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**Podcast**

# PPA Podcast

**April 10, 2024**

**Spring Cleaning**

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The Practice Profit Accelerator 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 episode of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator Podcast. The one, the only, Mr. Scott Manning. Welcome to the show, my friend.

Scott: Thank you, Kevin. Welcome everybody. And yeah, we're looking forward to this and just keeping, building the momentum. We don't always like to date these things, but there's the kickoff the second quarter, and we have hopefully a lot of great things to report. We've been seeing some beautiful record-pacing quarters, blowout months. I had a lot of people, it was funny, Kevin, we saw so many record months in February, and you think most people, they start February and they think, "Oh, well it's a short month, so we're going to do a shitty job." But this year, because they had a bonus day, they changed their mindset and they said, "Well, we have a bonus day, we're going to have the best month." So it was crazy to see the high scores in a month that most people write off because they think they lose days.

Kevin: Yeah, it's exciting. What I love about kicking off the year and doing it in a way with intention where we're like, "Okay, great year last year, how are we going to better our best?" And then you come out with that momentum and you do good things in January, or February, or both, or all three. I just spoke with a practice earlier today who said, "Yeah, we just compared numbers from last year specifically." We were with a hygiene department. I was with a hygiene department today, and they said, "Hey, we're better than we were last year. And guess what? We've still got opportunities!" And so it was a wonderful, spirited conversation about celebrating the momentum created, the forward motion that was created, yet still saying, "Man, there's still more." In a good way! We talk about we're not out here looking for problems, we're here looking for opportunities, leverage points, the whole deal, which leads very nicely into the theme for our podcast today, which is, well, let's face it's that time of the year and we all could benefit from a little bit of Spring Cleaning! Mr. Scott Manning.

And I love when you get into your writings around this time of the year because this is an important concept to apply in life. What needs to be better organized? What needs decluttering? What needs to be freshened up? What needs to be thrown out, never to be seen again? And this exercise, I'm not talking about the house, although let's face it, your physical surroundings I'm certain could use a little sprucing up, a decluttering, whatever. But this exercise can really benefit in all the areas of our personal life and then professionally in the four walls of our practice: from mindset to systems, priorities, the options, as you are well aware, are endless. So let's get started. Take it away, my friend.

Scott: Kevin, listen, I love that you drew out this topical idea related to what should be on everybody's mind for the Spring. But I also think that what frustrates me sometimes is that people, they talk a good game, but they really just go through the motions. They get caught up in the daily routines and we're human. Human nature is to, water seeks the lowest level. And I believe that this point that you're making, this thing you're bringing up is really like a take in inventory. It's like state of the current status quo. And I think some people,

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Scott:

they give themselves maybe credit where it's not deserved and everything... Push pause in your life, in your practice, in your day right now. And it's just status quo, by the definition, that's what it's. So if we said, where we are in this moment in time is right now is status quo.

So we say, "Okay, what can we learn from taking an inventory?" And first of all, you might say, "Where have we let clutter creep in, to schedule? Where have we let clutter creep in, hell, even to patient experiences? Where have we let clutter creep in?" I could use a different word, Kevin, for the spring cleaning, the dust and the cobwebs, I don't know if there's the dust or the cobwebs after wintertime, but we have to say, "Where have we let insurance creep in?" So we could just go on a Spring Cleaning of verbiage and we could do that by itself. So I always start with schedule because that's the typical. But then we go to experience or system, but then we go to verbiage and communication. We could go to sprucing up the triangles of trust. There's no place that this ability to apply clean up. Okay?

You see, when you drive down the roads, you have all the volunteers having to keep the highways clean. All right. Sometimes you used to see in the old days you see the juveniles or you see the people in the chains picking up along the roads. But the point is, just by the nature of busyness, shit gets left laying around. And what happens is that we get distracted by the noise, by life, by different things. And we lose sight of what ultimately was the purpose to begin with. And I might even throw out that concept of, "forest and the trees." So I would say Spring Cleaning is really about restoring order. It is about refining focus. It is about cleaning out the things that are in the way of progress. And so that's to me what I would love to have. And I gave some tactical or tangible things to grab onto in schedule, experience, communication, verbiage, systems, triangles.

But you know, Kevin, it really begins with making sure on a daily basis. If you do it once a year, if you do it one season a year, you're going to be screwed. It's not like the garage; it takes a year to get dirty and to get cluttered again like a junk drawer. This is about the mind, gets cluttered on a daily basis, so you have to Spring Clean. And that's what is supposed to happen with the morning huddle is we're looking fresh eyes on the day. Then at the end of day huddle, we are cleaning up the day so that every day is refreshed and new. And I realize I don't want to distract our topic here down into one singular daily discipline of cleaning out the mind, but really this podcast should be a, "grab people by the shoulders should shake the shit out of their heads."

