

The journal for

Private Dentistry

Essential reading for private practice development

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**Winners, pictures
and reaction inside!**

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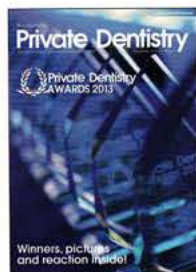
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Life after dentistry

When **Harry Singh** gave up dentistry, colleagues couldn't understand why. Here, he gives a frank and tongue in cheek look at why he will never drill or fill another hole, and what drives him to follow his true passions in life

We all have dreams, goals and things we love doing, however, life is filled with activities and commitments that have nothing to do with our dreams or goals. In business and life, we operate on autopilot and live life in reactive mode. Sometimes we do what we think is right or what we think other people think will be right. I began to have this feeling a couple of years ago. At times I felt like a cross-eyed discus thrower; I would never set my own personal goals, but I would definitely keep everyone else entertained.

Design for life

I decided to take ownership of my life and future, instead of letting life happen to me. If you don't design your own life plan, chances are that you will fall into someone else's plan.

It was not as though I had failed, I had achieved success. I would have been more than comfortable if I carried on with what I was doing and where I was going, however I wanted to be outstanding, more successful and make a difference.

Being successful is not an end goal, it is a journey and those that are truly successful are the ones that know they will never reach the end journey. Becoming more each day is the true definition of being successful.

I didn't want to slug out my guts for another 20 years doing something that was not my true passion and, at the end of it, retire to 'enjoy' my life and receive a pension and say: 'Is that it?' I wanted my life back now. Success is the process of turning away from something to turn towards something better.

The Harajuku moment

After visiting an elderly relative in hospital who did not have much more time left in this world, I was reflecting on my own life and had a Harajuku moment (a term coined by Malcolm Gladwell, as a moment in

time where you have a revelation that must happen now, and fast. In *The 4-Hour Body*, Timothy Ferriss described the Harajuku moment as 'an epiphany that turns a nice-to-have into a must-have').

I imagined myself as an old man, rocking on my chair at the front of my house and reflecting on my time on this planet. Days are expensive – when you end a day, you have one less day to spend. I therefore wanted to make sure I spent each and every one wisely.

What I feared most was not having lived to the fullest extent possible. I didn't want to come to the end of my life and my final words being: 'I wish I had...'

You listen to the older generation and I can promise you that 99% will not regret what they did, but more what they didn't do. I want to prepare to die well, with no regrets.

Back to the start

I wanted to be a dentist from the age of 12. I loved science, but this was not the deciding principle. One

Retired dentist **Harry Singh** is founder and CEO of Dental Property Club as well as aesthetics dental practice. He is a property investor and facial aesthetician. Visit www.dentalpropertyclub.co.uk for more details.

day I went to the local library (for it was before the days of Google), picked up a careers book and looked at what profession made the most money! The job title in the book said dentist. Once I had made sure that no one in my family was a dentist, I decided that this was the road to riches, fame, success and world domination.

I fluked my dental admissions interview by paying someone at my school to make a clay model, to demonstrate my superb manual dexterity skills.

After I had graduated in 1996 from Leeds Dental School, I followed the usual pathway of VT and associateship.

As a typical Indian boy, I wanted to be the big boss, control everything, and have the accolade to announce I am a business owner at wedding functions. I hoped this would allow me to marry a 'fit bird' – all arranged, of course.

To the max

After buying, opening and selling several dental practices, I was able to live a very good lifestyle, which included buying 'boys toys' (such as sports cars and watches) and traveling the world. While making money and all its trappings fun, I found the happiness to be short-lived. I felt like a drug addict; no matter how often I bought materialistic items, the happiness would not be sustainable.

Contrary to popular believe, the key to happiness is not having more (bigger houses, faster cars, more holidays) – it is becoming more.

Similar to many dentists who have spent several years drilling and filling under the NHS, I decided to improve and expand my dental menu of services. I was hoping that this would be the answer to the lack of appreciation and satisfaction I was getting from my chosen career.

So I enrolled on as many courses as possible with the ambition of working in a modern, contemporary dental practice, which stood out from the run of the mill practices. So I set up a state-of-the-art private squat called Aesthetics in 2007.

Dental dreams

Aesthetics was my dream practice – it had everything I wanted. We won awards (including Best Marketing at the Private Dentistry Awards 2008 and Best Team at the Dentistry Awards 2007) and were shortlisted for a whole host of others.



I loved the creation of the Aesthetics brand for our patients and my professional colleagues. I do not regret a minute of this journey and without Aesthetics I would not have met or worked with some wonderful dental coaches, suppliers and colleagues.

However, as a business owner, I was in at the deep end, each and every day. I could not let go and I wasn't willing to delegate to others. Looking back now, it was stupid. It's like the owner of Liverpool FC playing in the team on the pitch every Saturday afternoon. The owner's job is to watch the game and then make the tough decisions. I had to be watching the game and not playing in it. I realised I could not do this with dentistry and so, coupled with my true passions, I decided to sell the practice.

I made mistakes along the way, which I tend not to call mistakes but learning experiences. I don't dwell on them, as I believe you can either have 'reasons' or 'results' in life.

The meaning of life

I felt that there was something missing in my life, that I was not living my ultimate life mission. I had happiness, but did I really have meaning? Happiness is the moments in life and meaning is the sense of connection. I felt disconnected (similar to when a rotary file breaks in the canal away from the drill).

I had a very comfortable life. I am married with two children, have a large family home, two cars, and go on good holidays – I was thankful for my life.

