

HOW I DID IT

DO YOU HAVE A DREAM? ROBERT
WARD SHARES HIS AND DESCRIBES
HOW HE MADE IT COME TRUE



Robert Ward BDS, LDS, RCS(Eng),
MSc qualified from the Royal
London Hospital in 1992. After a
stint in general practice, he enrolled
at the Eastman Dental Institute
where he completed an MSc in
periodontology in 1997. Robert was
appointed senior dentist at Boots
Dentalcare in Bedford in 1999 and
was accredited specialist status in
periodontology in 2001



My dream was realised on 17 January 2005 with the opening of Aspects Dental and Referrals. I set out to build and create a practice that had magical ingredients and I think I have more than achieved this. To accomplish this goal I was prepared to put large amounts of both time and money behind the project. I wanted an exceptional dental practice that was also a centre of excellence for specialist dental services and I am proud to say that this has been achieved - we now have an oasis with a unique wow factor.

The practice has two distinct markets – a dental practice that offers high-quality care and services to its patients and a referral centre for specialist services in periodontology, oral surgery, endodontics, prosthodontics and implantology.

When I look back to the completion of my MSc in periodontology, I realise I have come a long way. It was at that point that I decided I wanted to open my own practice. My previous experience had served me well. For four years I was senior dentist at Boots Dental Care in Bedford. Boots tried to attract the best dentists, employed hygienists and also employed and promoted dental specialists. These were the essential elements for my own practice – I worked and learned. In 2003 I decided the time was right for me to buy a practice of my own and turn my dreams into a reality.

In December 2003 I went to see a 1,600-square-foot deserted first floor office space in Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes. This day turned out to be the beginning of a yearlong project that culminated in the opening of

my practice. Even at this early stage I was convinced that this was the beginning of an exciting and interesting journey.

LOCATION

I chose Milton Keynes because of the investment and growth potential. New businesses, new leisure complexes and a growing number of residential developments were all factors I wanted to capitalise on. The area was positively buzzing with excitement.

The premises appealed to me because of its location and spaciousness - it had great potential. Locally, there was already a medical centre, a podiatry clinic, a chiropractor, an alternative therapist and a host of shops. Ample free parking completed the picture.

KEY APPOINTMENTS

If I had any chance of completing this project successfully, I knew that I had to put in place key companies and people, both to help me undertake the work and to organise the finance for my investment. I also wanted to enjoy working with the people I appointed. For me this was to be an experience of a lifetime and I wanted to surround myself with people who shared my vision and high expectations.

My first key appointment was to be someone who I trusted with my ideas and who would help me with a business plan, finance and would give me honest and professional advice. This was to be Andy Acton, managing director of FT Associates, who has proved to be a most valuable ally.

The next stage was to find an architect who would put my ideas for a 21st century



purpose-built surgery into practice. After interviewing several designers I chose Richard Mitzman. I was very impressed with his previous projects and felt that his enthusiasm and attention to detail would mirror my aspirations for the practice. I commissioned Richard to design the practice two months before the finance was finalised.

I knew that I would need help with branding and marketing as I wanted all

aspects of the practice to have the same high-quality, cutting edge feel and look. I also needed a marketing approach that would be lively, robust and would help me reap the benefits of my investment and hard work. I commissioned a marketing company that I felt could take me forward.

THE DAY-TO-DAY REALITY

Having a dream is great – it is not tarnished by any worries or negative circumstances, but



the reality can sometimes be different. As I worked on this project day-to-day I never lost my vision, but managing a project of this size is very demanding and it is imperative that you keep a keen eye on every area so that costs and time do not run away. Time equals money.

After submitting my business plan to several banks on the recommendation of Andy Acton, I finally decided on my means of finance. With his help we negotiated a deal that I was happy with and would successfully finance the project, although I quickly realised that financial goalposts need to be flexible!

As the project progressed, builders, interior designers and equipment suppliers were appointed. Each new appointment meant that we were moving forward and progressing, the project was gaining momentum and I could actually see results.

Equipping a surgery is one of the important and fun parts of creating a good dental environment. I wanted innovative, well-designed equipment to complement my ultra modern practice. The two surgeries are fitted with robust and reliable Belmont 2 Voyager chairs. In surgery one, where the endodontist works, there is an Optima electric motor. This allows accurate torques for his nickel titanium burs. In addition he routinely uses the Global G3 dental microscope.

A decision was made to make the practice digital. All of our systems are computerised, using Software of Excellence. The radiographs are digital, using the Dürer Vistascan to transfer the images from the plates to the screens in the surgeries. There is a Satelec OPG machine that

is used in conjunction with the Vistascan, to give digitised images. A vacuum steriliser made by W&H is essential for the surgical procedures carried out in the practice.

The patient lounge is equipped with a 42" plasma screen. We also have in-surgery music, provided by the Imerge hard disc music system, which stores a massive 250 CDs.

It was at this stage I realised I needed to start building a firm foundation for my practice team. I was exceptionally fortunate to find an excellent practice manager in Pat Fogden, who was an experienced practice manager for Boots Dentalcare. She not only shared my vision but was a great sounding board for me. We also started to hold meetings with other future team members including hygienist Carol Sumner and nurse Claudette Murrell.

SMALL AREAS FOR CONCERN

As the project unfolded, there were a couple of areas that slightly concerned me. If I was to undertake another project of this kind, I would make changes.

Firstly, finance. I included my bank manager in negotiations with the architect and builder. We talked fixed price contract. This is where the contract cost for the building work is agreed and there are penalties for over-runs. This allows for careful planning of the funding. I agreed a fixed price but there was not a clause for over-runs. The project ran over by one month.

