

EST

2014



*Dental hero*

TOOTH CARE

DENTAL CLINIC

Choosing the right name for your practice is a decision that will impact on your business for years to come. By Frank Leggett

# Name Game

For many years, naming a dental practice was a relatively easy decision. You either named it after the dentist—e.g. Smith Dental—or named it after the location e.g. Jones Street Dental. Both of these options make perfect marketing sense. They connect the patient with the dentist or they connect the practice with

the locale. Unfortunately, both these naming styles can present issues further down the track.

For example, if Jones Street Dental relocates to nearby Smith Street, then a name change is inevitable.

## Creative thinking

“When we took over the practice it was called Parkwood Dental,” says

Dr Ernest Yeo who owns the business with his wife, Sarah. “I didn’t want the practice to be limited to its location and, unfortunately, Parkwood was not the most well-known suburb. Additionally, Parkwood is a bit old-fashioned and dated in appearance, and we wanted to separate ourselves from that perception.”

Dr Yeo changed the name to

Photogenic Dental within a month of taking over, updating the website and renovating the interior. He wanted a fresh start in a modern practice with a new vision for the staff.

Calling the practice Photogenic Dental made marketing much easier as the name is very memorable. It also communicates that there is some focus on cosmetic work. However, a proportion of their marketing reminds patients that they are a family practice with excellent general dental care.

"We've also partnered with a high-end photo company, Verve Studio, in Claremont," says Dr Yeo. "If a patient gets a lot of work done, we offer them a free photo shoot. We then use the images on our website and the patient can celebrate their new smile."

### Using your surname

Naming a practice after yourself can be problematic when taking on a partner. While it's fine to keep operating under the original name, it can cause some confusion for patients. If they are seeing a dentist at John Smith Dental, they expect to be treated by Dr John Smith, not someone else. Often, taking on a new partner leads to a renaming of the practice.

However, things become even more difficult when it's time to sell the business. "When selling a practice named after the owner, it can be problematic when the vendor doesn't want to sell their name," says Simon Palmer, managing director of Practice Sale Search. "They don't want dentists with unknown clinical ability practising under their name. If they have no clinical oversight over the new dentists, then they don't want to compromise the integrity of their name. And rightly so. However, the person buying the practice will want to buy the name because it forms part of the goodwill."

One solution is to rebrand the practice six months or a year before selling. It doesn't have to be dramatic and a connection can be kept with the original name. John Smith Dental may become JS Dental. This new name can be sold with no integrity problems for the seller.

Another solution is for the vendor to license their name to the purchaser for a period of time. Then, once the time period expires, the practice would need to rebrand.



**"When selling a practice named after the owner, it can be problematic when the vendor doesn't want to sell their name. They don't want dentists with unknown clinical ability practising under their name."**

Simon Palmer, managing director, Practice Sale Search

"That situation gives the purchaser a chance to take advantage of the goodwill with the existing practice," says Palmer. "The buyer can show the patient base there's a sense of continuity in order to retain as many patients as possible. If, all of a sudden, the dentist is gone and the name is changed, there's the possibility for a disconnect and for patients to become unstuck. Having a sense of continuity is very important."

Traditionally, dentists named their practices after themselves as a way of showing pride and ownership. "I've spoken to older dentists who feel that young dentists are hiding behind anonymous practice names," says Palmer. "They feel there was more transparency and ownership of the dentistry when the practices were called after the dentist's surname."

### See to it

"Our practice was originally a video store," says practice manager Lucy See who co-owns See The Dentist in Hunters Hill, NSW, with husband, Dr Andrew See. "We moved in five years ago, completely renovated the whole place and started from scratch.

It was Andrew's sister who came up with the name and we both liked it immediately."

Sitting at the reception desk, Lucy can watch people walking past. They often see the practice name on the door, see Andrew's name, and laugh or point it out to their friends. It's not just a pun but a call to action too.

"We are in the happy situation where the practice name incorporates our surname but is still general enough so that it's not completely linked to one person," says Lucy. "We have associate dentists now so patients see other clinicians as well as Andrew. The name has not narrowed us in terms of expanding our business. Likewise, if we ever want to sell the practice, there would be no need for the buyer to change the name."

More and more dental practices are choosing inventive, memorable names. And if your business name sticks in people's minds, then the associated marketing becomes significantly easier.

### Not a normal dental practice

Dr Mark Miller of Dental as Anything in Helensvale, QLD, has been at the practice since 1989, was a partner for 10 years and became the sole owner in 2000. "Originally the practice was called Helensvale Dental Centre," he says. "When we decided to rebrand and update the practice, I took the staff away for a weekend team event and one of the jobs was to create a new name for the practice."

A lot of ideas were tossed around until a hygienist came up with a play on the band name Mental as Anything—and Dental as Anything was born.

The change of name signified that the practice was going in a whole new direction. Dr Miller instigated team meetings and goal settings for the first time. He began taking more time with patients and encouraged staff to be welcoming and approachable. Their website was updated to be less formal but more friendly.

"Just about everyone comments on the name of the practice," says Dr Miller. "We get a lot of new patients purely because of our name. Dental as Anything differentiates us from other practices and lets people know we are not your normal dental practice." **Bite**