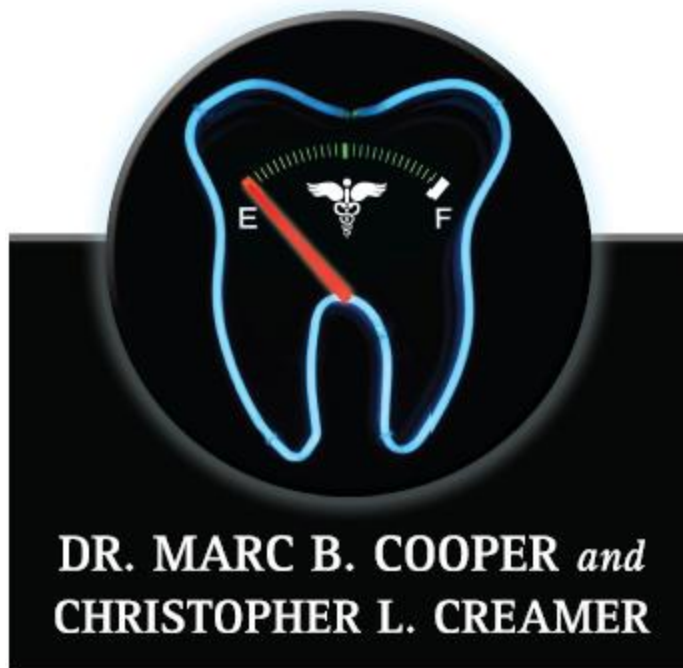


RUNNING ON EMPTY

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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by

Dr. Marc B. Cooper

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2009

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SELF IMPROVEMENT VS. REMASTERY

What distinguishes our work in the world of practice management consulting is not complicated. Although our work is based on time-tested disciplines and practices, contemporary as well as eternal, our consulting arises from one basic principle. *Context is decisive. And the recession has changed the context.*

Following this principle, our overriding intention is to alter a dentist's context. There are numbers of processes, concrete steps, and structural procedures we provide, such as strategic plans, authentic visions, a working budget, monthly targets, etc. But altering a client's context is the most fundamental and critical aspect of the consulting engagement.

Most consultants treat symptoms, not the underlying cause of why a practice under-performs. In treating the symptoms, consultants implement incremental change, which is never enough nor is it long lasting. Dentists who want lasting success require a fundamental shift in their capabilities.

To achieve this shift, dentists don't need to improve themselves, they need to reinvent themselves and remaster their practices.

Remastering is not changing what is. Remastering is creating what isn't. A butterfly is not an improved caterpillar. A butterfly is a totally different creature than a caterpillar.

To remaster, a dentist must first recognize, then be responsible for, and finally alter the underlying assumptions and premises on which he or she bases practice decisions and actions. But how do you reveal your underlying assumptions and premises? It's like seeing your own eyes.

We expose a client's assumptions and premises by facilitating their ability to recognize their current context. The context is the sum total of all the conclusions that a dentist has reached about running a dental practice. It is a product of their experience, their interpretations of the past and of their culture of private practice. This context consists of unspoken and even unacknowledged conclusions about the past that dictate, actually limit, what is possible for the future.

Once a dentist has uncovered their current context, he or she must confront what's next. That requires courage to break new ground, confront the past and leave behind an outmoded view of dental practice. Lots of risk. Lots of change. Lots of discomfort.

It is not uncommon for dentists to hold tightly onto what they already know at first. But they ultimately realize that if they continue to cling to what they have already done, they will continue to get what they already have. If they don't change, they'll remain stuck in a poorly performing practice.

In order to make this break from their present thinking, a dentist needs to be willing to undergo a major shift and serious soul-searching. But when a dentist makes authentic changes, if he or she truly alters the context, it not only produces the means to alter the entire culture of the practice and achieve unprecedented results, it also has the ability to sustain these changes.

What happens when a dentist changes their context? Here's an analogy:

You inherit your grandmother's house. Unknown to you has one peculiarity—all the light fixtures have bulbs that give off a blue rather than a yellow light. You find that you don't like the feel of the rooms. You spend a lot of time and money repainting, reupholstering furniture and replacing carpets. But you never seem to find just the right combination. Then one day, you notice the blue light bulbs and change them. Now everything you did looks poor.

Context is the color of the light, not the objects in the room. Context colors everything in the practice. Actually, context shapes what we see without being aware of it. Our first job is to help the dentist see the blue light (the context).

After you recognize and become responsible for your current context, then the next step is to create a “new” context.

This requires that you change your thinking and modify your actions. We accomplish this through our exclusive transformational technologies, using language as the medium for this transformation. This technology is far too involved to talk about in the scope of this book, but in essence, our clients stop listening to themselves and start talking to themselves.

By thinking in a different language, a language of leadership, a language of ownership, and a language of management, they change themselves, and this becomes the new context of the practice.

Try this. First, consider what you think leadership is. Write it down. Now evaluate yourself as a leader. Write this evaluation down.

Now, think a new thought about leadership. Is it difficult? Of course it is! This is difficult to do by yourself because you are stuck in concepts which are all past based. You are stuck in what others have told you about leadership. You are unable to see beyond what you already know. The thoughts you have are the very same ones you had before, therefore, the future will turn out just like the past. You have hit the boundaries of your context of leadership.

So try on a new thought. Consider that leadership is a verb rather than a noun—a totally different context in which to consider leadership. It changes everything about leadership. You no longer have to be charismatic, eloquent, brave or outgoing. All you need to do is act.

Operating from the new thought that leadership is a verb, you can now take different actions (not based on your past), say different things, feel different feelings—all because you changed your context of leadership as a noun to leadership as a verb.

We don't just work on the practice, its systems, structures, protocols and policies. There are many consultants who do this, and some do it quite well. The biggest difference is we also work on who you are, because you are the context within which your practice occurs. So, while many possibilities for self improvement exist via continuing education and consulting, it is the remastering of your practice that will make the biggest different in the long term.



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

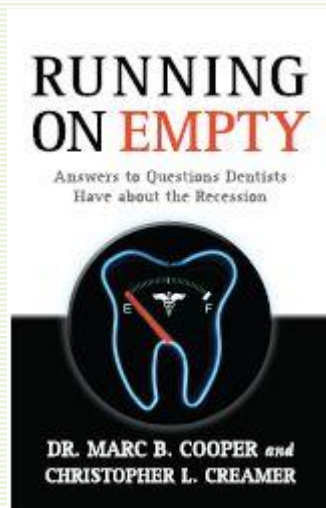
Valuocity; A Fable about Dental Practice (Fall, 2009)

Available at Amazon.com

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