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The Pursuit of Simplicity, Clarity and Focus

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Kevin: Good day everyone! Welcome to the latest edition of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator Podcast; the one and only, Mr. Scott Manning, welcome to the show!

Scott: Well, Kevin, they say anybody who knows, they say thank goodness, the one and only, because it would be hard to take any more than that. But listen, thanks so much for having me. I love when we come together for this, we're kind of known as a little bit motivational people, and as the great Zig said, "Motivation is temporary, so you better get a daily dose." But at least we come this mid-month halftime, fire 'em up in the locker room, and let's go. So we are here, friends and families, for all of you. You're taking care of everyone else. Quite literally, from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed, you are people of service. And so this is a moment for us just to pause, to settle in, to decompress, to reflect, stare in a mirror, and do a little self-care and check in. So we hope this is the outcome of this is to sharpen the saw and that. So thank you, Kevin.

Kevin: Yeah, you're welcome. And by the way, Scott, I mean let's remind everybody, the best of the best in our universe, get daily doses of motivation, inspiration, execution from us if they're engaged in everything that shows up. I mean, everybody should be fortunate we don't show up on Saturdays and Sundays. We might look out, we might start doing that!

Anyway, listen, as you and I we're going back and forth in planning for this, I think we both felt strongly with regards to dedicating this to the pursuit of three very specific words when combined together are powerful, which is simplicity, clarity, and focus. And so I'm excited to explore the balance between, as we know, there are good things when we gain achievement by doing things: sometimes new, sometimes different, sometimes more. Yet, it's also important as we go along the way to avoid some of the pitfalls as we travel down the pathway to these positive outcomes that are defined by the mission we are all on together here when it comes to delivering comprehensive patient health initiatives, just like patients want to avoid future problems. So let's spend today in trying to do some of that. So Scott, get us started, take it away, do what you do, my friend.

Scott: Ha! Kevin, thank you so much. Look, I think, let's start. I thought usually we go crazy and then we try to settle it in and give some tangible things. So I want to start the opposite. I'm going to start with just super tangible. A lot of times we're coming up on this middle stretch of the year, and what happens with high-performers, and truly with anybody, but probably specifically with people who are prolific, a lot going on, is that we also lose focus. We accumulate clutter, distractions, busyness. And so these three points are vitally important to just take a moment and say, let's begin—not just with the end in mind because we've been talking about that for the last few months—let's begin with the understanding that we are trying to achieve specific outcomes. That all actions, all actions, are either moving us closer to or farther away from our objectives.

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Scott:

It is very easy to miss or to lose sight of this point, and we end up caught in the effort of it all. Effort is great, it's required. However, the more that we get caught up in the effort, the more it becomes daunting, overwhelming, stressful, a little bit, you lose your mojo. And it's simply because we are focusing on the wrong things. We want to see through all of that and we want to see the objective. And so the mantra is a simple concept. The mantra is, "It's not about efforts, it's about outcomes." Effort leads to outcomes, but only if it's intentionally placed. Only if it's simplified, clarified, and focused in.

And so Kevin, I want to start with a very specific activity for every single team member to just take a moment, shake it off, and say, "Where has it become more about effort than outcome?" On the phone, on the intake, even in the schedule, the busyness, the volume, even the production...I was with a great, I mean just a fantastic group of people today, and I said, "The hole you gift through is the hole you receive through." And so they had completely self-limiting situation. They were scheduled out, new patients, 13 a week, four, two and a half months. They literally were scheduling into August full weeks of new patients. Challenge is they were completely plateaued on opportunity. So I said, "Well, the reality of it is we have a logjam." And so if we want to get more out, we have to put more in, in terms of opening up space for creation, for opportunity.

So this was the point going back to, it's not about just filling it to the template. It's about what is the outcome we're getting as a result? I can even go, morning huddles, outcome. What's the outcome? Please define the outcome, not just the effort of having it. "Oh, morning huddles are better. Oh, everybody's on time. Oh, we're talking about this and that." Now, yeah, I'm sure they're better. But again, not the point is it's not about the effort of doing it, it's about the outcome you want to achieve. So every team member, if you're utilizing this podcast as a team engagement device, which is kind of the point, then I would just take a pause and I would say every team member needs to go back to a verbal, defined, clearly spoken statement of outcome of what you are trying to accomplish when you're engaging a patient, when you're helping your team member, when you're ending your day. And so that's where I would start, Kevin. It's not about efforts. You don't get paid based on how hard you work, you get paid based on how much value you bring.

