farther ahead than we were last year. In fact, we may be trending the wrong way."

Well, guess what? Past is proving future. You want to know why? Because they're not tracking what's the most important number you start with? Diagnosis! Right? And so man, it's just crazy because the future is proving the past because these two particular associates have simply avoided expanding their philosophy of diagnosis. And so guess what? You're going to continue to repeat what you've done for the past however many years if you're not actively participating in creating the momentum towards a different future outcome: past proves future, future proves past.

And so I just had to share that because it is so spot on of an example about how we're not defining clearly enough what a victory is, which is what we're going to get into next here. And then definitely not defining the pathway to get there differently than we have in the past. And so we had a little bit of fun with that conversation today and that came up with game plan to maybe create some new direction, new awareness, new clarity with regards to how we can positively influence with active participation, new future results.

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Kevin: So Scott, if you don't mind man, let's dive into what a victory is because you have a wonderful list that I actually reflected on on my flight home because this was something that just spoke to me and that I heard of others telling me about too at the retreat. And so let's transition into that.

Scott: Well, Kevin, this deal could be individual. I mean, every team member could apply this. Maybe more than anything, this applies to your health, your marriage, your relationship with your children, yourself, your obvious team collaboration, your engagement with patients. But since today the theme is what it is. We look at the practice as a whole. Okay?

So I think that victory must...first of all, I want to stick with this theme. The easiest thing to do is say, we have to acknowledge here's where we were, or here's who we were. Here's who we are today. Here's where we've arrived, here's how far we've come. We incorporated our procedures. We expanded to complete health. We chopped our hours and consolidated our schedule. We added associates, whatever. Our success factor used to be one hundred thousand, now it's two hundred thousand. It doesn't matter. Just here's where we were, here's who we are, here's where we are.

And now from there we have to say, "Okay, forward, forward march, victory would be defined as..." Now I can make general comments. Most of the time practices would come to us to say they want more complete health dentistry. They want fewer patients per day, less stress, right? We want more profitability, more ability to share and grow team careers and bonuses. We believe victory is: work smarter, not harder defined by leave on time, reduce hours, less dependency on new patients. On our specialty modalities of care and practices, bottom line is top 20%. We want our referrals not to just grow, but to be better quality, conversion to increase, case value to go up. So it doesn't matter if all that is perfect today, it's perfect based on what you used to see as success. That's why I define everything as state of ideal based on today, okay, what is the future state of ideal?

And even if it were more of the same, then we can still take the lessons we've learned to double down the discipline to maintain more of the same: less waste, less frustration, less going through the motions, less...I'm careful to say the word effort, okay? But less volume needed, less effort, volume of effort needed to achieve same goal. So it could be same goal done in a smarter way. So the point is, this victory has to be tangible. So I'm going to give you a little inside thing here. Kevin doesn't know this. I'm working on a brand new for 20 ..I wish it was a 2022 because it rhymes, but brand new for 2024, I'll have to figure something rhymes with four. Something for 2024 that is basically like the pinnacle of every principle. That's my theme. What is the pinnacle of every principle such as morning huddle, pinnacle, boom, here it is, such as treatment, planning, prepay, whatever, diagnosis, pinnacle.

So this is completely brand new. I never even told you about this before. And the point is, one of my little tips here is this: we must know what is the key metric, the one single number, based on every position, it's different. It's different, okay? Every position. Kevin of course knows the master number is

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Scott:

diagnosis because it tells us really whether we're true with our patients or not. But if every person knows the key number, that's past, right? We're learning from the past, but it also could be a future indicating number. The second one is what is the move the needle priority? What is the key thing that we must do, engaging with humans, with patients? What is the thing that moves us forward? And then the last concept is now, what are the actions that now do these things? What are the actions that will result in the manifestation or the realization of the priority? And then make that number that we are focusing on different, improve, right? Everything's a catalyst.

Now, that's a big long story, but the point is that you have to define victory in tangible form. It can't be, "We want to be happier, we want less stressful days." All right, all that sounds great if it were a warm, fuzzy blanket, but we have to boil this down into specifics. And so whatever that is, and we got a long list we'll never make it through, but the idea first of all is what is a victory for who we are in our clinical identity? What is the victory for the standard that we're no longer going to accept beneath? So every doctor says, "I want to do fewer fillings." Okay, well, you are kind of the one that determines whether we do more fillings or not, more fillings or less fillings. So if you want to do less, then well, okay, and well, what if the patient only needs...somebody else can do it!

There's really no rules except for the rules that we put up on ourselves. And I would change the word limits. There's no limits other than the limits we put on ourselves. There's no restrictions other than the restrictions we put up on ourselves. So you have to recognize and redefine victory so that you have a path forward. It's like the patient. What is the first thing that we do? We reprogram what health is. In the past, health has been: maintain, be cavity-free. This is not health. That is the lowest common denominator of what I can get by with. We are redefining health so that we can lay out a path to a greater victory. And Kevin's got a lot of other cool things here that we can talk about.

We have summarized this based on what does better look like. If you've got nothing else to go off of, just say a victory for us: what does better look like in our morning huddles, in our days, in our new patients, in our treatment planning, in our diagnosis, in our case acceptance, in our team communication, in our end of the day closes, in our bonuses, our collections, our value-based scheduling? You can just apply better, like I said, sandpaper, rub it up against all of the above. Now, I may have just taken that to a totally different place, Kevin, but I'll let you bring us back home to center.

