

*Battling  
and Beating*  
**THE DEMONS <sup>OF</sup>  
DENTAL ASSISTING**

*How every dental assistant  
can have an amazing,  
fulfilling career*

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**INDIE BOOKS  
INTERNATIONAL**

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## *Preface*

**T**here's a saying: "If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life." I believe that to be true.

I love speaking to dental assistants and interacting with them. I've been lucky enough to do that for more than a decade, everywhere from Seattle to Boston and Phoenix to New Orleans. During my travels, however, I've seen dental assistants who are ready to give up and move on to another career. They're ready to quit because they have fallen out of love with their career. The light that burned so brightly when they first started as a dental assistant has been nearly snuffed out.

Those are the people who inspired me to write this book. Those are the people who were almost in tears after my courses because no one out there was speaking to them and listening to what they had to say. Those are

the people, and they are *you*.

It's been my honor to meet so many of you over the years. It will be my honor to meet many more. But above all of that, it will be my greatest joy to hear your tales of success and overcoming the demons that I talk about in this book.

You inspired me to write this book. I hope I can inspire you to change the way you look at your career, starting today.

Let's slay these demons together, and then let's talk about it when you see me at the next trade show or online at [IgniteDA.net](http://IgniteDA.net). I'm happy to be your biggest cheerleader and fan.

I can't wait to hear your success stories.

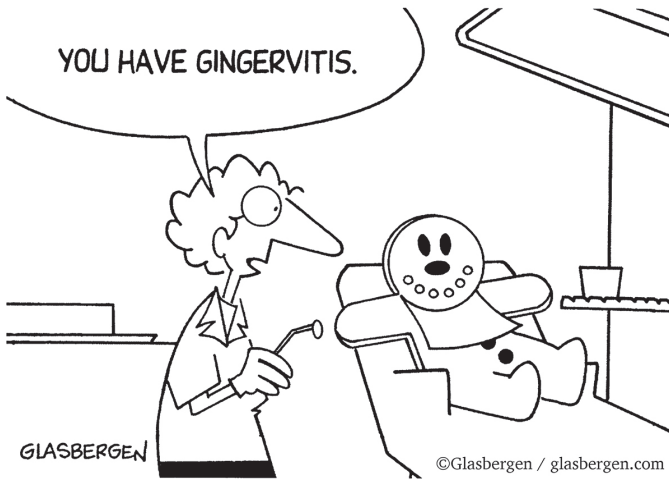
Kevin Henry

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## Chapter 1

# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

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If you're reading this book, I'm going to surmise one of two things. Either you're already a dental assistant, or you're thinking about becoming a dental assistant.

When I talk to dental assistants around the country, whether they've been an assistant for thirty years or thirty days, there is one constant. They love their

patients. They may not love the paycheck. They may not love the drama that happens in their practices. They may not love a lot of things that are involved with their careers, but they love their patients.

Speaking as a dental patient, that is worth its weight in gold. You see, when we patients sit in your dental chair, we look to you as our confidant and the person we can trust. We see you as a person who will give us a straight answer to any question, including whether we really need a new crown (even though the dentist just told us we do).

That's a big responsibility. You have the attention of the patient, and he or she is looking to you to cement a big decision in his or her mind. Is that patient going to accept treatment or walk out the door and "think about it?"

A lot of that rests in your hands. If I'm the patient and I ask you, "What do you think?" when it comes to a new crown, or implant, or filling, or whatever the procedure might be, I'm not just asking you because I want your opinion. I'm asking you because I trust you.

This is a scenario that plays out in dental practices throughout the country every day of every week of every year. Patients look to you and want to trust what you say. They want to see confidence in your eyes. They want to see a reassuring smile on your face. They want to know their oral health is your priority.

That's no small task, and it's certainly not a task to be taken lightly. Are you up for the challenge?

The vast majority of you say “yes,” and you show it every day in your work. You're not only there to be the advocate for your patient, but you're also there to be the glue that holds the entire practice together. Let's face it: if you call in sick, it's a bad day in the practice. No one else knows where any of the supplies are or when they need to be ordered. They also may have to actually remember how to take out the garbage and sterilize instruments. *Gasp!*

I remember one time when I was giving a lecture to dental assistants in Dallas. I actually had the entire team in my class: the dentist, hygienist, assistant, and office manager were all sitting there in the second row

as I spoke for three hours about the importance of the dental assistant in the practice.

After the course was over, all four came up front to where I was standing and thanked me for the talk. One by one, starting with the dentist, then the hygienist, then the office manager, and finally the assistant, they each shook my hand and told me they had enjoyed my talk. It felt a bit like the receiving line at a wedding, but it was a nice moment.

