

**Editor's note:**

To kick off our 2017 series about women in dentistry, *Dentaltown* magazine and Benco Dental decided to start with a model of success: **Dr. Pamela Marzban** has been in private practice for 16 years, a business owner for 15, and is an assistant professor at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry. She's also a fellow of the Academy of General Dentistry and a member or fellow of about a dozen more professional associations and organizations.

In 2014, Marzban won first place in the international Aesthetic Eye Competition at the International Academy of Comprehensive Aesthetics Conference, in the category of full-mouth aesthetics. She's been named a top dentist by *Washingtonian Magazine* in 2015, top general dentist in a peer-recognized competition in *Virginia Living Magazine* from 2010 to 2015, and as one of America's top dentists by the Consumers Research Council of America from 2009 to 2015.

# The Secrets of Her Success

by Dr. Pamela Marzban

The first contributor in our Women in Dentistry series says it's **all about balance and connection**—to her colleagues, her co-workers and the community she serves



When I was approached to write this article, I was extremely honored to be recognized but the idea was unsettling: To me, success is a fluid concept that can have a different definition for every individual. I'd like to share three principles I believe in, which have allowed me to be a fee-for-service practice and to do the type of dentistry I want to do, with a team I want to do it with, in a beautiful, state-of-the-art facility. My business—our profession—not only provides me with a great and stable income; it also gives me personal fulfillment on so many levels. This is what I define as success.

### **You can't achieve success all by yourself**

As a new graduate, I was too “polite” to ask for advice from colleagues, and wasn't always sure when to seek professional help. It seemed that people didn't want to share their successes and failures ... as if there was a fragile secret that would disintegrate if their story was whispered.

We don't have to reinvent the wheel over and over again! Talk to friends and colleagues; learn from their pasts. If you know someone who attains something you aspire toward, ask them if they're willing to share their story with you—perhaps even to mentor you. Not everyone is going to share personal stories, but if you're willing to put yourself out there, you may end up with a trusted group of colleagues you develop amazing relationships with, which will accelerate your success as well as theirs.

Know when to ask for help! For example, if you're about to hire an associate or take on an associateship, hire an attorney. Don't use an old contract and change the names to try to do it yourself. If you're looking to build out an office, hire a real estate agent to help with location and contracts. Get an architect and an interior designer to help with the blueprint and office layout.

I realize sometimes we feel like cutting financial corners; it can be scary to invest money in other professionals. So I ask: Where and what do you want to spend your energy on? I promise, hiring and working with the right professionals throughout your career will save you a fortune in time and loss of production. More importantly, it will provide you with better direction and peace of mind, which ultimately brings a quicker and safer path to success. As business owners, we need to understand business—and we must recognize that we can't and shouldn't do it all.

Having a select group of people for trusted advice and professional help is key. Ever thought about how important the numbers are in your cellphone? Mine are priceless.

### **Sound and strong leadership takes work, but is powerful**

The cohesive dynamic of a successful business comes from the team. In fact, having a strong team is directly proportional to how successful a business will be. However, the drive behind that team is a strong leader. This person must be proactive, organized and act with integrity. She needs to invest in her team by taking time



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to teach them, encourage them and empower them.

Everyone on the team should feel ownership toward the success of the business. I believe that the only thing dentists should do in their offices are the obligations others legally can't do. This frees up time for dentists to focus on leadership responsibilities or to do more productive work, while simultaneously creating production for assistants and hygienists. This business model takes time to develop—it means a lot of training and continuing education—but this type of investment in people is priceless. It brings greater success to a practice, it inspires our dental professionals to want to become more, and it brings you so much personal fulfillment.

Each woman on my team brings a different perspective to our group but shares the same mission. We have dedicated ourselves to our patients and our practice by continuously training to remain on the leading edge of our field. We work hard every day and have fun every day.

### **Giving back rewards yourself, as well as your community**

There are so many ways to put good energy out there! Our office picks a few 5K/10K races a year, and the team participates in them. We take turns picking a charity we want to support, and I pay for my team's entry as well as 10 of our patients. To us, it's a great day of spiritual and physical wellness.

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My team and I have also volunteered at our local clinic for projects they needed help with. We do candy buy-back programs at Halloween for the kids and for our soldiers abroad, and food drives for the needy in our community.



There may be times in your career where it is difficult to donate a single moment of your day, so don't commit to anything that will create stress or negativity to your life. Find other means. Sometimes, if we know a patient is having a difficult time, we send flowers or a gift basket to let them know there are people who care about them. Giving back to the community and to humanity is not something that's required to run a successful business; however, it is one of the most rewarding things I do.

While money is important, it doesn't fuel my soul. I work as a part-time clinical instructor in the department of general dentistry at my alma mater. It's a two-hour drive to get there, and after a six-hour shift I hop back in the car to head home. I do this on a couple of Fridays a month, in which I do not work at my own office, and I refuse any compensation for my time there. Why? Well, those four hours of driving are uninterrupted quiet time for me. I can listen to an audiobook or whatever music

I feel like, catch up with friends and family on a call, or just simply enjoy the drive. The time I spend at the school is priceless to me; it's a privilege to help develop our future dentist in such an amazing teaching environment. Now, I will share that I have been in private practice for 16 years and owned my practice for 15 years of that time. I am a writer; I write for the Academy of General Dentistry. My clinical work has been published and awarded, nationally and internationally. And for many consecutive years my office has been recognized as a "top dentist" office by every local publication, and some national publications as well. I am proud of my team and our accomplishments, but these accomplishments are only part of my success. To me, success is having balance in my life. It is balance that brings me peace and happiness.

*"A master in the art of living draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play; his labor and his leisure; his mind and his body; his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing, and leaves others to determine whether his is working or playing. To himself, he always appears to be doing both."*

— L.P. Jack ■



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