

PPA Podcast

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Past, Present, Future

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Kevin: Good day everyone, and welcome to the latest edition of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator podcast. I am so excited as much as I'm going to miss my good friend Scott Manning, I am so excited to have Maegen on our show today. Maegen, how are you doing?

Maegen: Kevin, I'm so happy to be here. No kidding. Do I ever have big shoes to fill being here? I always enjoy listening to you and Scott go back and forth here, but I am excited to be here. I know we have a lot of fun together too on these, so thanks for having me.

Kevin: Yeah. Well listen, we've got Scott a little extra busy right now. Today's theme, as everybody knows, we're coming into the close of the year. Normally we don't time stamp these, but let's face it, here we are. It's December end of 2024. Clinical days are getting less and less, and so we've got all of our Santas busy. Scott's like Santa Claus, right? So we got him busy in his workshop, and so Maegen and I are here with you today. And so I'm going to set up the call everybody, because I want to have a little bit of fun today on what is a very serious topic, and it's about you, it's about us as team, and the mission that we're on. And so we're going to talk about how we can take account of everything that is going on currently, what's happened in the past, and of course we're going to put some timeframe to it, 2024, as well as what's happening here right now, and then what's going to happen in the future.

Because guess what? We all have a say in it. And I'm going to use this analogy because I've been having a lot of fun over the last couple of weeks sharing this with teams as I've been doing calls to end the year. So we, my wife and I, gave Addison...she's into Legos right now. She's into building and creativity and all this kind of stuff. It's so fun to watch and do it together with all this. So we gave her an Advent calendar, which for those of you who aren't familiar with it, it's basically a 24-day countdown to Christmas. And every day you get to open a door and behind the door is a surprise. And so Addison's been so excited. First thing she does, wakes up, boom, runs to the advent calendar, opens the door, bam, little Lego thing. And then ultimately when you get it all, you get this surprise of what the entire Lego scene is going to be. And it's just been so much fun.

And so I've been using that example with everybody, most specifically about the present because guess what? We all have opportunities still today to have an impact on what we've built from the past, what we are building as we go towards the future. It's just going to be an absolute blast here today. So Maegen, before we dive in, any thoughts, anything that you'd want to share as we get started here? And of course we'll start about reflecting on the past.

Maegen: Yeah, absolutely. Well, first of all, how exciting. Advent calendars have gotten a lot cooler since when I was a kid. That's a pretty neat update there, but I love that analogy. I think it's such a great point of really making the most, seeing the magic in every day and really looking for that opportunity. So this reflection exercise is right on time. You are patient number one. We always say that. I've heard Scott say that many times and especially at this time of year as we're about to go into the holidays, we get it. It's a lot of energy.

Maegen: There's a lot of energy needed from you at the practice. There's a lot of energy needed for you when you get home from the holidays. And so just really taking a moment to reflect and focus on you and resettle yourself as you go into this busy season. It's right on time. So appreciate you taking us through the exercise, Kevin. Let's dive right in.

Kevin: Yeah, sounds good. Okay, so the other thing that's happening is of course we're watching all these Christmas and holiday movies and all these kind of things, and Addison's been watching Disney and the one with the Scrooge, I think it's a Christmas Story or whatever the case is, and what happens to Mr. Scrooge, right? The guy who just holds onto all the money, he doesn't want to give it to anybody, and while he sees people suffering the whole deal and then he goes through this crazy experience about these ghosts who show up. The Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Future. And we're going to do the same thing today. So we begin with the ghost of the 2024 past.

And here's what I want to do, friends. One of the things that I think is so important is in any given year, we do so much. We make so many decisions, we make so many changes, we go through so many different experiences that we tend to forget to take account of it all—the good, the bad, the ugly, whatever it is—in order to be able to put that in perspective. And number one, reaffirm how much effort we actually put into doing great things, doing good things, being forces for good, as well as taking account and reminding ourselves of the good, smart changes we've made and why, as well as, "Man, were there any changes that we made in the past that we either might want to eliminate, change again, or do something with them because they ultimately did not pan out as we had hoped?"

I got a really cool story. A number of years back, we had one of our specialists who, they got together for a team meeting in January, so the month after the end of the year here. And I was working with the office manager and I said, "Hey, one of the cool things would be is ask all the team members to just document everything that you guys did, everything you changed, tried, anything new, the whole deal." And they ended up having, I think it was over 70 or 80 different things that they changed, that they documented on a big, huge whiteboard. And when they all looked at it, they couldn't believe how much progress they had made. And so then they went into a discussion about what was good, what didn't go so well, and they used that as the basis for making adjustments both here, now, and what's going to be happening in the future.