As I shook the assistant's hand, she introduced herself, and these were her exact words: "Hi. Thanks for the talk. My name is Marcy, and I'm just the dental assistant."

She said this in a quiet tone and in an almost apologetic way; however, it was the "just" that stood out to me more than anything.

I politely pulled her aside from the rest of the team and told her that she should never say she was "just" the dental assistant again. She's *the* dental assistant. She's *the* backbone of the practice. She's *the* heartbeat of the practice. She's *the* person that many patients trust when



they have a question or concern.

Dental assistants, I will tell you this: *You* have to have faith and confidence in yourself and in what you do. If you don't have confidence in yourself, who else is going to have confidence in you? It's a lesson that I've tried to teach to my daughter since the day she was born. It's a lesson I still try to instill in dental assistants in my talks throughout the nation.

If you do nothing else today, you must drop the word “just” from your vocabulary. A good friend of mine, Angela Severance, hosts a website for dental assistants called NINJAdentistry.com. Check it out. It's a great place where assistants are told how awesome they are (I love sites like that). But do you want to know what the best part about that whole site is? It's the name. You see, NINJA stands for, “No, I'm Not Just an Assistant.” (OK, there's an extra A in there, but you get the point.) You're not just an assistant. You're a valuable piece of the puzzle, and one that the dental practice simply couldn't function without.

I always encourage dentists and dental team members

to view the practice as a small business. It's a small business just as much as a local restaurant or flower shop or veterinarian. Every member of the dental team (including the dentist) is an employee of that small business, known more affectionately as the dental practice. Every member of the dental team has a role to play in order for that business to do well.

Think about walking into your local coffee shop. There are usually two or three people who have a job to do to make sure you walk out with the right cup of coffee. At the very least, there's a person who takes the order and a person who fulfills the order. If they don't do their jobs right, it's likely you're going to find somewhere else to get that cup of coffee in the morning.

The same is true for the dental practice. You have customers (patients) who come into your small business every day. How they are treated and their level of satisfaction will determine whether they come back for that root canal or six-month checkup. If they don't come back, your business suffers. If the business suffers, you as a worker suffer. It's not a pretty picture or cycle.

You see, the business of the practice doesn't just affect the doctor and whether he or she can make his next car payment (which is what the patient always thinks, right?). It's also about whether you can make your next car payment as well. It's about your family having the things you want them to have. It's about knowing that, at the end of the day, you're playing a key role in a business that is not only doing well financially but also changing lives.

And changing lives is why so many of you became assistants, right? You wanted to help Mrs. Jones smile again. You wanted to make sure that oral cancer is caught as early as possible. You want to watch when that teenager has his braces taken off and a big smile spreads across his face.

Those are just some of the moments that make you glad you're an assistant. I've seen the looks in your eyes when you've told me those stories. I know how much your patients mean to you. Those are the moments that make you smile, and we're going to talk a lot about those. There are also moments that make you cringe and grit your teeth and wonder why you ever became a dental

assistant. We're going to talk about those as well.

I believe strongly that dental assisting can be an amazing career for anyone who chooses it as their vocation. It's not just a stepping stone to hygiene. It's not just a job. It's a career where you can find joy and fulfillment.

So, why should you enjoy your career as an assistant? There are plenty of reasons for that, some of which we've already highlighted. But to enjoy your career, you have to know how to navigate through some of the minefields and pitfalls that have already claimed so many of your colleagues. That's where we're heading in the following chapters.

You are a rock-star dental assistant. You are an amazing asset to your business. Believe in yourself and believe in the power you have.

Remember the scene near the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, in which Glinda tells Dorothy she doesn't need to help her any longer?

**Glinda:** You don't need to be helped any longer.

You've always had the power to go back to Kansas.

**Dorothy:** I have?

**Scarecrow:** Then why didn't you tell her before?

**Glinda:** She wouldn't have believed me. She had to learn it for herself.<sup>1</sup>

I believe the same thing about assistants. You've always had the power to change lives inside of you. Sometimes, however, you need to go on a journey to discover that.

I hope this book will be your journey and you'll discover the power that's always been inside you. When you do, you will love your dental assisting career more than you ever thought possible.

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<sup>1</sup> "Movie Quote DB." Movie Quotes Database. Accessed May 10, 2017. [http://www.moviequotedb.com/movies/wizard-of-oz-the/quote\\_26339.html](http://www.moviequotedb.com/movies/wizard-of-oz-the/quote_26339.html).