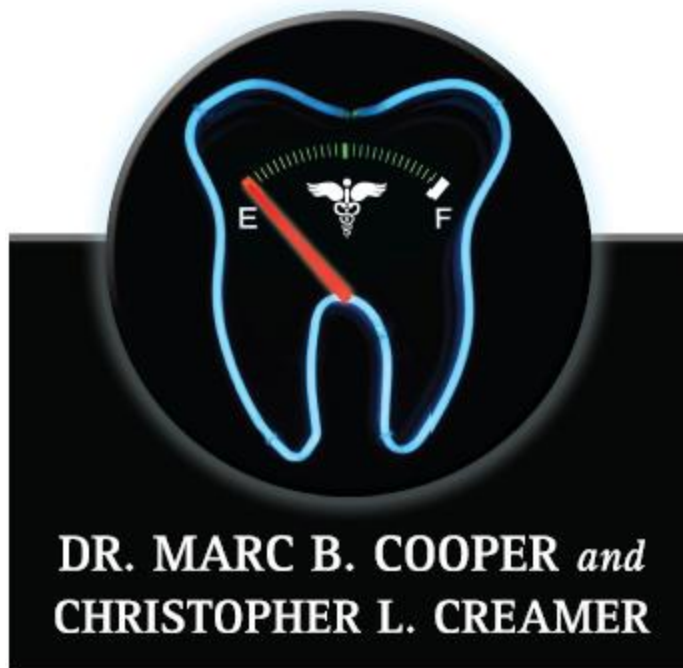


RUNNING ON EMPTY

Answers to Questions Dentists
Have about the Recession



DR. MARC B. COOPER *and*
CHRISTOPHER L. CREAMER



© 2009 by Dr. Marc Cooper & Christopher Creamer

The Mastery Company
MasteryCompany.com
PO Box 1806
Woodinville, WA 98072

Copyright holder is licensing this under the Creative Commons License, Attribution 3.0.
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/byu/3.0/us/>

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!

RUNNING ON EMPTY

Answers to Questions Dentists Have about the Recession

by

Dr. Marc B. Cooper

Christopher Creamer

2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

The New Context

The Opportunity

Culture of Change

How the Future Shows Up for You

Vision Lost

What Makes Successful Practices Successful

Is 'Excellence' Your Core Value?

Operating States and Integrity

Shift from Beauty to Health

PART II

Rules for Change

Cash is King

More with Less

Manage Your Management

I'll Take Care of You

Don't Be Road Kill

Accountability

Listening

Great Patient Service

Customer or Patient?

New Patient Referrals

PART III

Bridge to the Future

Self Improvement vs. Remastery

The Triangle Offense

Core Values and Remastery

Final Words

CUSTOMER OR PATIENT?

I've got serious problems between the back and the front desk. They are always at each other's throats. Given our small number of new patients, we've got to ramp up our service to keep the patients we've got. Why can't my staff get along since we're all in this together?



In the new economy, anything less than extraordinary customer service places you at risk. Every practice around you is trying harder to keep the patients they have and attract new ones to make up for the loss of production. You can ill afford to lose patients at this time. And more or better dentistry is not going to bring in new patients or keep old ones when they are reluctant to spend money. Therefore, patient service must be a top priority.

Now, there is a condition in many practices which results in stress between the front and the back staff. You see, when a person calls your office, or walks in and sits down in your waiting room, he or she is not a patient. He or she is a customer. And a customer is different than a patient. They have different emotional make-ups. They have different expectations. They have different behaviors. They operate within different contexts. It's these differences between a customer and a patient that are ultimately the source of breakdowns and upsets between the front and the back.

The front desk and back office think and work inside two different contexts, a context of customer versus a context of patient. When contexts collide, conflict and upsets arise. It's not surprising how conflict can build between the front and back.

Look at how you think and behave when you are a customer. What do you expect in terms of service and response? As a customer, you expect the service to be precisely on time. As a customer you expect to be held in extremely high regard. As a customer you expect your requests to be fully met and totally complied with. As a customer you anticipate you should be the total focus of whoever is waiting on you. You accept as true the axiom, "the customer is king."

So as a customer, people have strong demands in terms of how they are related to by your staff. As a customer, individuals have strongly held beliefs about the way they should be spoken and listened to. The front desk is totally shaped by the context of customer so they must provide the relationships, service and communications appropriate to that context. Remember, context is decisive.

But when a person crosses the threshold into your operatory, they immediately transform from customer to patient. A patient has a totally different way of thinking and acting. Look at your own experience of being a patient. You want to “partner” with the provider so you can get the most effective and gentle care. You are not demanding but rather compliant. You don’t know what to expect so you don’t speak with insistence. You don’t assume or presume. In many ways you want to serve your provider so he or she will serve you better. Clearly you are very different when you are a customer than when you are patient.

Given the way the back perceives the person as a patient, the back doesn’t understand or appreciate the degree of difficulty required in customer service and customer management. The back exists inside the context of patient, where for the most part the person is fully compliant and willing. “How can the front desk have a tough job when these people are so easy to manage?”

To make matters worse, as part of the context of patient, the back feels their work is much more important than the front, since they provide the dentistry. In the back dentistry is king, while in the front, the customer is king. Two kings can’t sit on the same throne.

Is it any wonder the back is frequently upset with the front and vice-versa? There’s a lot of talk about customer service in dentistry, but the real desire is patient care. More and better dentistry, not more and better customer service. If you look at the advances in dental care compared to the advances in customer care in a dental office, there is no comparison. Look at your checkbook and calendar. Which gets most or all of your attention—customer care or patient care?

Remember, better dentistry isn’t necessarily going to carry the day. In this new economy, better customer care brings in more patients. What would be the possibility of shifting the axis in your office from patient care to customer care? What would be the outcome if the back actually served the front in a way that outstanding customer care was the result?

You need to communicate clearly with staff. You need to listen to their positions and concerns, but make it clear that customer service trumps any of their territorial ambitions. There is no room for attitude. Every patient interaction, from the moment they enter the front door until they exit, must be seamless, of the highest caliber and with a single team objective in mind: outstanding patient service.



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

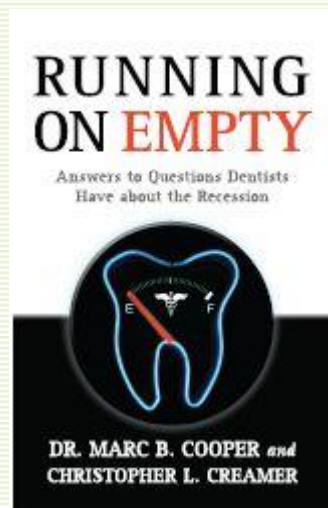
Valuocity; A Fable about Dental Practice (Fall, 2009)

Available at Amazon.com

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

*The book will be available July 31st at
www.Amazon.com for single copies.*

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



DR. MARC B. COOPER & CHRISTOPHER CREAMER



THE MASTERY COMPANY

MasteryCompany.com

All Rights Reserved 2009