

Is there life **after** dental practice ownership?

Dentists often put off selling their practices because they are concerned about life after dentistry.

What will they do with all those extra hours, how will they cope with leaving behind the identity that has defined them for decades? This series of articles explores the very busy lives of some of Practice Sale Search's clients, former practice owners who have embraced post-sale life.

Name: John Edwards

Practice owned: Victor Harbor, SA

Graduated: 1984

I was 30 when I graduated from Adelaide Uni.

My first day I could work I was working in Victor Harbor, 80km from Adelaide, where I am right now. My wife and I thought we would come here for a couple of years, get some experience and then do something else.

I'm a country boy, so it was no problem for me to come here. I fit in well.

A practice came up for sale in 1985, 18 months in. We were scared at first because we had no business experience and didn't know how to run a practice, but I was advised that this was an amazing opportunity and that I had to take it. My father was a business person, my wife was good with numbers, my treatment skills were somewhat precocious, with a healthy dose of OCD, a warm heart, fair mind and sold work ethic. Combined, we began to believe that we could do it!

Tell us about your practice

When we bought the practice, it only had a single chair. I was working 60 hours a week by myself, and we were very quickly too busy for the site we were in; we had to move. A building became available for purchase down the road; we bought it and renovated it so that we could have 3 surgeries.

Why did you sell?

In my head and my heart, I'm 45 years old. I'm in good mental and physical health.

However, if we are counting birthdays, I will be 70 in June 2023! I started to see other people my age starting to fall apart. We don't know what is around the corner, and thought it would be a smart age to get out.

We had a staff pizza night at home; I gently ran it past my employee dentist, told her we were thinking of selling. She said she was interested but we didn't know



how to structure the sale and the process was taking so long. I felt quite stressed and anxious about all of it. Simon from PSS offered to help us in whatever degree we wanted. He was able to keep me calm, gave me advice, provided a sequence and process for the sale on where it was going, what the buyers were doing, when we were likely to hear back. He kept me sane.

After it sold, I began to think about what to do next. Dentistry and practice ownership had been my life. I have loved it for 39 years. I worked 4 days a week until the end of 2022, then will probably cut down to 3 and then 2 days until EOF 2023.

Tell us about your wine making

When I was 21, I discovered red wine in Coonawarra. It just clicked with me. I became a wine enthusiast. I got interested in drinking and, in particular, collecting different wines. Then, one fateful day, we had a BBQ at home and a mate of mine, who is a winemaker, looked at my paddock and said I should grow grapes. I checked with an independent consultant, who also said I could grow grapes there. I did a wine-making course and started to make wine.

We began planting the vineyard in 1991



and it was a few years before we produced a commercial volume. We started with sparkling wine and chardonnay, and then expanded to grow red grapes and added Barossa Valley 'Old Vine' wines to our portfolio. I found a fantastic winemaker to help me. My wine-making style is called artisanal handmade wine making - it involves science and art. I was lucky that it worked really well. My wines are wonderful, and in recent years we sold all our products to China, until they started their embargo in early 2021. I have started making gin and vodka, and Limoncello using professional/traditional processes. I'm a green thumb, I love gardening, cooking, wine making, so it was a natural thing to move from wine making to making spirits. I have 9 Australian native botanicals in my gin. And I'm not even a gin drinker!

What's next?

I have lots of plans:

- ◆ Shaker-style furniture making
- ◆ Serious Italian-style pizza making
- ◆ 'Operation Flinders Foundation' involvement
- ◆ Revisit 'abandoned' piano playing, and discover my 'inner Impressionist artist'