

# What's a Dentist to Do? You Always Have a Choice

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## Crunch Time

These are difficult times for a lot of people. Layoffs, wage freezes, deficits, forced time off. We need to be sensitive to this, and how this challenging economy affects the life of each and every one of our patients.

However, our practice philosophies and our professional ethics do not change directions with the winds of the economy. Our "ship" sails to its destination regardless of the underlying currents. Yes, we must understand that there are people suffering under the current conditions, but we also should not "sell ourselves short".

## The Recession Mentality

Begin by consciously making the decision not to slip into a recession mentality. If your mindset is that times are terrible and people have no means to buy your dentistry, then without even knowing it, you will present only basic treatment and steer yourself away from offering finer elective dentistry. After all, "times are bad". In this case, your reaction may be worse than the actual situation, or at least may make not only your patients' but your own situation worsen.

## The More Things Change...

However, if your mindset is that people will always pay for what they want, although fewer may choose

elective dentistry, many still will. You will practice dentistry the way you always have – providing fine services in an ethical manner. Your patients do well with what they chosen. So do you. If you believe a recession is coming and that times will be tough, then they will be for you. You'll change your successful behavior patterns and replace them with less resourceful ones. Your mindset becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## A New "To Do" List

Use downtime to improve yourself and your practice. Work on your systems: perhaps a better financial arrangement form, maybe a better

communication system between providers and administrative, better treatment acceptance, and so on. Go to some C.E. Learn to do something that answers to your patients' needs and 21st century expectations. Work on a better marketing plan. Expand your range of services. Build a better team. Take time to work on yourself. Find and commit to a workout schedule. Become more spiritual.

In other words, try to position yourself and your practice to come out the other end of this tunnel better, stronger, and ready to serve.

## Take Another Look

Simply complaining doesn't accomplish anything either. It's an expression of ingratitude for the abundance provided by our Creator.

Our professional ethics do not change directions with the winds of the economy.

Please e-mail us at

jackchurchill@msn.com or fax us at (612) 339-3618. We look forward to hearing from you not only regarding this article, but also if you have any ethical dilemmas you would like to present to the membership. Perhaps we can help you decide what to do.

It's negative, often counterproductive, and generally is directed at people who can't do anything about the situation anyway. It destroys hope.

I was sitting at lunch last week enjoying a bowl of soup. A gentleman next to me grabbed my attention since he was sitting at his empty table, alone, and wearing a snowmobile suit in a room full of people in coats and ties. A couple at a table next to him got up, leaving a partly empty bowl behind. He went over to their table, sat down, wiped off a spoon, and finished the soup.

*Continued next page*

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*\*\*Quoted from The Book of Virtues, edited with commentary by William J. Bennett. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993, page 536.*

# Ethics Committee

*Continued from previous page*

A gentleman sat in my dental chair one day several months ago. He was sent to me through Project Homeless Connect and was somewhat mentally challenged. I sat him back in my chair and looked at his feet. He had his worn-out shoes on the wrong feet.

## Find the Reason, Add the Rhyme

So even though times may be tough, count your blessings, be positive, stay the course, and as the poem instructs, never, ever quit. ■

## You Mustn't Quit

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest! If you must – but never quit.

Life is queer, with its twists and turns,  
As every one of us sometimes learns,  
And many a failure turns about  
When he might have won if he'd stuck it out,  
Stick to your task, though the pace seems slow –  
You may succeed with one more blow.

Success is failure turned inside out –  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt –  
And you never can tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems afar;  
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit –  
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit.\*\*

## INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

ABC Defibrillators Sales and Training	70	Minnesota Dental Association	24, 44
Advanced Head & Neck Imaging Center	69	Minnesota Dental Association "Intelliquest" Tapes	31-32
Advanced Practice Management	Cover II	Minnesota Dental Foundation	60-62
Affordable Care	69	Northern Dental Alliance	51
AFTCO	81	Northwestern District Dental Society Summer Meeting	40
Business Opportunities	84-90	Paragon Dental Practice Transitions	79
Christensen Dental Consulting	56	Patterson Dental Company	2
Cincinnati Insurance Company	65	PEB	Cover IV
Clean and Clear	58	ProAssurance	48
Druk Upholstery	58	John R. Schulz	68
Dyste Williams	23	Shea Practice Transitions	14
Federated Insurance	79	Sunset Dental Technologies	43
Fortress Insurance	18	TDIC	5
Gateway Banking	78	TDIC Insurance Solutions	Cover III
Joel Greenwald, M.D.	30	J. Trask Consulting	82
Heritage Construction	7	Transition Resources	29
JNBA	34	University of Minnesota	52
Karkela Construction	15	Weber Law Offices	74
Kelco Services	70	Welsh Construction Company	1, 65
Keystone Design Builders	22	J. White & Associates	9
Maguire & Strickland Refining, Inc.	38	Winthrop Weinstine	30
Leanne Mathieu-Kramer	37		
Minnesota Academy of General Dentistry	59		