Dr. Painless Parker: lessons for today’s dental marketing

By Dr. James McAnally, CEO of Big Case Marketing

Dr. Painless Parker was rebellious, rich and detested by most of his peers to such an extent that they invented special laws just to keep him from practicing dentistry. In spite of all this, he was an extremely successful dentist and holds a few lessons for today’s dental marketing.

Born in 1872 in Canada, the man who came to be known as Dr. Painless Parker entered Philadelphia Dental College (now Temple University) in 1890, at the age of 18. Like a significant number of graduates, he started out as a “street dentist” following his two-year education.

Street dentists were every bit of a road show as they put their equipment in a horse drawn wagon and took their services directly to the people.

Parker hired a former manager who had worked for P.T. Barnum, and he began traveling the streets of New York with a full-on circus complete with show girls, a band and a bugle blower who blasted notes each time Parker removed a tooth. The band and bugler were there to cover up the patient’s yelps from pain because there was no anesthesia in those days. Brooklyn became the headquarters for the non-traveling version of Dr. Parker’s practice.

Dr. Parker would take out a rotten tooth for 50 cents. He promised that if you felt pain during the extraction with his E.R. Parker System, he’d actually give you 5 bucks — the equivalent of $114 today.

What got Parker in trouble was that he figured out that getting the word out about his services was more important than any other thing he could do. To do so, he chose to become highly visible to everyone, patients and dentists alike. Imagine a cross between Colonel Sanders and Billy Graham as a street dentist.

He went so far as to don a top hat — which in those days was the symbol of the upper class — while wearing his white doctor coat, and wore the outfit with a necklace of 557 extracted teeth that he had removed in one day.

Arrested after ‘special laws’ made to attack him

Parker took to the streets of Canada for a period and Canadian dentists were so upset they pushed through a special registration fee required just for street dentists and arrested Parker for violation just two days after the law came into effect. He continued his self-promotion though, and by 1904, his net worth from dentistry was $500,000, which would be $11 million today.

While the Canadian dentists had put their petty scheme into place, the New York dental “leaders” got a law on the books that forbade dentists to use an assumed name. As a result, Dr. Painless Parker said goodbye to New York and packed up for California.

By 1906, Parker was again “open for business” on the streets of Los Angeles, and by 1910, he was even more wealthy than he had been in New York. In California, attempts were made to label him as “unethical” and “incompetent.” Thus, he was forced to take out large ads to fight the slander and to expose that the attackers were motivated by their wallets rather than their self-righteous proclamations. However, if his clinics were operating today at an equivalent level, they’d be producing $35 million annually.

By the time he died in 1952, Dr. Painless Parker was a multimillionaire many times over thanks to real estate holdings on top of all the dental practices he leased to his associates.
Parker's lessons for today's dentists

Parker's success was by way of marketing. To be honest, sales wasn't as critical in those days as there were far fewer dentists. Making a reasonable living in dentistry wasn't a problem. However, if you wanted to reach for the stars, especially in competitive cities, just like today, you had to seriously attack the marketing for your practice and become fearless about doing so. Painless Parker's success was due to his marketing. Yes, he was an astute businessperson, but he also executed and thought about his marketing a lot.

He practiced highly effective marketing that:
• was completely contrary to the opinion of the majority of his peers,
• flew in the face of convention,
• was loud and proud about his solution to patient's problems,
• led to helping lots of patients,
• made him wealthy and
• allowed him to leverage off his dental wealth to become personally wealthy.

Parker was hated by a large portion of his peers, but yet I've had three patients in my short career speak fondly of having been treated by Dr. Painless Parker — again, we know the odds of them having actually been treated by Parker is nearly zero. However, those same patients probably don't remember my name.

Parker's success was due to marketing and the never-ending pursuit of selling more of what he was good at and what the population needed — basic dentistry. Promotion works. Creating celebrity really works.

Dr. Roger P. Levin, chairman and CEO of Levin Group, announced the company has formed an alliance with ABEL Dental Software, a Buffalo, New York-based practice management software firm. ABEL Dental Software will work with Levin Group’s Total Practice Success™ practice management consulting division as well as its Total Practice Success™ training division.

Levin Group will provide training for ABEL Dental Software customers on Power Cell Scheduling™, a scheduling system developed by Levin Group to maximize dental practices’ efficiency and productivity. The training program will be custom-designed around ABEL Dental Software’s products to help its customers fully understand the products leading to maximum utilization.

Levin is one of the profession’s most sought-after speakers, bringing his Total Practice Success™ Seminars to thousands of dentists and dental professionals each year. A pioneer of dental practice management, he developed the Levin Group Method™, a systems-based methodology that effectively brings the business side to dentistry.