Kevin:

Yeah, I love it. Well, I don't know. You continue to just fire me up here. And one of the things that you said early on, and you specifically used the word "fight," because you're right...for those who are...man, they're in a groove and things are going well, and your targets are on point and things of that nature, you know what battle we have to fight? We have to fight complacency. We have to fight retraction. We have to fight negative contentment that everything's fine, everything's meh. We go back into taking things for granted that they will just always be this way without supplying, actively, energy to it. And being aware

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Kevin:

that even maybe the slightest little tweak in scheduling, the slightest little tweak in conversation given circumstances of the world or whatever the case is, that will keep you headed in the right direction. Because otherwise, we are then bound to repeat history, which is, we're going to go backwards rather than maintain or go forwards because we're not paying attention. And we're not actively participating in giving ourselves the greatest possibility of predicting the future outcomes.

And so I just wanted to say that because you're right, it's not always about more and bigger and better and all those kinds of things. It's just, man, how do we keep hitting these numbers? Well, how do we keep hitting these numbers with a half of a less day working, or not seeing as many patients, or whatever the case is going to be? That's why we're talking about designing is reality on this deal. And as you start talking about tangible, Scott, I could come up with a million different examples here, but here's something: I like the concept of how can everybody at each stage of the patient experience, given the role that you're in, have just one thing that you believe if you did with every patient, every day, every week, every month, all year long, would give you the opportunity at the greatest chance for the successful outcome?

If I'm a hygienist, I'm going to show every patient the mess that's in their mouth, no matter to what degree it is. Photos, scans, x-rays, the whole deal. And I don't care if I'm running behind on a patient—whatever—they're going to get them. I mean that's the one step I'm not going to miss, because that proof is what gets a patient to say, "Holy smokes, that's what my mouth looks like? What are we going to do about it?" If I'm an assistant, if I'm a doctor, if all of us just took that time to clearly define how to tangibly check...end of the day, I had 16 patients today, did I do X with all 16 patients? Yeah. All right, chalk it off, we're heading in the right direction, I'm actively participating in my future! So friends, we could go deep into that. And for any of you who I have calls with in the future who've listened to this, and really this is striking a chord, let's talk about it.

Let's dial this thing in so that you can feel good about your participation. You can feel good about having a say in what is going to happen next week, a month from now, next year, the whole thing, because it's just a continuation of what we're doing and making slight adjustments along the way. It's really a beautiful process if you just keep it that way. If you keep it connected and stop so many of the starts and stops, start, stop, start, stop! It's so hard to work that way. And it's definitely almost impossible to create good momentum, just like with referrals. But you can't just ask for a referral today and hope it shows up tomorrow. You got to ask for a referral, every patient, every day, all day long, all week, all month, all year in order to create a constant flow of referral-based patients over and over and over again for the rest of eternity. It's how I built my mortgage practice, it's why it was so successful, is because I never stopped asking. Scott, I'm going to turn it back over to you.

Scott:

I mean, listen, I just think it's just amazing. Okay? And I think that Kevin, this is something that we can really push on going forward. And what, I guess the big takeaway theme that I have here for everybody listening, is build this

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Scott:

conversation into your routine. It is bookend morning and end of day, huddle. But that's not really...the depth of what we're talking about, should be an individualized, personal action plan that you'd go on as yourself at the end of this year. It should be a practice: twelve month reflection, twelve month vision, and more clarity for deeper into the years ahead. And then finally, it should really probably be a quarterly thing. And the more you can take this message and lessons from today, and you can set it up for a quarterly discipline structure, and you can identify, here's what we've learned from the quarter, here's where we are, and here's what we would like to see as victories ninety days from now.

But right now you can do end of December, by January, 4th quarter. And then if you do it properly with the big picture crystal ball for the annual situation, then you can calibrate quarter by quarter and you can have a halftime, right? You can have a six month, and you can see. So I just think, Kevin, it needs to be embraced, embodied, it needs to be built in. And this is a great thing. And of course, we're here to help. We're here to help, but nobody can give you your victory. That's the key. Okay? People can help you. We can expand your minds, we can show you what's possible, same with patients, but you have to help people set and take responsibility for their own victory. The more you do that, the more victories you're going to rack up.

So I'm going to sign off and let Kevin close you out, and thank you again, Kevin. It's great stuff. And we can run this thing right through the end of the year.

Kevin:

Yeah, I love it, Scott, and thanks for that. And my final comment here that I want to make sure everybody heard, because maybe you didn't make the connection here. Each and every person in the practice has the ability to influence the future outcomes that you all want to achieve. That is so important to remember. Each of you can take ownership of your decisions, your actions, your responsibilities of the greater team initiative. And if everyone does, holy smokes, we don't ever have to worry again. We know we're going to hit our numbers. We know we're going to take care of patients. We know, we know, we know, because we're actively participating.

And so that to me is a big deal, is if everybody dives in and owns this...talk about a connected team experience, forget about it...you'll do more than any other team on the planet just by doing that alone. And love Scott's idea of turning this into a more formal quarterly review and something of celebration and of excitement to make the adjustment out of reflecting on all the good that's happened in the past.

Friends, thanks for being with us again on another great addition of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator podcast. Until next month, let's go get them and actively participate in what the future is going to look like. We'll talk to you again in a month.