And at some point, while you do have to take initiative, you have to be proactive, you have to hustle, but you also have to use your brain. You have to find leverage, you have to look for efficiencies. And you have to remember that, as I use this every month, I know it's every month and now it's out of season, but it's not, I'll say basketball, it's not about how many shots you took, it's about how many points you scored. It's not how many yards you ran, it's about how many touchdowns we got, right? We got to remember this, Kevin, because otherwise it's very easy for people to celebrate, be proud of, even to acknowledge the wrong things. And they think they're doing great until they run into a brick wall and they forgot that they were supposed to shoot the gaps, not run as hard as they could. And so hopefully that helps a little bit to start us off.

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Kevin:

I love it. And as I always do, taking notes as you talk about things that are hitting home; not only as I think about it from the standpoint of how to serve our team members, our doctors in their efforts for their patients, I also think about it in my personal life and how I can make connections in this stuff too. And you said three things early on, you talked about we're at this point where we're getting to the midpoint of the year, which is just crazy to me it's gone this quickly. And it is easy lose focus to get caught up in the busyness and then the distractions, my word to put into that is they intensify almost as if the world is fighting against us intentionally (although I do believe a lot of times it is when we're on a worthy mission). So the point that you made for me to reemphasize is, are our actions moving us closer to or farther away from the outcomes that we want to achieve, from what we want to create opportunities for?

And it's such an interesting way to put it, Scott, because I think people, they feel in the spirit of effort, like I'm putting in so much effort, I'm working hard, I'm tired at the end of the day. I'm working longer than ever before. Listen, I love the fact that you're willing to do it, yet it's important to not put yourself in a position where that is what equals success or that equals worth, because you could be put in all this effort and literally be getting farther and farther away from where you want to be.

And that could be falling into old habits, it could be overcomplicating things, I mean, it's endless. And friends, I find myself running into these situations too, where I got to take a step back, breathe it out, and look at it. And something in my personal life actually applies to this very directly, not enough time for this here. The next point that I want to make to drive home is, "intention." That word has been coming up a lot lately in conversations that I'm having. And here again, there's a difference between, "I know what my role and responsibility is. I've got a routine, I'm in it." Okay, that's great, right? You've mastered the routine, but what are the intentions within all of that effort? Going back to effort.

Because the example, here's an easy example: one of the things that we hear about all the time is doctor does all the diagnosis, presents the treatment, and all of a sudden the patient's freaking out because there's all this stuff. And so then clinical provider, one of our financial team members, someone goes through reiterates again and they stop and they look at the patient and say, "Do you have any questions?" And it's like, well, it's not really the patient's responsibility to have questions.

So it's like, if your intention is to engage with the patient and to help them move further along the pathway to a decision—investment—of getting healthy, then we have to be smart with our intention of our questioning, with our intention of our leading statements, our directive statements to give people. So instead of saying, "Well, patient, do you have any questions?" You could say, "Patient, I know we just went over a lot; this happens, and I know that you weren't expecting it probably because a lot of other patients were."

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Kevin:

So just tell me: what's bubbling to the surface with you? What is coming to a top of priority that doctor just spoke about?"

There's such a different shift in energy there because it's not about, alright, what questions do we have so we can get to the next step? Because that's what happens. And friends, I'm not trying to be overly tough on you. It's this, with our intention of being present, literally fully present and engaged in a moment, you can put yourself in this situation and ask better questions, and to engage in a deeper way. And so that's when you said, Scott, what is right? So I'd say, what's the right effort? What are the right actions? What are the right things to be focused on? And then you don't have to give so much physical time effort when you prepare appropriately. And so much comes down to preparation and the fact that we just don't do enough of it. We show up two minutes before we're supposed to be there, or we show up a little bit early and we're doing busywork. Friends, we all have to take a step back and understand what the true mission is. I realize we have all these things to do. So please, don't think I'm dismissing that, it's not the point. The point is when every patient shows up in the door, there's one mission: to get the patient to say, "yes" to comprehensive health. Scott, back to you my friend.

