



Thinking about Retirement?

READ THIS FIRST

Dan Jenkins, DDS, LVIF, CDE-AADEJ

Frequently I receive an email from a fellow “experienced” dentist asking for advice on retiring. Sometimes it might be just for a recommendation for a dental practice broker. Most of the time it involves how to find someone to take over their practice and how to structure any relationship after the sale. What I notice most of the time is they do not ask IF they should retire - their minds seem to be made up.

Before making the jump to retire you should keep in mind a story I read many years ago about an active dentist meeting an old friend at a convention who had retired a few years earlier. He spoke of his great life of financial stability, retirement home in Florida, apartment in his home town to visit his grandkids, and - then he paused and said, "But, I still miss the practice." He missed the social interaction with his patients and his team. I'm sure there are things about practicing dentistry that each dentist is stressed by. But, if you have been practicing for 40 plus years there must be something you like that you will miss if you cease to practice. You should figure out what it is and see if you can eliminate that stressor, even if it means downsizing or changing your practice model. If you could have a practice that you enjoyed every single aspect of, how long would you practice? Probably until they pry the hand-piece out of your cold rigamortised hand!

If you still are determined to retire or partially retire I have some ideas for you which I have shared with my friends in the past. If you are interested in bringing in an associate you will want one that has a similar philosophy as yours. For example, it could become very confusing for your patients if you provide porcelain inlays and onlays and the new dentist is opposed to this. The new dentist may feel they should be either resin fillings or crowns - and tells the patients that the work needs to be redone! Thus, your potential buyer associate should consider obtaining the similar training as yourself. For instance, if you are a Physiologic Based Dentist and your new dentist is of a different philosophy - Bio-Psycho-Social or CR - you will not agree on treatment either to be done or what has already been done.

What I suggest is to find a dentist who, as an associate, is already investing in your similar philosophy. I suggest meeting the potential

buyers at a training course. Obviously, if they are there they are interested. You could audit the course and let it be known that you are seeking an associate for future buy-out and you will most likely have a lot of company during breaks and in the evenings! You also will have to decide how far along in the education journey you would want your associate to be. If you are considering a Physiologic Based associate, (my recommendation), you might meet them at CORE I at the Las Vegas Institute at the beginning of their journey.

If you wish to be able to practice what you want after the sale you can have an agreement to practice in an area your buyer does not - such as treating Sleep Disorders, Implants, Dentures, or Physiologic Orthodontics. Some dentists do not like doing some of these things and if you have the training and experience you could have your niche.

Another issue that may come up in the sale of your practice is the value of it if you have some high end expensive equipment. If you have Lasers (hard and soft tissue), TekScan, CBCT, CAD-CAM, EMG and TENSing equipment, as well as implant and orthodontic supplies, you will find they are of no interest to a buyer who does not have the training to use them. You may have to sell them separately to someone else. This will lower the sale price of your practice.

Often I hear the statistic that only 3% of dentists are able to retire at the same level of living before retiring. Many LVI practices are at the top of the market when sold...what a different story. Before you retire, plan ahead, use proven brokers such as Practice Transition Partners who can match you with a perfect candidate. With a plan... retirement can be just what you hoped for.

“If you could have a practice that you enjoyed every single aspect of, how long would you practice?”