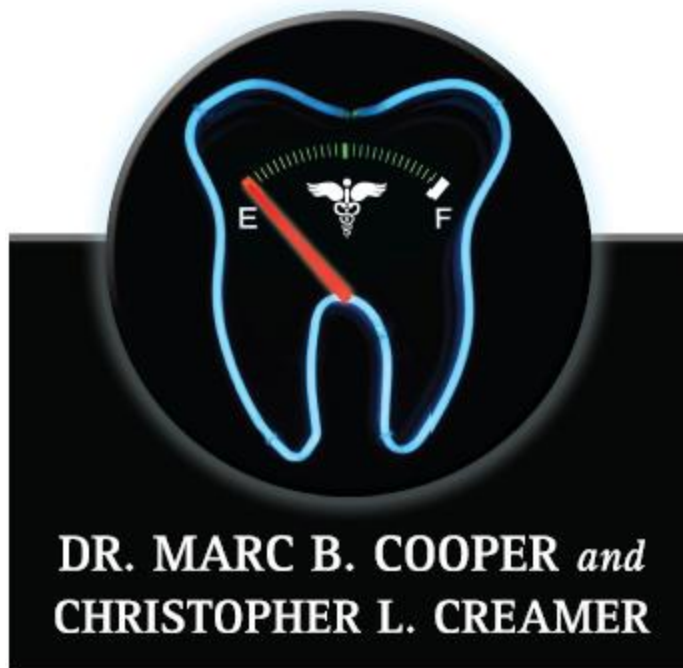


# RUNNING ON EMPTY

Answers to Questions Dentists  
Have about the Recession



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Matt King edited all parts of the book, Running on Empty (2009), from which this chapter was taken.

Please feel free to forward this via email to whomever you believe would benefit.

Thank You!

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*Answers to Questions Dentists Have about the Recession*

*by*

*Dr. Marc B. Cooper*

*Christopher Creamer*

*2009*

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## ACCOUNTABILITY

*Until the last eight months, my staff's performance has been pretty good. We have relied on an employee manual I bought several years ago. Every job description is complete and clear. My staff is doing what they've always done, but it's not helping me in areas that I really need, like increasing restorative out of hygiene, more new patients, being more efficient. Should I revamp my employee manual?*



Like you, most dentists manage by job description. Dentists believe that if you accurately describe to the staff exactly what you want them to do and how you want them to do it, it will happen. But describing how to perform your job and delivering high performance are not the same.

Telling people to exercise, what exercises to do and the desired result, doesn't get people to the gym. Telling people what to eat, how to eat and when to eat, doesn't work for dieting. So, telling a staff member what you want them to do, how you want it done and the results you want produced. What are the chances?

As a parent, if you were asked for a job description, you might produce 20 pages of the things you do every day, a long list of duties and tasks. However, if asked what you are accountable for as a parent, your response would be brief and to the point.

As a parent your accountability would be the same, whether the child is 5 or 25: *I am accountable for my child's well-being.* As a parent, all the jobs you do are to fulfill your accountability. You see, when you are accountable, you figure out what you need to do and how you need to do it. The same thing is true for the front desk. Their job description would include hundreds of tasks, but their accountabilities would be few. All the various tasks they do are simply to fulfill their few accountabilities, such as scheduling and collections.

We recommend you manage by accountability, not job description. Our definition of accountability is simple and straightforward: *What you can be counted on to do.* Accountability is the bottom line. It is the lines on the court and the rules of the game. Job description is last year's play book.

Why is accountability more powerful than job description? A job description doesn't require responsibility; it only outlines what you should do. A job description doesn't embody any commitments, accountability does. A job description doesn't put you at-stake, accountability puts you on the hook. Accountability is a stand you take. A job description only informs you of what to do.

Another important aspect is you can't be accountable to yourself. You need to be accountable to another, someone who will hold you to account. It takes time to set up these relationships, but defining accountability and the conditions required to fulfill the accountability, structuring the reporting processes, and developing effective communication methods really pays off.

If you look closely, you'll see that accountability is missing from most dental practices, and that includes the dentist. This is one big reason the majority of dentists don't deliver the results—because there is no one holding the dentist to account for what they do, what they say and their results. And since the dentist isn't held to account, rarely will he or she hold their staff to account.

In the Mastery Company model, we establish accountability in a dental practice by teaching and coaching a specific process. We ask four basic questions of each individual staff member and the doctor. The answers are rigorously negotiated between the dentist and each staff member until mutual agreements and real commitments are reached. Here are the four questions we begin the process with:

*What are the core activities that you are responsible for?*

*What are the expected outcomes from these core activities?*

*How will your success in these activities be measured? What is your metrics of success?*

*What conditions do you need in place to be successful in these activities? What do you need from the dentist, from the rest of the staff, to succeed in these activities? (This also includes what level of authority that will be assigned to the accountability).*

It takes times to develop mutually agreed upon responses and settle in to manage by accountability. But when it's complete, people know what they are accountable for and what they need to do to succeed at their job.

In our experience, management by accountability is far more powerful and produces far better results than managing by job description. And in these tough economic times, you need to be able to count on each member of your staff to get the job done.



**BOOKS by Dr. Marc Cooper**

Mastering the Business of Practice

Partnerships in Dental Practice

SOURCE; The Genesis of Success in Business & Life

Running on Empty; Answers to Questions Dentists Have about the Recession

Valuocity; A Fable about Dental Practice (Fall, 2009)

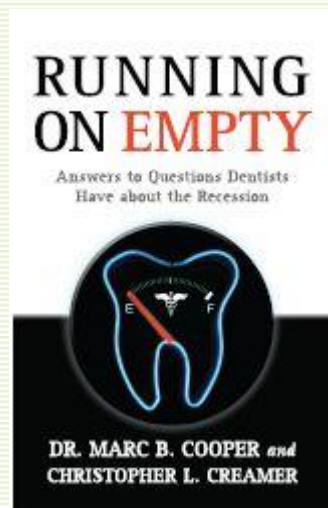
*Available at Amazon.com*

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***‘RUNNING ON EMPTY’  
ORDER INFORMATION***

*The book will be available July 31<sup>st</sup> at  
[www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) for single copies.*

*For 50 or more copies, please contact  
The Mastery Company at (425) 806-8830*



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