



Compassion Fatigue

Take charge of your practice and personal health

The most common inquiry in my business: *“When is the ideal time to sell my practice?”*.

My father taught me that his 40 years of experience revealed the following; **sell your practice only if one, or a combination of these three (3) reasons exists:**

1. You are sick (long-term disability)
2. You are sick-and-tired (burned out)
3. You are financially secure enough to sell your practice

This column is for those dentists who feel sick-and-tired.

Dentists are acutely compassionate people. Most of my clients say they entered dental school specifically to care for other people and help them with a very important aspect of their health care. Unfortunately, this compassion can often conflict with the dentist's other obligations, namely the health of their business, their personal health and the time they can devote to family and friends.

Are dentists also guilty of ignoring their personal health and well-being?

My answer: Unequivocally yes, many dentists go beyond reasonable limits and accidentally over-commit themselves to their patients. The life-chart of the dentist reveals the following:

1. As a healthcare provider you are a dentist, first and foremost.

2. As a business owner, you are responsible for the ongoing health of the practice and to ensure it can meet its financial obligations. This extends to the welfare of employees and to the welfare of their families.

3. In your personal life, you could be a spouse, a parent, a sibling, a child and a friend. In short, there are many others who rely upon you to be healthy.

You are charged daily with the task of balancing all the above.

Since the spring of 2020 my clients have been reporting that they feel extreme pressure, duress and anxiety with managing the burden of patient care, staff support and family stress – “burn-out”. I feel this and have had similar experiences.

The expression “Compassion Fatigue” succinctly identifies a common condition in the field; namely, dentists putting their patient health before their own wellbeing and it having a degenerative effect on their own welfare.

How can you reduce compassion fatigue?

Some suggestions are to schedule fewer patients each day and/or to extend your individual appointment times by one or two units of time, thus slowing down your pace. Others may need to resist the temptation to accept every single new patient that calls or to resist the choice to “rescue” every emergency that calls the office (when ethical). Others adjust their schedule by shortening work days or their work week. Whatever the case your future and existing patients will be better cared for by a fit and healthy you. Maintaining your physical and mental health is an obligation you owe to yourself, your family and your patients.



The optimum time to sell your practice is when it is growing and has a healthy “bottom line”. These practices will sell for the highest price when compared to others in a state of decline. Holding out for things to improve under these circumstances may be a false economy.

Sadly, many practitioners choose to sell in the latter condition when the practice is performing much like the owner’s mind set – I call it **“Practice Fatigue”**.

Please remember to be good to yourself and make time for reflection and actively seek a balance with all other obligations. Stated another way, practice owners must show the same compassion they do to others to themselves. It will be from this vantage point that they can honestly answer the question... Is it time to sell the practice?

The Covid Compounding Effect

Without having a choice, many healthcare professionals had to throw themselves into the frontline of the battle with Covid 19. Owners, to whom this message is addressed, above all others you had no option but to line out in PPE and face the unknown that this infectious disease posed back in the early summer of 2020. Additionally, despite there being an older cohort that fall into the ownership bracket, the necessity to commit was apparent and the list of aforementioned commitments left owners with no choice.

Those that chose to take a step back or a more relaxed approach to their return, taking time at the cottage or encouraging staff to sit it out on CERB payments had to face the distinct reality that patient attrition would be the knock-on effect immediately after the lockdowns. As one client poignantly put it “the bees nest got kicked”. Patients needed treatment and there was no shortage of competitors that were willing to welcome them open armed, if getting an appointment at your office was less than convenient, trust that there was an accommodating competitor happy to help. This trend

is abundantly evident in the significant appraisal volume that we have seen in recent months. As ever, the numbers tell their own story.

My team and I are intimately aware of owners that were beside themselves with concern about the unknown effects that this disease could have had on them and their staff. Fortunately, it has proven not to be the case. Ownership is a lot of responsibility. Understandably when you are charged with the task of administering treatment and generating aerosol in the mouths of the general public you can’t help but feel in the cross hairs of this deceptive force.

In hindsight, prudence was a wise course but regardless of what route you took as an owner, the last most extraordinary 16 months have only added to the mental anguish and compassion fatigue that many had previously been experiencing.

As ever, my team and I are here for you and we always welcome a call if you need somewhere to vent. **Call 1.844.ROI.2020 to chat with an ROI expert.**

I would like to remind owners that you have built a wonderful asset and you need to pointedly ask yourself these three questions regularly.

Written by:



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Record

A graphic for a podcast. At the top center is a circular logo with the text "On Air" in a large, white, serif font, "with" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, and "ROI CORPORATION" in a white, sans-serif font below a white microphone icon. The background of the logo is dark brown. Below the logo, the text "Listen On" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, there are four logos for podcast platforms: RSS (orange square with white signal waves), iTunes (black Apple logo), Google Podcasts (multi-colored dots), and iHeartRADIO (red heart with white signal waves). The entire graphic is framed by a thin white border and set against a background of wavy, golden-yellow lines.