

Entrepreneurial Spotlight

Dental Elements was founded by Dr. Jake Meggison in 2012. Currently, Dental Elements has approximately 28 employees in four offices around the Kansas City metro area. They are in Shawnee, Leawood, and Wellsville, Kansas and Grandview, Missouri. Dr. Meggison tells us, “As a student, I knew I wanted to have my business in the healthcare field. That was a major factor in choosing dentistry. I could not see myself in the hospital setting with the schedules that they keep, so medicine was never in my future.” He added, “I had a clear vision of the type of atmosphere that I wanted to create and work in. I had worked in other offices prior to going out on my own and none of them had the feel that I was looking for – a more casual atmosphere of support, as opposed to production being the driving force.”

When asked how he built a successful customer base, Dr. Meggison said, “This answer is surprisingly simple. Say what you do and do what you say. The most basic values and virtues we are taught as children are the most important lessons to follow. For building that customer base, we asked about Dental Elements’ marketing practices and what has brought the most successful outcomes. Meggison stated, “Our most successful marketing has been internal. Our patients and our team send 10 times more referrals than any outside marketing could produce. When we do market it’s a grassroots effort throughout the community. I also really like contributing to local events. This helps both us and the event put on the best showing possible.”

Dr. Meggison was telling us about the culture of Dental Elements and how he created it. He mentioned, “Culture is probably the part of our organization that I am the proudest of. From the beginning, I was fascinated with companies that were able to create loyalty from their teams simply by taking care of them on every level. I wanted to do the same in my office. Treating every single team member as if they were family and truly listening to their concerns and needs and following through has taken us further than anything else. It has created an atmosphere that makes you want to not only work towards the success of the company, but for your coworkers as well.”

Jake Meggison met his wife Ashley in Lawrence while attending Kansas University. They were married in 2009. They have two children, ages 8 and 10. We asked Dr. Meggison how being an entrepreneur has affected his family life. He told us, “It affects it on every level. When you have everything on the line, every decision you make determines the quality of life at both work and home. There are ups and downs and they can be extreme. In the beginning it consumed all my time. Dentistry in general does not allow much flexibility. I am typically scheduled down to the 5 minute marker nine or more hours a day, 4-5 days a week, and several months in advance. Any work on the business must happen in the evenings and on weekends. That said, putting that time in early has allowed me to create a schedule that is much more flexible over this past year. I am still putting in a couple of nights a week but can spend time with my wife and kids on

weekends without falling behind.” The doctor told us a surprising fact, that dentists today have to work three times harder and make half the money that dentists did back in the 1980s.

Next, we moved our conversation on to the topic of motivation and new ideas. When we asked Meggison what motivates him, he responded, “I love the challenge of finding solutions to issues and creating opportunities out of obstacles. I have learned to look at things from different angles over the years and love the feeling of overcoming a situation that could or should be a barrier for us. Seeing the overall growth of our company would be the short answer. Sometimes that is in physical size and sometimes it’s in the numbers, but those are both the result of solving countless issues.” As for new ideas, Dr. Meggison responded, “Most of the time it’s out of necessity. If there is an issue or inefficiency in a process we are doing, to find a solution we need to think outside of the box. I also set aside time every week to unplug and reflect on everything that has happened in the last few days, weeks, and sometimes months.” An example of one of these ideas is their Freedom Plan. This is a plan Dental Elements created as a benefit for patients who don’t have dental insurance. It is great for retirees or young people coming off their parent’s plan. It is a unique membership plan that is an office solution to help patients get the care they need as well as to stabilize patient flow between busy and non-busy months.

We moved on to a discussion about how to manage fear and what is the greatest fear for Dental Elements. Dr. Meggison replied, “I would say letting down the people that depend on me to be a leader. Our business is responsible for the livelihood of the families that keep us running as well as the wellbeing of the patients that trust in us. Making sure that I stay true to the spirit of why we are here in the first place is imperative. We religiously use a set of core values to evaluate all decisions we make. We even evaluate the core values on a regular basis to make sure that they are still working. That fear keeps me motivated and focused. I manage this by staying alert to what is going on in every aspect of the company, with patients, doctors, team members, etc.” When asked about those core values, Meggison tells us they are Patients First, Excellence Every Day, Strive to Thrive, and Ride or Die.

