

'Focus on your net income'

Dr Bim Sawhney
Riverside Dental, Norwich



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I opened Riverside Dental, a state of the art, fully private practice, in the centre of Norwich back in November 2011, and initially met my Denplan Consultant, Frances Lynch, when she ventured onto the building site to talk to us. She wanted to discuss joining Denplan, but as we had no patients and no income at the time Denplan didn't seem relevant. As patients began to register, we signed up with another payment plan provider, purely on the basis of cost, as they offered a very cheap and basic plan, which was all we wanted while we were starting up. But that's all it was – there was no training, no backup, no support.

This suited us fine for the first few years, but as the practice grew we knew we needed to work with a payment plan provider that offered us more professional and business support. We only had a one-size fits all plan, and wanted to develop a more bespoke plan system, so last year I started to speak to colleagues in practices that had either always worked with Denplan or had returned to Denplan from another plan provider. They all recommended the move. Finally I contacted Frances again and asked her to come up with a bespoke business proposal. I could see from the start that despite the admin fee being more expensive, the support Denplan could offer us in all areas of the practice was much more comprehensive.

We went ahead with the move, four years after we first discussed it, and it went smoothly. Frances came for regular meetings ahead of the switch and during the process, armed with a tick list of items to discuss and actions we needed to take. The hands-on consultant support made everything very straightforward. You need your hand to be held when you are running a busy practice and making a big move like this, but Frances trained me and the staff in explaining Denplan to patients and was present in the practice to clarify any issues while we were going through the conversion. Everything was agreed with us in advance and it was all much simpler than I had expected.

The numbers are going up. We originally had 278 patients with the previous plan provider, and as part of our five-year business plan Frances set us a target to achieve by the end of each year. We met the first target easily and now have over 400 patients with Denplan. Promotions and incentives have played a big part in motivating the staff, and we have done very well because of them. Over the last year we have regularly won vouchers and hampers, which we've shared throughout the team, and which keep them focused and motivated. Our head nurse, Claire, is the practice Denplan Champion, responsible for promoting Denplan in the practice, and she has benefited from special promotions, goody bags to hand out, and the Denplan Champions' training day.

We're also taking advantage of the wide range of training Denplan offers. I have attended a number of CPD days and will be attending the Key Client Forum this year. My practice manager is also now attending the Practice Manager Forum, and Frances is putting together a bespoke training programme for us, to include three specific modules that particularly interest me: telephone tactics, customer care and creating an award-winning practice, and increasing treatment acceptance.

We already had our own ideas on marketing the practice, but have had a bespoke marketing visit to discuss other opportunities and ways to implement our strategies. It has been very useful to talk plans through with people who are specifically trained in marketing, and who do it for their job! We enjoy dedicated consultant support, and Frances has put a range of measures in place to keep us on our toes, such as 'mystery shopper' tests, phone calls actually made from Denplan head office to make sure that our staff are giving the right messages and that our practice is the best it can be.



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The best thing about Denplan is knowing that just a phone call away there is expert support in whatever aspect of the practice you need, both clinical and business. A few months ago, for example, I had a query about CQC, which Denplan's former Chief Dental Officer, Roger Matthews was able to help me with himself. If I need any other advice, I know it is available – and someone at Denplan will have the answer or be able to find it for me.

On the financial side, the move has certainly paid off. We sit down with Frances annually to review our Denplan fees, which is something we had never done with our previous provider. As a result the practice suffered a considerable amount of lost income due to some of our

patients remaining on the same fees for several years. It is important to focus not on the cost of the admin fee but on the net income – in fact the net income we currently receive from our payment plan patients has gone up by 43% since we joined Denplan.

I would advise any other practice considering a move to switch to Denplan. We were fully supported right through the transfer and afterwards as a valued client, and it was made very easy for us. Speak to colleagues who have converted to Denplan to ascertain their experience, and then just go for it. Don't just go on price. Cheaper isn't always better!



Biography

Dr Bimesh Sawhney is Principal at Riverside Dental in Norwich, a purpose built private practice which he set up in 2011. A graduate of Guy's Hospital, he has continued his training with a particular interest in cosmetic dentistry and teeth whitening. He is a member of BACD and lectures at postgraduate teaching events across East Anglia and beyond.



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