And so friends, that's where I want to begin is like, take a moment. What are you proud of? And it's not just about all of them being "successful." It's about, "Hey, I'm proud of the fact that we took a chance. We went for it. We really tried to make something better." And not everything, as you know, is going to work. So first of all, what are you most proud of? What is that? Create a list of changes and accomplishments so you can be equally as surprised as this team that I was referencing before.

Kevin: And then look at it both from not only a team and practice and business aspect, but also just look inside yourself personally and say, "What have I done? What am I proud of? What's happened to me over the course of this year that has influenced where I am today, how I think today, where my focus is today, my energy levels?" All those different kind of things. Because again, it gives you a window into what can we do with that today and going into the future.

And I'm always a fan of making certain that we applaud ourselves for the challenges that come at us day to day and make sure that we understand how much we actually overcame, given that there's so many forces against us because you all in dentistry and in specialty healthcare work, you are on the most worthy mission there is on the planet. And so there's always going to be forces working against you to try to derail you. That's why it's so incredible to be on this journey with you to help support you and be a force for good for you as well, because we get to work through you by your efforts and your energies and the whole deal.

And so friends, that's where we want to begin, is by thinking of and utilizing the past, not to hold us back, but to actually be the perspective we need to springboard now and into the future. So Maegen, what would you like to add to that, given I know how much you love and put into yourself, your own reflection, one of the things I've been most impressed about you since we've known each other, and then conversations that you're having with teams.

Maegen: Yeah, well thanks Kevin. And I think that's definitely something you and I share is we spend a lot of time on reflection. So everything you've outlined, we always focus on good first. And I think that you did a perfect job of outlining that. I wanted to share something that I'm excited that I came across on a podcast I was listening to. I cannot remember the guest, but the guest was talking about what happened at her dinner table every night when she was growing up. And she said her dad used to ask a question around the dinner table. And his question every day was, "What is something you failed at today?" And it was something that he encouraged them and he would almost be disappointed if they couldn't come up with something. And when they did say, "Yeah, I tried this, and I tried taking a shot on a basketball and I missed the shot, it was really embarrassing and I almost wanted to quit the team, but I didn't."

And talking it through and their dad would turn to them and say, "Good, good. Keep going. Keep going. Keep trying to fail at things. Keep doing things that are out of your comfort zone. Don't measure yourself by the results. Measure yourself by the effort and the intention and the action that you're doing to try and get that outcome." And I just thought that was such a great muscle to explore, this idea of what's something you've tried that you failed at this year, when you're doing your past reflection and giving yourself some credit because it is scary to try some new things. Sometimes it doesn't always go well. Sometimes you encounter something with a patient and it doesn't come across the right way. And just give yourself some credit for not staying in the comfort zone.

Maegen: Another example I would say where you can apply that one is even with cases. If you're noticing you're getting a lot of yeses, if you're not getting a lot of nos, that's usually a sign from the universe that it's time to ask bigger. It's time to look at maybe asking for the patient and starting the conversation with a bigger concept of anything, or a bigger concept of whole mouth dentistry and complete treatment presentation, and knowing it's okay if the patient rejects it, says, that can't happen. I need to have a different option, or I need to break it down. That's an example of failing in a way that's really positive, that indicates that you're trying something, you're going for something big. So just thinking about this of a different mindset shift on the concept of failure and how it can be a really useful tool for reflection.

Kevin: Yeah, I love that, Maegen. And the interesting thing about when you look at failures, and I love how you said the dad embraced it and encouraged it, is because a lot of times we are told when we're being sold on positivity, all those kind of things, and I think you guys all know here, all of us at DST, like we have a positive mindset. We believe in creating all of our good, yet you know that we embrace all of the stuff that comes with that. And it's not about shying away from it, ignoring it, stuffing it in a box, the whole deal. It's about the opportunity for you to say, "Holy smokes, who else has tried that many things? Who else has failed at something and continues to go at it?" And look, we failed once, we failed twice, we failed three times. And then boom, the fourth time, look at what we created.