ABEL Dental Software Inc., of Buffalo, New York and affiliate ABELDent Inc., of Burlington, Ontario, are leading suppliers of comprehensive clinical and practice management software to dental practices. The companies provide ABELDent software and supplemental products and services, including practice Web sites, patient portals and patient education software to more than 6,000 dentists. ABEL offers 24/7/365 support and a comprehensive range of training options.

For more information, contact Levin Group at (888) 973-0000 or visit www.levingroup.com.

About the author

Dr. James McAnally is CEO of Big Case Marketing, a global leader in providing turnkey marketing for the complex case patient and in teaching a trademarked sales system to dentists who treat elective reconstructive and dental implant patients. Big Case Marketing doctors are on three continents and programs are conducted worldwide. His two-days per week part-time practice focusing on reconstructive and implant dentistry is in Seattle, Wash. To find out more visit, www.bigcasemarketing.com or e-mail info@bigcasemarketing.com.

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Dr. James McAnally has an active general practice in Seattle, WA. He has earned fellowships in the Academy of General Dentistry, the International Congress of Oral Implantologists and the Misch International Implant Institute.

As the founder and CEO of Big Case Marketing and a private consultant, Dr. McAnally has helped dentists world-wide realize their goals of developing high-producing fee-for-service practices.

THE MAXIMUM CASE ACCEPTANCE SYSTEM™ by Dr. James McAnally

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Infiltration: a new treatment for caries

By Javier Martinez de Pison, DT Latin America

The president of DMG America, George Wolfe, couldn’t be happier. German-based researchers associated with DMG obtained the IADR “Materials and Bioengineering Research Award” for their investigations on resin infiltration of natural caries lesions using “Icon,” DMG’s new revolutionary resin.

The winners, Sebastian Paris, H. Meyer-Lueckel and A. M. Kielbassa of the University School of Dental Medicine, Charité-Berlin, Germany, used the Icon resin, which replaces hard tissue lost in caries to demineralization (500 μm), sealing the approximal region. This microinvasive therapy can arrest caries progression by infiltrating and sealing the problematic region.

Infiltration with Icon means that this resin creates a diffusion barrier not on the surface but within the hard tissue, stabilizing and blocking the caries, which in approximal applications is indicated up to a maximum radiological lesion progression into the outer third of the dentine.

Caries infiltration is a recommended treatment for vestibular smooth surface lesions, which are frequently observed after the removal of fixed orthodontic appliances and in patients with poor oral hygiene. The treated lesions lose their opaque color and resemble healthy enamel, producing a drastic aesthetic improvement.

Wayne Flavin, director of scientific affairs for DMG, said that Icon bridges the gap between remineralization and restoration, and provides an opportunity to treat upon discovery of the caries.

Simple procedure and esthetic results

He explained that Icon is not unlike any other restorative resin “where dentists etch, rinse, dry and light-cure, so they are using a technique they are already familiar with, except that the materials are revolutionary in what they are capable of doing.”

“It’s a resin that penetrates very deeply into a lesion to seal and arrest the progression of the lesion,” Flavin explained. “At the same time, you get a very good cosmetic result because the refraction index of the material is very similar to enamel.”

The procedure takes between 10 and 15 minutes, depending on the familiarity of the dentist with the product and where they are working, such as vestibular or approximal lesions. Flavin said that DMG is developing training videos and C.E. programs for dentists, although most are familiar with it.

Icon comes in a kit containing products such as a patented double syringe for etching that uses a screw-type mechanism that facilitates its application.

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Mirror handles and kits now in stock

In PhotoMed’s last e-mail newsletter they introduced their new Universal Mirror Handle, but they were not yet available. They now have them in stock and showed the new handle for the first time at the CDS meeting Chicago, where they were extremely popular. PhotoMed has them available individually or in kits with three mirrors.

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Beautiful II – Beautifil Flow – Beautifil Opaquer

Beautiful II, a nano-hybrid composite restorative material, is ideal for universal application. The second generation of Shofu’s Beautiful offers the possibility of creating several layers of naturally appearing composites in combination with improved handling properties.

Beautiful II is a proven material for esthetic restorations of anterior and posterior teeth that allows for realistic color reproduction due to its combination of light scattering and diffusing properties. By copying the natural light transmission of dentin and enamel, perfect restorations are produced with single or multilayer techniques, Shofu said.

Beautiful II exhibits high flexural strength and low abrasion. New and improved Beautiful II is a direct composite resin that incorporates S-PRG technology. This unique technology produces esthetic and long-lasting restorations that release and recharge fluoride. Beautiful II is available in pre-filled tips, syringes and a variety of kits in a wide selection of shades. The new less-sticky formula and “One Touch Cap” of the syringe enhances dispensing and delivery.

Shofu’s Beautiful line also includes a flowable material. Beautiful Flow is available with two different levels of viscosity — F2 and F10 — for a varied range of applications, such as fissure sealing, undercut block-out or as a base and liner.