

JAMES A. BURDEN, D.D.S.  
FAMILY & COSMETIC DENTISTRY

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A few years ago, my practice was doing well but it wasn't quite where I wanted it to be. We had stopped growing and I knew we could do better. It wasn't that anything was drastically wrong. Other doctors told me they'd be more than satisfied with the practice I had. But I wanted to take things to the next level and knew I needed help to make that happen.

About that time, I was contacted by Silkin, a nationally recognized practice management company. They provided me with an evaluation of my practice at no charge. It was in that consultation that the Silkin analyst told me something no one had before. The reason I wasn't getting to where I wanted to go was because of me. It's a little unsettling to hear that, but I have to admit it was true.

Before, I was doing too many things in the practice myself. There is a limit to how well any one person can do all of that, especially given that my main role is to do the dentistry in the practice. Using the Silkin system, I received executive training that showed me what I needed to do and especially what I needed to delegate to others. And that's the barrier we never got past before. And that's the reason we couldn't expand beyond a certain point.

The result was amazing. We learned what management systems to use and how to make them work for us. My staff members are now able to really do their jobs and I don't have to watch over their performance all the time. The difference in reduced stress, eliminated staff drama, increased productivity and improved quality of service for our patients is remarkable.

Now I tell other doctors what it took so long for me to learn myself. If you're struggling with any part of managing your practice, you need to change your approach and get the right kind of help. Once you do, it will make life so much easier. I thought I was overworked at my previous production level but really, I was just working harder and not smarter. Now I produce twice as much and it's easier than it's ever been. I never thought that would be possible.

Even in difficult economic times, there are certain things you can do to get a practice functioning efficiently and maintain or increase growth. You just have to know what to do and get some help to make it happen.