Secondly, operational issues. An investment of this size really does require a full time project manager. The

architect acted as a project manager for the building works and in addition I had the help of Chris Davies from CDM (Construction Design Management) and Pat Fogden my practice manager. I was not able to work very much for one month during this project due to the death of my father and Amit Gadhavi stepped in as clinical director for this time. Everybody was superb in co-ordinating and helping the project move forward.

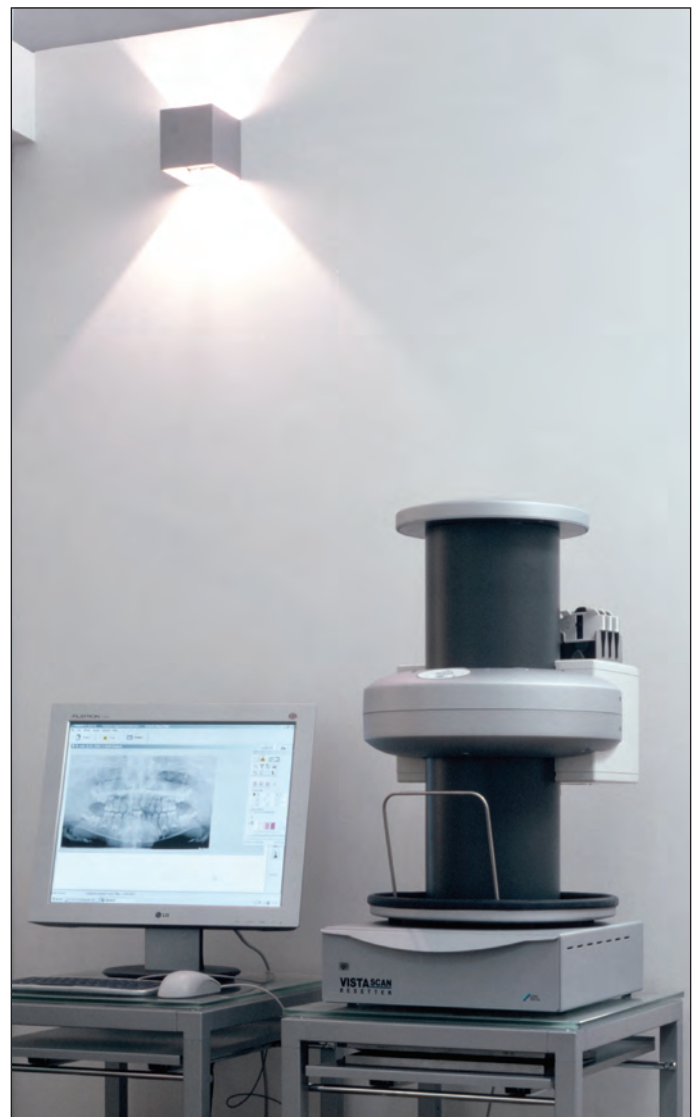
AT LAST

On 17 January 2005 the practice finally opened. Everything had been

worthwhile - it was the culmination of a diverse and challenging project that required meticulous planning. We had a launch evening where Ellis Paul officially opened the practice and I was delighted with the results. I wanted to create a wow practice and referral centre and I was so overjoyed at the outcome.

THE GREAT ASPECTS

Now that the project is finished I can look back and assess. The look, the feel and the overall ambience of the practice is just how I imagined it to be in my vision.





Before opening, we already had appointments booked well in advance for the general practice and by the end of the open night had 70 referrals.

I am delighted with the high standard of building work and interior design of the practice. The practice is unique in style, colour and ambience. The Aspects brand is apparent in every area. I feel that I have created an oasis that can be enjoyed and experienced by the team, my patients, referred patients, referring dentists and all specialists.

REFERRAL PACKS

We have produced high-quality and substantial referral packs that are sent to referring dentists. These packs are very comprehensive and make for an easy referral path to the clinic. There are individual forms for

all areas of specialist services and all literature is housed in an organised holder. The team of specialists at Aspects is offering exceptional services to referring dentists.

THE FUTURE

The clinic has been open since January 2005 and I am delighted with the progress so far. At the planning stage I compiled a forecast for both areas of the clinic for the first year of trading – we are exceeding our monthly targets. We are now looking at the next stage in our growth. A marketing strategy is in place for the coming year for both the general practice and the referral clinic. I firmly believe that planning and execution of continual marketing is key to the future growth of the clinic. This is an area that I recognise I

need help with. I am working with a dental marketing company that understands the aims of the clinic and that can help me, leaving me free to concentrate on clinical issues. The solid foundation has been built and now we need to go forward and be active in all areas of the business.

The birth of Aspects Dental and Referrals is the culmination of a dream. It has been a great experience, a great outcome

and there is a great future ahead for all concerned with the clinic. My philosophy is that if a job is worth doing it is worth doing well – the extra time, the extra money and going that extra mile has paid off. When I open the door of my practice each morning, I am amazed at how much I enjoy my surroundings and chosen profession. My investment is paying off in more ways than one. ■

THE ASPECTS TEAM

Rob Ward BDS (Lond), LDS, RCS (Eng), MSc (Perio Lond)

Principal, specialist periodontist

Adam Slade BDS(Lon) LDS, RCS(Eng) MFGDP(UK) MClintDent (Prosth)

Implantologist

Bikram Bal BDS, LDS, RCS (Eng), FDS, RCS (Eng) Specialist in oral surgery

Norman Gluckman BDS (Rand) Specialist in endodontics

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