Scott:

Well, Kevin, thanks to all that, making it so special and relatable, which is one of your special words. They're relatable. But I want to say something, Kevin, I'm going to give three examples then, but I want to drive an overarching point to this. Friends, let's break down these words, okay? Clarity. So clarity comes from questions. We use, we teach, we use by the way, probably one of the most successful people I've ever met in my life. I'm not going to define by how, but let's call it by tens of thousands of people they've influenced and potentially highest net worth person I've ever talked to my life. So I'll just say one person said to me, and as greatest compliment, I would chalk it up to maybe greatest compliment, and say, "I never heard anybody ask so many authentic questions, like you ask more questions shorter period of time, and you can tell you're diving deep into curiosity into my soul."

And so yeah, I pride myself, maybe outside of Kevin, I'm the greatest question-asker on the planet Earth. It could have been an attorney, but boy, that seems kind of slimy and sleazy, so we'll stop that. But here's the deal, Kevin. Clarity comes from not just asking questions to patients to get their goals, it comes from also asking people around you to make sure that we're aligned on the same objectives. I always say, "Success will be defined by the alignment of expectations." And so I want you to think about when you have a question for the doctor, when a clinical team member wants to know why something happened in the schedule, ask the business team member a question to gain clarity. So clarity is not just in your own head, it has to start there, but clarity is also around you. Communication can drive clarity or can drive confusion.

And so you really have to take this principle of questions, this unlimited tool and resource that we teach you, and practice, and you have to make sure you're applying it to all aspects of your life. It may be your single greatest, I won't say weapon, but tool. So this is clarity.

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Scott:

Now the other thing, Kevin, I want to move to this idea of the purpose-driven outcome. We've all heard of purpose-driven life, maybe the second greatest book in the world. So we have this point, Kevin: so we hear lots of things, for example, I didn't have time to follow up, or, I'm already running late to add one more scan or photographs. Or...

And here's what I always say, "People say, well, we're too busy. How are we going to do that?" I say, "That's not the goddamn point. Okay? The point is, is it going to drive outcomes? Because if it is, find something else that you're screwing around with that isn't, and get rid of it, and then put this in. Or, figure it out, because this is about outcomes." It doesn't matter whether you don't have time or you're too busy or you have all these priorities. This is the same deal. You can give assignments to your kids or grandkids and they didn't get it done and say, how come? And they didn't get around to it. It doesn't matter. We have to remember the hierarchy of prioritization. So if you want extra credit, every one of you in your roles and responsibilities, are you clear about what's important about the things that are going to do what Kevin just said?

They're going to help more people with life-changing dentistry. Are we impacting the yes, the size and value of the yes. Anything that does that must be done: not once in a while or when we have time, it must be built into the success system. This is simply what championship people do.

The other thing that Kevin used is the focus isn't the main point, on the action, on the happening of it. The focus really is on the outcome, is driven by the focus on preparation, on setting yourself up for success. So if you want the next question to ask each other, is, "Where do we find ourselves chasing our tail? Cleaning up messes, reactive with mistakes." And you know Kevin, we believe in this, and actually, we do it.

But I would say if you were, you said tangibly, Scott, what is one of the most substantial things that you could see that we manifest change into people's lives. Team members, practices, patients, doctors, all of our Wealth Group members, everybody. And it's very simply this: most people's lives are one constant to-do list, a derivative of triaging the past. Whether that's this morning's fuckups, or that's yesterday's missed tasks that are left on the to-do list. People are mostly triaging past instead of creating future. And the more we can shift clarity, focus, ultimately it is simple. It's so simple. We can shift to creation of future, every single priority, every single tough conversation, every single piece of technology, everything. It becomes quite simple into what is most important and what isn't so important at all.

And so that's just what I would say, double down on where we can prepare for success and learn to embrace more questions. Very important I think, Kevin, in these points. And finally, make room in your life, in your time, in your health, in your psyche, in your relationships, for the things that are more valuable that are going to drive the kind of outcomes and changes that you deserve and desire.

