

SECRETS, MONEY, AND THE DEATH OF A DENTIST



Image Source: "Work Simplification in Dental Practice: Applied Time and Motion Studies"

Life can be stranger than fiction.

A client passed. Not suddenly, but slowly. He had ample time to get his affairs in order and to communicate with his loved ones right to the end.

Yet his closing chapter unfolded in a complicated fashion.

He died with buried secrets.

First, the money.

At the funeral, a long-term staff member approached the family lawyer to say that the deceased had made promises on his deathbed about a sum of money in recognition of her many years of loyal service.

It is common for long-serving staff to receive a bonus from the proceeds of a sale.

The twist in this tale, however, was that the amount mentioned had never been communicated to anyone else, including the widow, accountant, lawyer, or any other family or estate representatives.

Only this one staff member claimed it to be true.

And the sum – astonishingly, \$500,000.

Fast forward 20 days after his passing.

The practice was quickly appraised and brought to market.

On the surface, it seemed like business as usual, while this contingent liability and claim quietly lingered in the background.

This employee proved invaluable in retaining patients and managing the dynamics among the remaining team members and locum dentists while the practice is being offered for sale.

These were not easy circumstances for anyone, yet she did an excellent job of keeping morale high and operations running smoothly.

What was her motive?



And then, the intimacy.

We began to suspect that this senior employee may have had an intimate relationship with the dearly departed.

Was it a sense of loyalty to a lost lover or an effort to preserve an expected bonus?

We do not believe the other staff were aware of it, and we are equally confident the widow had no knowledge of any possibility of “accidental intimacy” within the practice.

Read more here: [Accidental Intimacy](#)

The lawyer eventually informed the widow of the \$500,000 demand.

They asked for proof.

None was provided.

As the practice sale approached closing, everything suddenly changed.

The staff member threatened legal action and retained a labour lawyer.

She also threatened to place a lien on the practice, which would have prevented the sale from proceeding.

Was this a contrived constructive dismissal claim?

Would the disruption be disclosed to the buyer and her advisors?

But wait, it gets more complicated.

Prior to closing, the purchaser reported receiving harassing phone calls suggesting that if money were not paid, the practice would be sabotaged.

The buyer panicked. At this stage, there was no turning back without significant economic loss for all involved.

One advisor described it as a desperate act by a grieving, scorned individual reacting to a lost opportunity.

And then, greed.

Threats made by the employee were recorded. One phone call, placed on speaker, was overheard by another individual in a car, who began recording the conversation.

This was clearly grounds for termination and potentially far more profound consequences.

The sale closed after the estate assumed the liability to give the purchaser peace of mind.

I never learned the outcome. The matter was settled out of court and sealed.

I do not share this story to sensationalize or trivialize.

This situation is a nightmare; one I would not wish on anyone. It brings shame and conflicting emotions to a grieving family and introduces unwelcome uncertainty for a new practice owner.

It is a sobering reminder of the complicated, often hidden personal entanglements that can exist in professional environments.

Accidental intimacy in a dental office is very real.

My hope is that this article reaches someone who may be caught in such a situation and serves as a reminder to maintain a healthy balance between personal and professional lives.

Office romances rarely end well.

Written by:



Timothy A. Brown,
FRI, CEO & Broker of
Record

TEXT me @ [\(416\) 520-7420](tel:4165207420) for a FREE estimate of the fair market value of your practice.

Subscribe to my newsletter: [Timothy's Newsletter](#)

Refer a friend and you will BOTH receive a **REVERSE Tariff** professional courtesy of up to \$1,500 each toward your ROI Appraisals. A total savings of \$3,000.

Working with i-Dentists™ since 1984 (*actually, a little bit longer than that!*)



roicorp.com