And so it's important to reflect, just don't live there. People who get held back are those who just sit and they mire in it, and they hold themselves back. It sucks all the energy out of everything that they're doing right here, right now, and also takes away from the enthusiasm of what we can create in the future. So Maegen, I love that focus and the shift and the intention that's put on it both from the story that you shared dad-wise. That's a good one. I'm going to remember that one with ours because we have a dinner table thing too where we always say, "Hey, what was your favorite thing today?" Or we play, "Would you rather..." Just really cool, fun, engaging things.

So Maegen, any other comments to build on looking at the failures in conjunction with all the good?

Maegen: Yeah. I think you wrapped it up really nicely, Kevin, which is reflect and then let it go. Take the lesson and let go of any of the complicated feelings around it. I think it's just a simple concept of, "know better, do better." Just don't spend too much time thinking about why it didn't work. Just figure out "what can I try next time" kind of thing. That's a great shift to not get stuck in it and to take it future focus. After you reflect, maybe after you recognize, "oh, that didn't work out so well," the very motivating question that helps you not get stuck is, "What can I do differently next time? What is in my control? What's something I'm willing to try next time?" It's just such a great way to bring it forward. So that's what I would say is the culminating comment with not getting stuck, like you said.

Kevin: **Yeah, I love that. All right, friends, so we have dealt with the Ghost of Christmas Past. Thank you for coming along on that journey with us. And now we're about to encounter the Ghost of Christmas Today, the present, right? And I love the word present, and of course my daughter does...we can't even put presents under the tree right now because all she wants to do is sit there and count them, look at them. She is Christmas queen, okay? Addison, really wild. Anyways, side note, you know me, always on a tangent yet we always bring it back. Here's the gift, the present, right? We have an opportunity, and this is again where I've used the Advent calendar in a really fun way. So I had a team call today. One of my favorites, we have so much fun together, and they're always very ambitious, engaging the whole deal.**

And so as we were going into the discussion about ending the year strong, starting 2025 equally as strong, I had said to them, I said, "Well, hey, how many clinical days do you have left?" And he said, "We have eight." And so I shared the story about Addison and the Lego Advent calendar. I said, "Well friends, guess what? You have your own advent calendar right now. You have eight doors left for you to open and you have a group of patients sitting behind those doors who are waiting for your excitement and your enthusiasm, no different than my daughter wondering, 'What on earth am I going to get when I open that door?'" And that's the excitement that we can bring to the present, not just now because we're getting to the end of the year and the days are minimizing, the whole thing. I mean, we could carry this energy in throughout the entire year.

It's just a fun way to put it in perspective because guess what? We don't know what's to come. We know the patient names, some of them obviously we've been with, others are going to be new. Yet we can still be excited and curious and anticipating; opening the door for every one of those patients for however many clinical days that you have left. So it's like, what priorities do we have with our patient care? What priorities do we have as an organization? What priorities do we have as team, as humans? Right here, right now, are there any challenges that we're facing that are holding us back from ending the year strong? Let's deal with those so that we don't continue to carry them any more forward. Not one day, not one week, not a month, not into a new year, nothing of that nature, because we still have time to influence today.

We still have time to influence what's going to come tomorrow. 24 hours sandwiched together here, friends. And so that's why the present is so important. We have to stay engaged and mindful of what is actually happening. And then as we go through the days specific to wrapping up a calendar year, which I know is a big thing for most people, is to take account of what are some of the things that are left undone that we want to get done? And let's put the pressure on and be excited about that. Say, "Hey, we've got eight clinical days left. We got amazing patients that we have the honor of seeing where we can change their lives and change the course of their health forevermore. On top of that, we've got some really exciting things in the practice that we can get buttoned up so that everything is tidy and ready to go so that 2025 is the best year that we've ever had."

Kevin: Look at it from a very enthusiastic standpoint. The calendar is closing. You are excited to go spend time with friends and family, by yourself. Whatever that's going to look like, use that as motivation. Honor yourself and your commitment to your team in order to give it your best and see it all the way through, because now is not the time to pull back on the gas pedal. Now's not the time to get lazy and say, "Well, we only have eight days left. No big deal." "No, we've got eight days left!" Using that example. So Maegen, what would you like to add about what's happening right here, right now, in the present, in all the work that you're doing personally as well as with all the teams?