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Kevin:

I love it. What you said here was so interesting, Scott. And I know, I'm certain you've said this before and it didn't necessarily hit with me like it did today. You said, "Most people spend so much time triaging the past instead of creating the future." I mean, holy smokes. Talk about tail wagging the dog, right? We go into, and what's so interesting about it is that in our universe, we're already better than the average practice. So imagine what it's like at these other places. And so this is why we put what I like to call "positive pressure" on all of you in regards to taking a look at your daily habits and routines so that you can continue to set yourself up for success. Because if you set yourself up for success, if you close out your own days, personally, professionally, if you start your own days personally, professionally, in a powerful and prepared way, you are a better team member.

You are a better clinician, you're a better executor of whatever role it is, you're a better parent, spouse, friend, fill in the blank. And it's interesting because we advocate for not only morning huddles, also PM huddles (end of day huddles), because it's better for humans to be able to put it in a box and know that things are closed out so that they can now start to think about the future. We tend to take all that stuff home with us. It's like, oh man, I got to remember to talk about that tomorrow morning when I go see Susie, Sally, whoever it's going to be. Rather than, well, we could have just done it, take it off the plate, now I can go live life, actually be happy, be filled with joy, be more present with the people I choose to be with in my personal life, and then come back the next morning and I'm already ready to go and ahead of the game compared to everybody else because I'm not dragging yesterday in with me.

And so I know that people get, oh, Kevin, Kevin, Scott. Yeah, I get the end of the day huddle, but...there's always the but, and I just don't like the but...I don't care. You have 50 people and you can get 10 of them to stick around and get together, well, it's better than none, okay? I still think if you actually ran the organization and everybody started and finished at the same time, which is what most people do, then you don't have these kinds of issues. The point is, is that it is your responsibility, not the patient's fault, not the practice's fault, not your doctor's fault at all. We all can participate in this. And that goes to the thing that I like to say, which is the past proves the future, and the future proves the past, because whatever happens in the future is going to be based upon what you did today and yesterday, just like what you did today and yesterday is going to ultimately predict and influence what's going to happen tomorrow.

And so friends, I know that you hear this from us on a regular basis, and the reason is, is because it's that important, and not enough people are doing it. And that would be okay if people weren't complaining about it. Well, the schedule, well, the patients, well, this, that, and the other. And I'll give you one very specific example. So I always get, as you all know, and you're probably listening here, shaking your head, well, we're so busy, we have no time. We go run so fast. And so a question I asked the other day to somebody, and I have a wonderful relationship with this team member, and so she never takes anything personal, she knows that I'm just challenging her a healthy way. I said, "Is there one patient today that you didn't really need to see? If you

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Kevin:

would've pushed them off for a week, or you have one less patient today, would that have totally destroyed you today?"

And she's like, "Well, yeah, I can think of one right now. And of course it wouldn't have." I said, "Well, there you go! You have total control over your schedule. You have total control over who walks through the door of your practice." And yet, that is the number one excuse" too many patients. It's not the patient's fault, you let them in. You don't have 500 patients calling up and saying, I'm going to come in on, what is today? The 14th. I'm coming in Wednesday, May 14th, and you can't tell me otherwise. There's not a patient on the planet who says that. And so friends, we're giving you this tough love because we know you can do it. We know that you can exert control mechanisms in place so that you're not constantly running behind and dragging the past with you.

And when you do this, you begin to then avoid future problems, right? Because you already packed schedule. And guess what you know is going to happen today? We're going to get an emergency patient. I said, well, do you have, yep. Okay, well, you didn't create opportunity for that because you're seeing too many patients. Anyways, I could go on and you guys would probably be like, oh, Kevin, not another preaching session. Yes, it's a preaching session! And the reason is because I get really fired up about this because you guys deserve it, and the patients who see you in a given day deserve it too.

