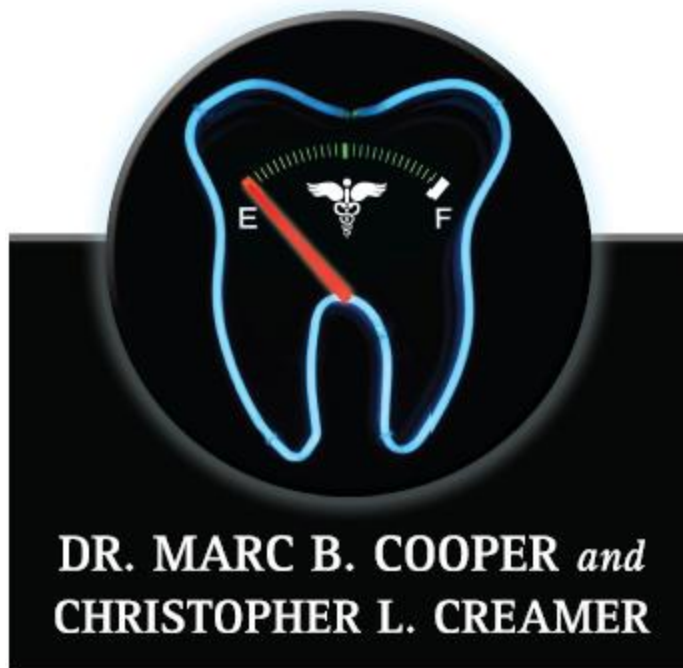


# RUNNING ON EMPTY

Answers to Questions Dentists  
Have about the Recession



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



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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!

# *RUNNING ON EMPTY*

*Answers to Questions Dentists Have about the Recession*

*by*

*Dr. Marc B. Cooper*

*Christopher Creamer*

*2009*

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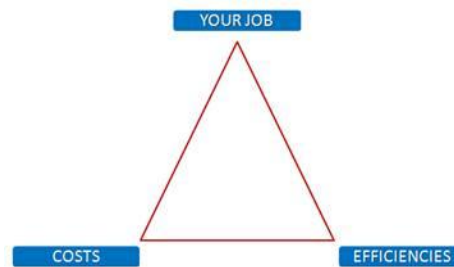
Final Words

## THE TRIANGLE OFFENSE

### REMASTERING SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

Since long before the recession took root, our challenge has been to coach clients to *remaster* their practices so they could remain viable. By remastering their thinking, systems and structures, they have also successfully positioned themselves to succeed into the future.

We coached owners of practices to focus on three primary aspects of their business operations. Much like the "triangle offense" of the Chicago Bulls and the Los Angeles Lakers, implemented so skillfully by Coach Phil Jackson, these practices committed to coordinating their activities on all three sides of an operational triangle.



#### **SIDE 1—Reduce Costs**

We coach clients to evaluate their expenses and reduce costs wherever they can. We make sure they have, and more importantly use, a functional budget. We developed an expense management tool to keep track of three categories of expenses (fixed, variable monthly and variable annual) and asked clients to use this tool as a simple way to actively manage expenses and anticipate the impact of variable revenue on their practice. Clients who are earnestly working at reducing costs are making a real difference in their ability to sustain their practices.

#### **SIDE 2—Increase Efficiencies**

We press clients to increase efficiencies through the following three steps. First, mistakes clearly cost time and money to correct and repair. Focus on identifying the causes of mistakes and reduce or eliminate them. Second, measure. Apply an effective metric to areas in which you want to be more efficient; confirmations, fewer no shows, less bracket breakage, better operatory management, new patient recruitment, etc.

Establish a base-line for the activity and watch for trends. And, third, set goals. Having a base line measure for activities and setting goals will drive improvement and generate greater efficiencies.

### **SIDE 3—Remember What Your Job Is**

Over the past 20-25 years, dentistry has become focused on the dentist, what they do and how they do it. Clearly, it has done the job. The quality of care, enhanced diagnosis and treatment planning technologies and protocols, evolving materials and methods, and clinical and management technologies (software, hardware, imaging) are nothing short of remarkable. What was impossible just a decade ago is now common in practice.

But this has come at a price. As more and more dentists focused on their dentistry and less on the patient, they forgot their primary directive: Take care of the patient. It became more about directing the patient to the latest and greatest dentistry available. This was supplemented by increasing patient cost and generating creative patient financing which left the dentist with little risk and a hefty margin. Patients became the means to the ends of financial success and the ability to deliver the most technologically advanced dentistry. Many dentists stopped serving the patient and became self- serving.

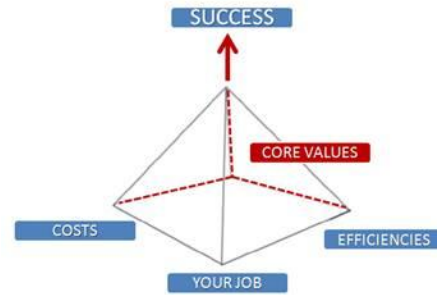
Dentists who remember that Job One is taking care of patients are winning the current battle. Dentists who refuse to consider what works for the patient, i.e. third party participation, treatment plans that regard the patient's financial status, health before beauty, are getting into trouble. Dentists who have pushed their practices exclusively into cosmetic, implant and reconstructive arenas are now the most threatened.

When the patient, not your dentistry is the focus of your work, it works.

### **CORE VALUES—The Missing Piece**

Now, since most problems are more complicated than they appear, most solutions tend to be more holistic in nature. The two dimensional representation outlined above (Reduce Costs/Improve Efficiencies/Remember What Your Job Is) is, in the end, but a 'slice' of the solution.

In reality, to provide a solid foundation, to infuse your practice with a culture based on core values, to ensure viability now and success into the future, you need to add Core Values. You thereby form a pyramid with "success" at the top, now supported by Reduce Costs/Improve Efficiencies/Remember What Your Job Is/Core Values.





**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*

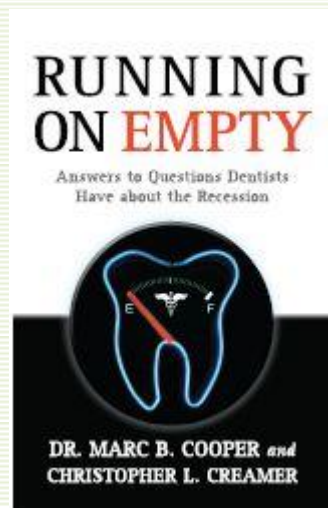


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***‘RUNNING ON EMPTY’  
ORDER INFORMATION***

*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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