Maegen: Yeah. So I think Kevin, what I would want to add is something I have been discussing with a lot of teams, and that goes back to in the present moment, just for a moment in this reflection, thinking of yourself as patient number one is, "What are the energizing activities you can do for yourself, in whatever time you have, to help make slightly better decisions every day that are going to help you get through this?" Because part of leaving it all on the field, part of serving every patient, taking the maximum that we can out of every patient conversation, really pouring ourselves into every single day of those eight days that are left, you've got to make sure you're filled up too. So just as I say this, as I'm walking this path with you, I am on this journey myself.

One of the de-energizing things can be when we go into screen time. And I'm not saying I'm above a good scroll, sometimes you need that just to turn your mind down, but when it starts to feel like that's all you're doing or you're spending a long time doing it, what starts as an energizing activity can start to take away and start to de-energize you. Same thing with TV. It's great. Watch a show. It's great to have a movie night. It's wonderful. It's not a bad thing at all. But if it's all weekend and you feel more tired on Monday, it might be a de-energizing activity.

So this is something, again, on the path with you just finding those moments. It might be a three-minute stretch before bed, you just put it down for three minutes earlier before bed and you just give your body a chance to relax after running around all day; put your shoulders down. It might be we wake up 10 minutes earlier to sit by the Christmas tree and have some coffee and read. It might be in the car ride, being able to put something on that really calms your mind, not listening to things that activate you or get you distressed, but things that put you in a good mood and really taking that time for yourself.

So whatever that means, whatever you can fit in, whether it's two minutes or it's 20 minutes, getting into nature or getting some quiet time, being shameless if you do need some quiet time. Some people just with all the busyness just need some quiet, quite literally. So just finding those moments.

And that's what I would say in the present reflection, Kevin, is making sure you're not forgetting about yourself. And if you're in a community and in a day where you're serving a lot of people, it's important to just make sure you've got a full cup to do that from.

Kevin: Powerful point to make Maegen and oh my gosh, it just makes me think of all of the good craziness and chaos that comes with any holiday season for anybody at any point in time. And it just so happens at the end of the year, there is a lot of hustle and bustle. And so it is important, friends, to be aware of that and conscious of it because you don't want your time away to impact what's happening right now as well as what's going to come after that time away. So honor yourself, really make certain that you find time to just pull back, breathe so that you can be your best. You can be your best for yourself. You can be your best for your family, friends, whomever you're going to choose to spend the time with.

Because in the end, I love how much focus that we put into the business aspect of things because of course the patients deserve it. They're the ones paying our paychecks and buying into the experiences that we're promising them. And so of course, that's where a lot of our emphasis is. Yet we so often forget of ourselves that we don't even realize the impact that it has on all the other efforts that we want to provide to others.

And so that leads me into the ghost of Christmas Future. And you know what? I love thinking about the future. And I don't do it in a way that's distracting, I do it in a way that creates enthusiasm and excitement because it's like I have a say in what tomorrow looks like. Although I don't know exactly how I'm going to get there, I just have this belief and this faith that I have an opportunity to be able to put energy and effort towards something that's to come. I'm convinced of the fact that things don't happen randomly.

And I know that may sound like this really, "Well, of course, Kevin." Yet how many times do people say, "Boy, I just can't believe that happened?" Well, why not? Good things happen, bad things happen. Let's, at least, have a say in it rather than being a victim of it. And that's where things go the wrong way. So when it comes to the future, I think it's important for all of us, this is an annual exercise that I do, and I do with my wife as well, is I take time to say what is important for me, my family, and all of the professional aspirations that I have, and I document them and I get as specific as possible. The key is specificity.

And anybody who has listened all year, you'll know that at the beginning of this year, I always come up with my words for the year. And this one was, "significance in simplicity." And all of my goals for this year were tied to that mantra. And I've got to say, I did a pretty good job. And had I not done that, had I not started with what was important for me and my family today, which translated into good things for everybody I interact with in my professional life, it led me to making smart decisions about what to put my own time, energy and effort on. Most specifically, my focus. I didn't have these pie in the sky like, "Oh man, I'm going to do all this really crazy stuff," and then only set myself up for disappointment. I was living in reality and it was directed by something meaningful.

And so friends, that's where I want to begin here is as you're thinking about your goals personally and professionally in life, beam them to something, tie them to something, so that you don't have a list of a hundred, but you have a

Kevin: list of five, six, ten that are meaningful and that can move the needle both personally and professionally. And most specifically is, what can lead to growth, okay? I know that can be this elusive word that, "Oh yeah, that sounds all fancy and all that stuff." When I think of growth, I think of when I look back, ghost of Christmas past, will I be proud of where I was and where I am today? That's growth.

