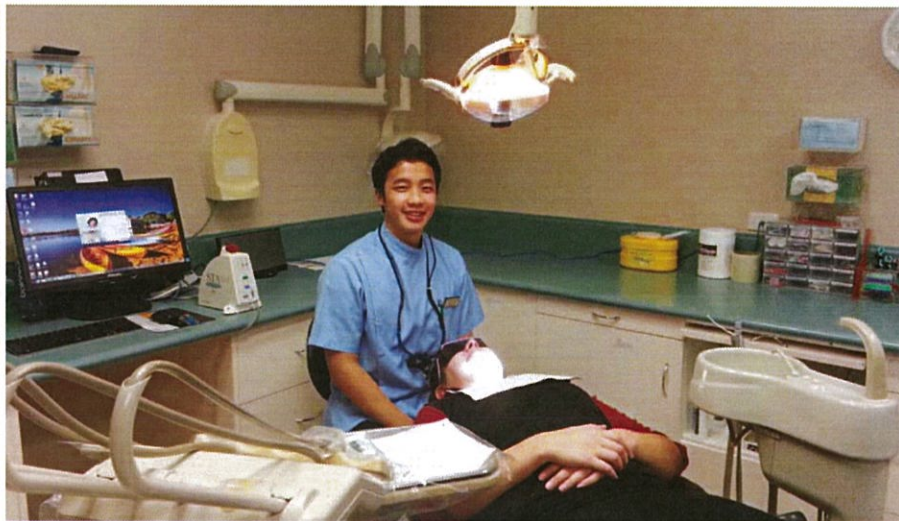


Is there life **after** dental practice ownership?

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: Jeffrey Tho
Age: 31
Graduated: University of Melbourne 2013
Practice Owned: Ballarat, VIC



Brief Career Summary:

I always wanted to be an orthodontist.

I did work experience at lots of different places when I was in high school, and working at an orthodontist was the one I liked the most. I'd see lots of people walking out with straight teeth and looking happy, and that really appealed to me. They had a PlayStation in the waiting room and a draw for a patient to win a bike. I thought that was really cool.

When I was in my final year at dental school, I had friends in Ballarat who referred me to a practice in Ballarat. The owner didn't have a job available, but he was looking to slow down and cut back and was happy to offer me a position



once I'd graduated, when he would be my mentor.

Unfortunately, the owner became very unwell and by time I was able to start, he was unable to practice. He passed away a few weeks after I started working. I started my first day as a dentist as the practice's principal dentist. It was extremely stressful, as I was put into a role that was far more demanding clinically (and non-clinically) than my training and experience had prepared me for.

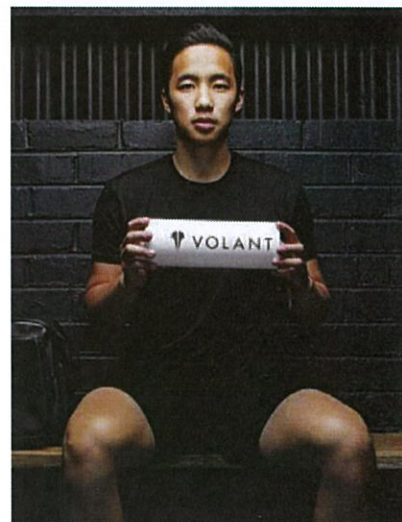
I had mentor in Melbourne who I could call, but it just wasn't the same as some of my friends, who had backup in the next room that they could ask for help or refer to if they needed it. I had to learn very quickly on the job.

I bought the practice in mid-2017 from the ex-principal's family, about three and a half years after I had started there.

Why did you sell?

In 2017, just a few months after I bought the practice, I had a snowboarding accident. I was at Mount Buller, hit an icy patch of snow and landed awkwardly on my thumb. I had some scans and the doctors said it would bruise up a lot, but that there were no signs of fractures; it was just a sprain. Luckily, I am right handed, and I had only injured my left hand. I took a week off work to give it a rest and recover, and thought I would be ok.

A month later I thought, "This doesn't feel any better at all." My assistants had to help more and it was awkward holding the



mirror, etc. I had an MRI, and they found the ligament torn from the bone.

From there I went to see a specialist (now 7 weeks after the injury). I continued to work with a splint on for another four weeks, until I saw a surgeon who said I needed surgery.

I had been keeping it together in the practice and had developed ways to work with my injury, but I wasn't getting any better. The surgeon said to me that while I may be managing at work, I needed to take time off, have the surgery and give the thumb a chance to heal. If I didn't the consequences would have been worse over time, including early onset of osteoarthritis.



Since I sold

Professionally:

- ◆ I have been doing some teaching at the University of Melbourne.
- ◆ I have done some ad hoc locum dentist work when dentists are away (I can work for a few days, but then need many days off).
- ◆ I have also been working with Dr Jesse Green (The Savvy Dentist) as a coach for his Practice Max program. Looking back, the coaching would have been invaluable for me as a practice owner. I also do some speaking for Jesse at our events, which I really enjoy.
- ◆ I don't have a plan to own again in the near future, but it isn't out of the question.

In my free time:

- ◆ I play a lot of badminton. I have been doing coaching for the Australian National Team. I have played badminton since I was 8 years old; I used to play for Victoria, then as a junior for Australia. When I was 17, I played full time for the national team

for three years (2006-8).

I just missed out on competing in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, but was able to play in two Commonwealth Games in 2010 and 2014.

- ◆ I have started a badminton brand, called Volant Wear. Our vision is

to show the world how incredible the sport of badminton is, because it doesn't get the recognition that it deserves. We make clothing and badminton apparel to change how badminton looks and are building a badminton community that will teach badminton players to be better in their sport and lives.

- ◆ Snowboarding – I haven't been since my accident as I am still healing, but I really want to. I love it, it's worth the risk.

Any regrets?

Selling really worked out well for me. It has been 11 months since surgery and my hand is almost recovered; it is functional, but it will take a bit longer to return to its normal strength, so I'm making sure I do the right things so that I don't re-injure it. If I had been practicing dentistry in the way I was before the surgery, I may have caused more damage long term – a chance that I didn't want to take.

For me, it's not about proving anything to anyone, it's about making the best choice you have at the time with the info you have and not looking back and having any regrets. ◆



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