There's no excuse that every patient shouldn't get a well-paced diagnosis, clear treatment plan, and appropriate amount of time to talk through that. There's no excuse behind it, friends. And I wanted so badly for every one of you. And don't get me wrong, we have many who are doing wonderful at that, okay, so I'm here to remind those who are, keep it up, and those who aren't, maybe this is the wake up call, right? Shake yourselves up a little bit and say, "How do we do it? How do we simplify our days? Let's get down to a day. How do we simplify our days, become super clear with what the mission is and how we can make that happen structurally? And then what do we do to maintain our focus throughout the day?" The three words all come together. Scott, I'm going to turn it back to you, I got to tell you, man, I'm fired up right now.

Scott:

Well, Kevin, I can't tell, I wish you had a little bit of energy. Listen, we love your enthusiasm and you always drive the point. And you know what comes across, Kevin, is simply: we care. We deeply care. And so, look, I'll work this up here with the final point. Number one, don't sell yourself short. Not only do you deserve, but you're capable of so much more. And so live up your potential. And Kevin, I never forgot something I learned from a coach in the junior high for the basketball. We had a theme, it's called, "No Excuses, Just Results." And that was kind of the theme for the season, and I never forgot that. And they say, success says you can have excuses and you can have results. You just can't have both. And so I think, Kevin, the point is, raise the bar of our expectations and then live up to them. That's what we have to do. Now, why don't we keep the boundaries, keep the forward progress, the proactive? Why do we delay tough conversations? Why is, ultimately, do we settle as human beings? So I think Kevin, number one, we overcomplicate. Number two, I think that we

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Scott: overanalyze. It's that whole paralysis thinking. Number three, we ultimately, we, I don't know how you say over-procrastinate, but we procrastinate. All these things, Kevin, are a deep-rooted sense of either insecurity, lazy, procrastinate, all these things, our lack of confidence, maybe timid or a little bit doubtful over success or failure. And so I think the key, Kevin, is that we have to make sure that we arm ourselves with the belief in us, with the support around us, and with the overall understanding that we're here to play to win.

And so the point of this meeting today, this podcast today, is for everyone listening to take the three key themes that Kevin gave you. What in your life can you simplify? What in your life do you need clarity over? Or you can exert more clarity over? And where do you need to direct your focus? And all of these things, not just to create greater patient outcomes, to create better life outcomes, but also just to create a more enriching, encouraging, positive environment: for yourself, for your team, for all the people that you love. So Kevin, that's what I want to say today. I think it's exactly what it needs to be because everything we talked about applies to every aspect of life, every role and responsibility, and more importantly, to every category of what people are doing: whether it's their health, it's their money, it's their relationships, it's their home, it's their practice, whether it's their patients. So thank you so much for leading a great meeting today, Kevin, and I'm anxious to see what people take away, what they decide and ultimately what they do as a result of this.

Kevin: I love it too, as always, Scott. Wonderful. And friends, I'm going to leave you with a couple of things. Number one, don't get caught up in wearing the badge of busyness, okay? I know the world seems like, oh, you're so busy. Like, oh, you're amazing. You're an amazing human because you're so busy. Also, don't get caught up with wearing the badge of, oh, I'm so exhausted, because people feed into that too. Oh, you're so amazing. You do all these things. Oh, how about we do the opposite? Which is what I love to live on. If everybody's doing one thing, I want to do another, which is this: "You know what? I had a great day. I was able to get it all done. I managed it well, I prepared for it, and yeah, it went pretty good. Sorry to hear you were so busy." Friends, how do we do it different? How do we do it with control? Because we have it. Don't get caught up in what the world is dictating. Don't get caught up with what the industry is dictating. We define our own path, and that, friends, is something so important to remember. So Scott, any final word or I'm going to wrap this baby up, man, because I could go on for another half hour.

Scott: I'm going to let you wrap, Kevin. Thanks everybody. We really appreciate what you're doing and we are so honored by your efforts and by your attention. But we're most proud of you, and we want you to have pride and ownership of yourself, over what you create, not how hard you work, but the impact that you have. So don't sell yourself short. The world will reciprocate the value of you inasmuch as you value yourself. Kevin, thanks for everything. Great call.

Kevin: Well said, Scott. And thanks everyone for listening in to the latest episode of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator Podcast. Go get 'em, my friends, we'll be with you again next month.