This podcast should be maybe even taking hands behind the head and slam it into the wall a couple of times and just saying, "Hey, let's not let life get the best of us. Let's give life the best we got, and let's make sure that we're not getting caught up in the 90-day busyness and motions and monotones and/or everybody can make excuse." Every person that's breathing life is throwing beautiful things, and also maybe some shitty things, at you, every person that's breathing. And so we have to say, "Which ones are we letting get our attention? The beautiful or the maybe not so great? And how is that then affecting our mood, our attitude, our priorities, our actions?" Kevin?

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Kevin:

Oh my gosh, Scott, I could go with this, excuse me, in so many ways. I'm going to hone in on the two words you said there: "mind clutter." And where I'm going to go with this is not so much in the obvious, which is a lot of things going on. We've got to flush them out in order to have clarity and be able to see more clearly, have more discernment. All that stuff is very obvious. What's interesting about your comment in the context that you were bringing it is when our mind gets cluttered, what do we do? We go back to the easiest point that we can recall and remember, where we basically act like a robot. We just do what we used to do. We do what was easy. We do what is less stressful. We do what (fill in the blank). And so one of the most challenging things when there is mind clutter and we got to do a little spring-cleaning there, is that we revert back to ways that weren't serving us well, which then creates future problems.

We dealt with them, got rid of them, now they're back. And it's because could be we've gotten a little lazy, it could be we've just gotten a little sloppy. Who knows? And I'll give an example. When I was in this conversation today in our little hygiene meeting that we were having, they gave credit, they're like, "Listen, we were out of the gates, we were crushing it." Yet they were feeling as we crept up towards the end of the quarter, that we are, "Getting a little too loosey-goosey, maybe some things were distracting, in the way." And so what we did today, so interesting because today's topic, is we started to clear the deck. And one of the things that I encourage people to do as we go through this Spring Cleaning thing is to say to yourself, "How can I create simplicity so that it's easier to..." and then fill in the blank: easier to live, easier to have conversation, easier to work, whatever. And simple to me also equates to organized, cleanliness, preparation, planning, all of this.

And one of the most interesting things about this conversation, because we covered a lot of ground as we were trying to simplify things, again, declutter, is that it all came down to if we made a greater commitment to planning and preparation in the mornings, everybody agreed, nodding heads, raising hands, that our days would be better. We'd be able to execute more efficiently and effectively. We would be able to have more capacity to focus on the commitments that we've made that we know. We know it! We know that they're going to result in good things, it just takes effort. It takes the capacity to be able to execute on something that's different and new or adjusted or whatever the case is going to be. And so as much as I could go in a lot of different ways, I really feel like viewing "mind clutter" in a more advanced and broad way than the obvious could lead to some aha moments. What do you say to that, Scott?

Scott:

Well, listen, Kevin, you always give the most and best example from team discussion and from high-level, prioritized thoughts that you come from your mind. So clutter in the mind, I would just shift in the time we have and build upon what Kevin is expressing. And I like to do it every quarter, quite frankly, but I'm just going to throw out as quick as I can and give Kevin time to really work his, "Kowalke Magic" as we call it. But so every quarter, this is a perfect thing to apply with the Spring Cleaning. And so I'm going to give you a two sides to the same coin.

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Scott:

Number one, I would go practice-wide, what are top three objectives for the next 90 days? What are the things that need to be cleaned up, tightened up, consistent, made more consistent, leveled up, et cetera, et cetera?

What do we find? I wouldn't even go as far as say, gaping holes. Okay. And then we say practice-wide and everybody can open up. This is no controversy here. This is not criticizing people. This is everybody, open-minded. If you're dropping balls, like if I were on a team and I'm dropping balls and for some reason I'm oblivious to it, I want somebody smack me around saying, "Hey, quit dropping the goddam ball!" Okay, I want somebody to tell me because I care about being the best team member I can be. So practice-wide, top three priorities for the next 90 days, boom. Then I would break it down departmentally, and I'm on a roll with this because we've been doing our virtual kickoffs for our brand new wonderfully loving DST family members coming into the fold. So I do this every time with brand new virtual kickoffs.