And so, again, how can we put some additional framework around the effort that we will put in to defining where our energy and efforts will be best suited? What are your habits? Do we have new habits we want to create? Are there other ones that we want to get rid of? Because they're sabotaging us, they're not allowing us to grow, they're not allowing us to expand the good that we're sending out into the world, the good that we're creating for our patients because we're becoming better in our verbiage, we're becoming better at helping patients focus on what really matters. In other words, influence. What are those things that we've got to get out of the way in order for progress, in order to be a force for good, in order to have positive influence on the people who we're choosing to serve? Maegen, what say you on the future?

Maegen: That's wonderful. And I'll share just a quick add-on, Kevin, because I think you covered it so well, of a visualization exercise that I will personally be doing at the end of the year, and I'll share it and invite anybody to take this up for themselves. And the question is, you sit with yourself, and you imagine yourself at the end of 2025, so at the end of next year, full year from wherever we're at now. And you just think of a version of yourself that's a more evolved version of you. You define that, whatever that looks like. It might be a physical change, it might be a mindset change, it might be a habit change, it might be a lifestyle change.

So whatever it is that's coming up for you in the ways that you see a level up, a version of yourself that you'd be even more proud of, even more proud to become, and you spend some time thinking of that, and then list out:

How would this person handle scenarios that you're running into, how would they react to triggers when they come up? How would they handle problems that you face this year? What are the changes in behavior that they would use? What energy would they bring to interactions? How would they make people feel around them? How would they ensure their cup is filled up? What habits are they going to choose to engage with?

And the one quote I'll leave you with, I can't take credit for this one either, but I thought it was just so great and simple. I heard it somewhere. It said, "Success leaves clues." Success leaves clues. And I just loved that. Something about it really resonated with me. And I share that as part of the future reflection as we're on this part of it. Because when you look back at the year and you do all the reflection, you can think of, "Where were my most successful moments?"

Maegen: And you define what that is, it's not always monetary. In fact, most of the time it isn't. But when you think of success, what were the habits I was engaged with at that time? What was my mindset like? What do I think was contributing to that working out? And really reflecting on that. And then in the future focus, what are the clues that I'm going to think about intentionally putting into place? Reverse-engineer some of this. What kind of person do I need to become to really walk into that success I'm looking for? And I just think it's a great way to think about it because it has nothing to do with anybody else. This is a conversation with yourself and defined by whatever "success" means for you.

And so like I said, I'll be doing a version of this. I hope it inspires other people to want to explore this as well, it's fun. And I look forward to hopefully meeting some of your more evolved selves and with my own next year at this time. But I just thought it was such a great exercise that I came across and wanted to share that for this future reflection.

Kevin: Well, Maegen, thanks for sharing powerful...I feel like the more ideas we have, the more each of us can grab onto something that just hits home and feels good and that motivates you and inspires you to want to be extraordinary. Like man, let's make that commitment to ourselves. Let's make a personal commitment greater than we ever have before. Build off of our past, be present, engaged, and excited about where we are today, and let's put some positive pressure on ourselves to see something really extraordinary come in the future. Maegen, thanks for pitching in here today. Crushed it as always, always good to be with you. So just a final word for our friends before we wrap up.

Maegen: Just happy to be here and cheering you on for whatever days you have left of the year, just know we're always here for you and just so proud of all the amazing results and accomplishments you've shared with us over the years. So thanks for allowing us to be on the journey with you.

Kevin: Well said, Maegen and my sentiments exactly. It's an honor to be with you all. I take the responsibility so serious, and just, thank you. It's been another extraordinary year. I look forward to all the doors that are still left to be opened this year because my schedule is full with all you wonderful people. And then we all get a little bit of a break to get ourselves ready for something that's extraordinary to come.

Friends, thank you for being with us today on this powerful episode. Appreciate you listening in not only today, but all year, everything that we do, we're humbled to be with you. We appreciate you choosing us as we choose you. Now, let's go finish the year strong so that we can get ourselves prepared to have the next most extraordinary year we've ever had.

Friends, thanks for listening in on the latest episode of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator podcast. Go get 'em friends. Look forward to talking to you soon.