I knew I had made some tradeoffs – burning the midnight oil, less family time than desired, not enough exercise, a bit more drinking than the recommendations. However, I was in a similar position to my professional colleagues. I would regularly discuss these tradeoffs with them and it was an accepted part of the game we were in.

But at my Harajuku moment, I asked myself the following questions:

1. Am I following my heart and being true to myself? What would my dream lifestyle look like? Not necessarily measured by what you have, but what you have achieved. Have you changed people for the better?
2. Is my life focused on the things that really matter to me?
3. Am I being the person I want to be in the world?

I tried to find the answers to these questions over the next few months by reading books, going to seminars, as well as listening to music in the car.

I stumbled upon the answer and, like most strategies/procedures, it was very simple and easy to understand but difficult to practise. There are only two tasks in human life:

1. To find ourselves (our destiny, to be true to oneself)
2. To lose oneself (connect to something much larger, a greater significance).

In certain stages in our lives we know what the right thing to do is, but lack the courage to act.

Now, I am in no way implying that dentistry cannot change peoples' lives for the better or that, as a profession, we don't have a vital role to play in this world. I am lucky to have friends who are amazing dentists – I respect them, they do a fantastic job and are following their life passions. I am just not one of them.

Follow your heart

While looking for answers, I was working harder on myself than I was on my career. It seems fitting here to mention some of the mentors that have made a significant impact on my personal development – Tony Robbins, Jim Rohn, Zig Ziglar, Jack Canfield, Darren Hardy and Brian Tracy.

You cannot do this all by yourself – your network is your net worth, after all.

You have to share your vision with your loved ones and my wife Sarb has always been there for me and never doubted my

decisions. I am also fortunate enough to have a fantastic friend in Smita Mistry (DCP at Aesthetics) who is always willing to listen to me and give her unbiased input into my decisions.

I knew I had to follow my heart and my passion. I think Oscar Wilde summed it up nicely: 'Be yourself, everyone else is already taken'.

Let's say you found out you only had six months to live. What are the five things you must do before these six months come to an end? So now, those five things you must do, are they not important enough to do regardless of how much time you have left?

Fight the fear

I believe that true power is to take action despite of fear. It was a brave move and my friends and family advised against it. They said I would be wasting all those years of studying, that dentistry was a good reputable profession, and asked what the ladies in the Sikh temple would think about me!

The grass is not always greener on the other side, and many dentists have returned to dentistry after failed alternative careers.

I wanted to prove them wrong, but this was not the main driving force for me to change pathways. I wanted to do what I have always wanted to do but was afraid of the risk. We are all scared, but 'fear' can either stand for 'forget everything and run' or 'face everything and rise'.

I decided to do the latter. Instead of playing the safe option of believing it when I saw it, I knew that I would have to approach my next step along the lines of seeing it when I believe it. Now, I didn't change careers without any experience with my new ventures.

Lord Sugar once said that to go into any business, you must have passion, experience and knowledge about it. It really is as simple as this. Most people forget the knowledge and experience part and think passion alone will give them success. Just choosing a business for passion will be fun but without the correct knowledge and experience, you won't be able to build your business in the correct way.

Don't go for the 'pin the tail on the donkey' approach to choosing your alternative career pathway. It will take time and you will make mistakes.

Here and now

These days I split my time between two business enterprises. I get my hands dirty in each enterprise and I also train others in what I carry out myself:

1. Facial aesthetics

I love the facial aesthetics aspect of my work. I had treated more than 1,500 patients at Aesthetics and now carry out these procedures weekly. I love the patient interaction with this type of work. There are no patients phoning me in the middle of the night to talk about a loose crown, broken tooth or sensitivity after a large restoration! I love the fact that you can boost their self-esteem and confidence within 30 minutes.

2. Property

I have been investing in property for more than 10 years alongside my dentistry career – I love this and am truly passionate about this business. I found it a perfect avenue to invest the money I made from dentistry and help me become financially free. I have amassed a portfolio worth more than £7

million. I have enough passive income from this portfolio to never have to work again, but I very much enjoy this business.

I started the Dental Property Club after speaking to many dentists who said that they were unsure where to invest their money – they were unhappy with leaving it in the bank and the very poor returns. They wanted to get into property, but didn't know where to start.

Through the Dental Property Club, I will be sharing my strategies regarding property investment, so you can avoid all the pitfalls and all the mistakes I have made. If you would like more details about this, please visit www.dentalpropertyclub.co.uk.

I have succeeded in my new ventures because I have the basics of passion, experience and knowledge in my chosen fields and I follow a formula that one of my mentors (Tony Robbins) uses for ultimate success:

- Target – have a clear focus on what you want to achieve
- Act – if you don't act, your goals will just be dreams
- Review – make sure the results you are producing are you towards (and not away) from your targets
- Flexible – you need to be able to adjust and adapt to keep you on track.

All you have to do is decide, commit, and resolve.

Free love

We have all heard people say: 'I love this so much, I would do it for free'. I have a different slant to this, which is: 'I love this so much, it is the only thing I will do for money'.

It can be done! You have to take action now. You can either spend your whole time planning your life, or you can live it.

I have never regretted choosing dentistry as a career, it has given me huge opportunities and flexibilities to pursue other avenues and follow my dreams. PD

Harry will be running the Wealth creation day for dentists course on 21 February 2014. For more details, visit www.wealthcreation4dentists-eorg.eventbrite.com. Alternatively visit www.dentalpropertyclub.co.uk.



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