

Keep your dental practice intact while preparing to sell

Dr. Steve had a potential merger opportunity. Offering equipment separately and directing patients elsewhere weakened the business a buyer might have purchased.



THE TAKEAWAY

Coordinate the sale, patient care and any wind-down as one plan. Selling individual assets or dispersing the patient base too early can reduce the remaining opportunity.

A small practice needed the right kind of buyer

Dr. Steve had operated from the same location for decades. The practice generated income for him with low overhead, but its two treatment rooms, dated equipment and limited expansion space made it less suitable for some buyers. There was no hygienist, and the two long-standing employees intended to retire when he did.

The likely opportunity was a merger into another practice, rather than a buyer continuing the existing office unchanged. That distinction mattered: the patient relationships and the ability to coordinate their transition were central to what remained to be sold.

Concern turned into an uncoordinated shutdown

The sale discussions began in March 2020, amid uncertainty at the start of the pandemic. Dr. Steve worried about the market and wanted to get ahead of a possible wave of retiring dentists.

While the practice was being marketed, he placed his own advertisement about closing the office and selling equipment. He saw this as useful preparation. In reality, the equipment advertisement directly undercut the practice-sale effort.

The patients were already moving elsewhere

A nearby dentist called about a piece of equipment. When the broader practice opportunity was raised, the dentist explained that Dr. Steve's patients were already arriving at the neighboring office.

Dr. Steve had begun referring patients to other dentists, hoping the activity might reveal an interested buyer. Instead, the referrals reduced the reason for those dentists to purchase the practice. The potential merger became much harder to complete.

Patients are free to choose their care, and care obligations must be met. The business lesson is to plan continuity deliberately rather than allowing an uncoordinated closure to disperse the relationships that make the practice transferable.

Treat closure decisions as transaction decisions

Before advertising equipment, announcing a retirement date or materially reducing operations, discuss how the action affects the proposed sale. A merger, an ongoing-practice sale and a closure require different plans.

- Identify the likely transaction: ongoing operation, merger or planned closure.
- Agree on which assets and records are involved and how they will be handled.
- Coordinate patient and staff communications with the transition timetable.
- Keep the team informed through an agreed communication plan.
- Revisit the plan if circumstances require operations to change before closing.

Preserve a choice, rather than deciding by default

A small or older office is not automatically without value. The question is what another dentist could continue, acquire or integrate—and what needs to remain intact to make that possible.

Talk with us before taking irreversible wind-down steps. A coordinated plan can help preserve options while addressing your retirement timing and the ongoing needs of patients.

Start a conversation: adsmidwest.com

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