So number two is departmentally, okay, what are the things keeping with Spring Cleaning theme, that we need to say, "What hasn't been fully implemented or what's half-baked? What needs to be adjusted? We've been talking about it for a while, but we haven't fully integrated or implemented it. What is something that we could make sure that we could departmentally elevate our gain within each area?" So it could be fresh eyes on patients and hygiene, and what does it mean to upgrade the new patient? Okay, what does it mean...excuse me, not a new patient, existing patient. What does it mean on the operative side that we want to incorporate a new piece of technology, take that Spring Cleaning into the visit. What's something on the business side or the insurance side where we have let the clutter creep in from a business perspective? We've loosened the grip on prepay or we watered down schedule controls and other things are creeping in.

So each department could now take and organize their specific things to them that would be the not 90 days as in we wait till the 85th. I'm talking about instantly do it and it's top of mind. And these are objectives or departmental project-based concepts.

And then the third layer is as an individual. And I would give you three major moves as an individual, me, myself, and I, Spring Cleaning for me would be, number one, my contribution to the practice in my position. This is what I own, this is what I can level up. This is what I personally take ownership over to clean out. Number two, I would say for my personal self-care, what is my attitude as a whole that I know I could Spring Clean or I could...maybe it's my health or it's my routine, or it's my sleep habits or it's my this.

And then number three on my environmental, environmental head trash, like listening to dumb things in the car on the way to the office. Or maybe it's cleaning up, literally, I have stuff around me, like junk clutter, et cetera, in my bedroom, or in my car, in my closet. Maybe it's with my family time. We've let the technologies creep into the very limited windows of quality time that we have available throughout the day. So I want to broaden this into tactical execution of how you can take Kevin's principles of "mind" and "clutter" into

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Scott: daily disciplines. And then also my structure of a few examples on the practice that we can now take and make it something that's actionable as a group, as a department, as an individual. So I'll shift there, Kevin, and then I know we also maybe have a few other ideas that we can hone in on related to where we see people sometimes going off the rails, or maybe they're not as disciplined as they could be with things internally.

Kevin: Well, I'm over here writing feverishly because you covered a lot of ground! If everybody just went back, listen to the opportunities of where to look, where to seek out this clean up opportunity, you can literally just listen to this episode, like you say, Scott, once a quarter to take the inventory, the whole deal. And eventually what you'll find is that if you actually do it consistently, because I will say, I don't know of maybe but a handful of practices of teams who do this on a consistent level. And what's most interesting about that is they tend to have the less cleanup of most people. So that's why frequency, not too often, and not often enough, so you got to find that balance. That's why quarterly, I agree with you wholeheartedly.

Where I went, and I just want to add two additional opportunities to ask questions to lead you to these kind of discoveries of areas to focus on is number one, where does it feel like you are having resistance? Where does it feel like things have become complicated? That could be in systems, protocols, conversations, relationships, follow-ups, whatever it may be. So, complicated, right? Because when things become complicated, again, what do we do? We tend to ignore. We tend to go away from it. We tend to let it get worse! And one of my friends a long time ago had said, and he was a physician, and he had always said, he goes, "Kevin, you know when people will finally do things, even though you could tell them a hundred times?" I said, "Well, when is that doctor?" And he said to me, "When it finally hurts." There comes a point where it finally hurts. And now you don't have a choice.

And I talk about this because number one, going into something totally off target here is that we don't want our patients to have that be the moment that they finally take action to do things. That's why we say, "Tell them everything. Tell them the truth. Tell them when it's, 'small,' tell them that. We don't want to get to a point where it hurts because now they're going to be mad at us if we didn't do something before." Anyways, sidetrack. Sometimes I do that, but I'm back. The point of it is this, when it gets to a stage where you're not able to take action to be involved and engaged in some activity, that's when you know you've hit that point where it needs some attention and focus. And then the last, the other one where I want to just massage a little bit of what you said, Scott, is where have we become disconnected as a team? So you were going very specific. I'm going very specific here because that's another thing that can get in the way of what we do professionally, is we forget about us as team. And there's clutter that gets in the way of team relationships, team communication.

What do we have to get out of the way? What do we have to alter or change in order for us to be united and to be walking in step with each other or like synchronized swimming? We'd never make it to the Olympics if we weren't

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Kevin: doing the same thing the whole way through the routine. So how can we look at it that way? I just wanted those two questions, different ways of asking similar things that you said. I believe the combination of yours and then the two that I just said, I don't know that anybody needs much else. You could replay the last seven minutes once a quarter, and it would lead to, I believe, some really extraordinary discovery.

