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How Happy Are You As A Dentist ?

I just got back from the IACA annual meeting in beautiful Atlantis. There is no meeting in dentistry like this meeting with positive, happy, appreciative, compassionate and loving attitudes permeating the halls of the meeting. I know that sounds corny or insincere, but ask anyone who attended and they will confirm what I said. It seemed everyone there LOVED being a dentist.

It got me thinking about the difference between all of the dentists at the meeting and the average dentist in North America. The normal discontentment for those that choose our profession is nothing new. For many years, surveys have consistently shown that the majority of dentists would not choose dentistry again as their choice for a career if they could start all over again. In a recent "Jobs Rated" survey report, using the following criteria, Environment, Income, Outlook, Stress and Physical Demands; dentistry was 33rd. It was just below Museum Curator and just above Parole Officer.

What makes the difference between those that dislike being dentists and those that love being a dentist? Is it income? Is it patients respect or appreciation for what they do? Is it the elimination of insurance from their practice? Is it the corporate takeover of their practice? Is it the type of dentistry that they are practicing?

A survey was commissioned by the independent marketing firm, Strategic Dental Marketing (SDM), which is a nationally recognized research firm used by many of the top companies in the industry. E-mail invitations to take part in the survey were sent to **800** LVI dentists. They felt they would be lucky to get a **10%** response yet they got a **42%** response. This was the largest response they have ever obtained especially when it was not incentive driven. No one was given anything for taking the survey. It would have been higher but many thought that the survey was just spam and never opened it. Yet a huge percentage did and responded honestly to the anonymous survey. Here were just some of the interesting and eye opening results of this telling survey.

It has always been clear to us that the majority of LVI dentists loved their occupation, but the results of this survey were beyond my expectations.

97.7% of LVI graduates love being a dentist. Compare this to the average in our profession where **67%** wouldn't go into dentistry again. The difference is staggering and an indication that if someone doesn't like being a dentist, they can change that. Why? Because **92%** enjoy their profession more since they started LVI. This was a direct indication that something they learned at LVI had improved their feelings about what they do for a living.



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So what is the difference in the practices of LVI trained dentists and the average dentist? I interviewed **20** doctors to find out. There were several common themes among them all. For one, many LVI dentists have been able to wean themselves off Insurance. They feel more in control of their practice and what they do for a living. They also feel better about the quality of care they are providing their patients and it's more WANT BASED driven, meaning that the patients WANT the work they are providing. They feel more appreciated by their patients and satisfied with the work they are providing. And they are not in the normal rut of volume dentistry, instead working on one patient at a time, developing relationships with their patients, and being adequately compensated for their superior skills.

Over **83%** of LVI alumni have seen an increase in their incomes with the majority of dentists increase in income exceeding **25%** since coming to LVI. **30%** have increased income by more than **50%**. At first glance it might seem that the increase in income that occurred as a result of going to LVI might be responsible for the increase in enjoyment of their profession, but more people increased their enjoyment than those that increased their income. As they say, money does not buy happiness (although it may allow you to be miserable in a lot of nice places)!

80% of LVI dentists make more than the average dentist in the US or Canada. I felt this would be the case, and the fact that the average LVI dentists income is significantly higher than the average North American dentist is not surprising.

92.2% of the dentists were either extremely satisfied with their LVI education or very satisfied. **7.2%** of the remaining **7.8%** were satisfied. This result was phenomenal and looking at the results of those that increased the love of their profession after attending LVI, it is not surprising that they would be appreciative of that education.

97.4% of LVI graduates plan to take another course at LVI. This correlates closely to the numbers that were satisfied with their education at LVI. Many graduates talk about going to LVI to get their "LVI Fix," which is described as an increased enthusiasm for what they do for a living.

So the answer is, if you don't enjoy your profession of dentistry, there is hope. You DON'T have to feel that way. Ask yourself, what is it that you don't like and then work on eliminating that source of discontentment. If you want to do a particular type of dentistry, for example treating TMD or OSA, then get the proper training that will allow you to excel in that area. The confidence you will receive will make you feel good about what you do and help you enjoy your profession more. The point is that there is no reason ANYONE should not love what they do for a living. It's so sad to think that the majority of dentists don't enjoy going to work. It's sad because it doesn't have to be that way.