Fear can drive success and satisfaction. We continued our discussion with how he defines success. Dr. Meggison pondered, “This is a tricky one. Being a small business is not always profitable and if I was to hang success on that alone I may have tapped out by now. For me, I take great pride in having a brand that I am proud of with a great reputation in the communities that we serve. I love having people recognize our brand and getting internal referrals. Our growth both with patients and within the dental community makes me happy. Having a brand that my family and team are proud to be a part of is a huge part of our long-term vision, which can be a moving target.” Then we asked him about a satisfying moment he’s experienced over the past few years. He replied, “I don’t know if I can answer this question. I am still in the middle of the whirlwind and have not really reflected on things this way. That’s the downside of always seeking out the issues to solve, reflection on success is often overlooked. If I must answer I would say

our 10-year anniversary. Looking around at what has been created and the fact that it has lasted this long felt great. The idea that we are improving the lives of the people around us feels amazing!”

We then asked Dr. Meggison if he believes there is a pattern or formula to becoming a successful entrepreneur. He giggled as he mentioned, “I believe that certain personality traits give an advantage for sure. I have read a lot of the books on this topic, and they believe in patterns or habits. I watched some of my friends that are entrepreneurs over the years and do see similarities in the way they process the world. Whether I am one of them or not is to be determined.” When we asked what he felt those traits were, he said, “My friends who are amazing entrepreneurs are very matter of fact. They easily make decisions because they are clear about the direction, mission, and vision of their company. They don’t have much ‘gray area’ in their decisions.” We then asked about his favorite aspect of being an entrepreneur. To this question, Meggison quickly replied, “The challenge. I would never be able to clock in and out for my entire career. I must have the pressure and the possibility of unlimited growth, or I get burned out quickly.”

Our conversation continued to what advice Dr. Meggison would give to college graduates who want to become entrepreneurs. His advice was along the lines of what we’ve heard from other successful entrepreneurs as he responded, “Find something that you can’t stop thinking about and then fully commit. Focus on making some kind of difference but never on chasing the dollar. Anything less is a path to zero satisfaction or bankruptcy.” We then began a discussion about what he would do differently if he had the chance to start his career over again. He told us, “I made some decisions early on that stunted our business growth both physically and financially. It has taken some serious time to overcome this. I try not to dwell on them but it’s hard not to wonder how much further we would be without those setbacks.

When asked what he feels are the top three skills a successful entrepreneur would need to possess, he said, “Vision, persistence and a solid moral compass.” We discussed what tricks Meggison has discovered to keep him focused and productive in his busy day-to-day schedule. He humbly admitted, “Know your role and hire or delegate for the rest. As a business grows you need to remain focused on what you do best. Anything other than that needs to be done by a specialist or someone that is better than you at it. It is impossible to be great at everything. The minute you see that you are slowed down by or distracted by a task it’s time to find the correct talent to take over and allow you to excel at your primary focus.” Some key activities for entrepreneurs are not what you’d expect. When we began talking about what those are for him, Meggison tells us, “Every business is so different. I know a big part of my focus is fitness. I try to have 30-60 minutes of physical activity a day. When you feel better and are healthier, you are more productive. That is universal. I also get a lot of my ideas when exercising. Another key activity for me was finding an organizational system to run meetings and set goals. There

are tons of them out there and it may take some time and trial and error to find one that fits your goals, lifestyle, or model. Finding one will help your business greatly.”

As we began to wrap things up, we talked about Dr. Meggison’s greatest inspiration. He admits, “I would have to say my mom. She ran her own business successfully for over 30 years and was self-taught. I have a ton of respect for what she was able to do.” When asked what his mom’s business was, he says, “she started a preschool and was the director. She became accredited and grew her K-6 school to 150 children.” The business quote he remembers most from his mom is, “You have to watch your cash flow.” Also, most entrepreneurs enjoy reading and learning from others. Meggison is no exception. He tells us one of his favorite books is one called Traction. He tells us it is a book about getting organized and prioritizing for growth. Another of his favorites is called Extreme Ownership, a book about how Navy seals lead and win.

If you’d like to learn more about Dr. Jake Meggison or Dental Elements, you can visit their website at <https://dentalelementskc.com/wellsville/>, call 913-383-0440 or stop by at 616 Main Street in Wellsville, 11912 Shawnee Mission Parkway in Shawnee, 13018 State Line Rd in Leawood or in Grandview, MO at 13010 Fuller Ave.