Scott: Well, listen, you're talking to me about maybe we should surprise the shit out of everybody and end this early. That's never happened in the history of the world, we're usually two minutes over. But at least, well look, we'll finish with some philosophy then. But I want to draw back to something that Kevin said, and then I want to tell you where the magic's at. Okay? What Kevin said is, "What's in the way?" Okay? So whatever it is we used to do or we want to do or we sometimes do, the question is, what's in the way of state of ideal? How on earth is everything we desire not happening? What excuses are we making? What busyness is allowed to creep in and distract?

And then I want to tell you something I've been adamant about lately. There is what I call, "when protocol gets in the way of progress," or you could say when somebody's "way of doing things" gets in the way of the outcome itself. And a lot of times this is with good intention. Sometimes though it's with stubborn asses. And then often though, it's just because we are not keeping the main thing, the main thing. It's like we start the morning huddle and we say, "Okay, how are we going to stack the deck for this day? Not to meet our goal. How boring is that? But to blow the shit out of our goal, to crush it." And then I go back to saying, "That's basic—basic is beat the goal." The magic, the secret sauce is in taking every human interaction and saying, "How can I make this better when it gets into my hands, when it leaves my hands, than when it arrived to me? How can I make every patient opportunity better? How can I optimize this person's health?" In this case, we're talking specifically to you.

When you become a creator and a maximizer, you never have to worry about it again! Because your mind is going to the opportunity to the positive, prosperous, abundant place, versus to the just get the protocols done, to just get through the schedule, get through the appointment. So the magic is in each one of you being honest and authentic and transparent with what you see, with what you're experiencing day-to-day. Because you know best in your role where there's something that's a little bit off, something that's not quite right, something that needs to be cleaned up or tweaked. Don't be afraid to speak up. Care so much that you don't let things fall by the wayside, that you don't let your team members or yourself settle for less.

And so the last point here is all of this, all Spring Cleaning is about, not just efficiency, not just neat and orderly, but it's about getting more of the bottom 80% out of the way of the top 20% so the top 20% has room to expand. It's about effectiveness at speeding up action and accelerating results that matter most. And you can't forget that part because Kevin writes about it every week, and matter most because not all things, A) matter, and B) matter equally.

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Scott: You have to learn to elevate and execute on what matters most. And the only way to do that, my friends, is do the Spring Cleaning, and to declutter, and then build it into your daily disciplines so that you can shorten the distance between the action and the result. So Kevin, I'll flip it back over to you. Everybody, let's make it happen.

Kevin: I love it. And although I could talk on this for far longer than anybody would appreciate, I'm going to try and boil it down to one specific question to leave you all with as you look for these opportunities, and you do your dusting, you do your decluttering, you do your organizing, planning, preparing all the things that we've gone through today, and we say this...“Whatever you're focusing on in the moment that you want to put time, attention, and energy to, identify through this question: what is the most significant piece of this particular puzzle that I'm trying to solve? Or what is the most significant piece of this component that I am trying to refine and make more effective or efficient?”

And the reason why the two words of “most significant” are important is because there may be 10 things to do in whatever it is that you're doing to better your best on. Yet, there's one thing in particular that will have the single greatest impact out of all of it. When you identify that, you can then work your way outwards, which is then going to lead you to something truly magical and special. Simplicity, friends; start there, work your way out, and don't over complicate it because you don't need it. Okay? There's brilliance in simplicity. There's magic in simplicity, and in the end, everybody can relate to it. So let's strive for that. Scott, final words, and then we're going to wrap this baby up!

Scott: Kevin, my final words, listen to Kevin. That's my final words. Go back through this, and that's what you have to do. So I just happened to turn over here and look at this quote for today. And so I want to mention...

...I'm so sorry. I don't know what the hell happened. I must have hit the wrong button. That's what happens when I was talking about finishing early, see. So I say, “You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great.” So this is not matter about making things perfect. It's not a matter of what's happened the last 90 days. It's about fresh eyes, just like we say about patients. It's about fresh eyes on yourself and your team and all your daily actions. So sorry about that, Kevin. I'll get out of the way now.

Kevin: All right, well, I'm glad you came back for that, that's a good one. Friends, thanks for being with us. Earmark this baby. Put it in an email folder, something, and let's make a commitment: pre-schedule it once a quarter! Let's go back to this. Let's find the questions that are most meaningful in this moment whenever you're listening to this deal for now and forevermore.

Friends, thank you as always for being part of these magical moments. So thanks for listening in on the latest edition of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator Podcast. Have a productive and profitable month, and we'll talk to you again soon.