

**Ep #24: Consistency Trumps Commitment with
Mark LeBlanc**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Allison Watts, DDS

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Welcome to *Practicing with the Masters* for dentists with your host, Dr. Allison Watts. Allison believes that there are four pillars for a successful, fulfilling dental practice: clear leadership, sound business principles, well-developed communication skills, and clinical excellence. Allison enjoys helping dentists and teams excel in all of these areas. Each episode she brings you an inspiring conversation with another leading expert. If you desire to learn and grow and in the process take your practice to the next level, then this is the show for you. Now, here's your host, Dr. Allison Watts.

Allison: Welcome to *Practicing with the Masters* podcast. I'm your host, Allison Watts, and I'm dedicated to bringing you masters in the field of dentistry, leadership, and practice management to help you have a more fulfilling and successful practice and life.

Mark LeBlanc has been a small business owner virtually his entire adult life. With deep commitment and quiet confidence, he has devoted his life and work to helping others create an achiever's mindset and a life of possibilities. He has conducted over 70 weekend business development experiences called the Achiever's Circle.

In 1997, the Minnesota Speakers Association created the Mark LeBlanc Award for outstanding service and presents this award annually to a deserving member. He was inducted into the Minnesota Speakers Hall of Fame in 2007. Mark served the National Speakers Association as president in 2007 to 2008. He splits his time between—you still go between La Jolla, California and Minneapolis?

Mark: Well I go to La Jolla about every 90 days or so to get my fix.

Allison: Okay.

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Mark: But I did live there for ten years and I hope to get back there.

Allison: Oh, it's beautiful, it's beautiful there. I thought Minnesota was wonderful too. So you work mostly from Minnesota serving your clients around the country and also catering to your nieces and nephews it sounds like.

Mark: That's correct. I'm a great uncle, it's probably the thing I'm most proud of.

Allison: Aw. Then I remember from when I heard you speak that you talked about walking a mile every day. Or, you walk right?

Mark: I do, I'm an avid walker. I walk every day. In my little book I do talk about the importance. I think what you do every day is more important than what you do once in a while. So I think consistency in all areas of our life and work is critically important.

Allison: Me too, that was one of the things that I really loved that you talked about and I'm really looking forward to you being here today, thank you for joining us.

Yeah, I know we'll get to that later, the benchmarking a little bit, right?

Mark: Sure.

Allison: You want to tell us a little bit about your background and how you started in business so early?

Mark: Well I had a job once for about six months and I found out at a very early age that I was unemployable. Which essentially means that I got fired from my first job after six months and I never went back. I was 21 years old and I thought, "I am never going back to work for somebody again." I delivered pizzas at

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night so that I could work my business during the day. Pretty soon I didn't have to deliver pizzas anymore.

Allison: Nice, and what did you do during the day?

Mark: At the time I started a creative and graphics company and I brokered printing. Pretty soon I was brokering enough printing that it made sense for me to buy a printing company. I sort of merged the two and had a creative graphics, printing, and mailing company for approximately ten years. I sold that in 1992 to speak and train, and coach full time.

Allison: Okay, well I'll let you kind of start wherever you want to. I read your book and I love it and I appreciate you sending it. I know you offered to send it out. We'll talk about that, I guess, toward the end. Do you have a place in particular where you want to start that makes sense?

Mark: You know, I like to live in a world of two or more right answers. I think virtually everything that I do falls under the umbrella of business development and growing a business or a practice. I'm not really sure why, but I found out early on that my right fit in the marketplace is really in the world of professional services.

Even when I owned my graphics and printing company from 1982 to 1992 the lion's share of our clients were dentists and chiropractors and veterinarians and accountants and lawyers, and we just really developed sort of that niche of print communications and marketing materials and helping a small practice position themselves in the marketplace. So when I sold that business, it seemed only natural that that's where I would end up coaching and speaking.

To date though, over the last 21 years, while everything falls under the growing your business umbrella, I've really been the architect or the creator of a set of best practices. We've

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developed nine best practices for growing a business and they fall under the money side of the practice, focus, and in the areas of marketing, and business development.

Allison: When you say focus, are you speaking about the vision and the mission of the business?

Mark: You know, that's part of it. I don't talk a lot about mission and vision and values. When I think about focus, I think about so much of the operational activities that go on. How do you maintain your focus? For people in professional services and people—all people—consultants of any type of service, our dream is to deliver our work.

It's not to run a business and it's not to—we didn't start our practice or we didn't start our business to really be a business owner. We started our practice or we started our business because we had a passion or a desire to deliver our area of expertise. Along the way, the successful ones figured out that “By gosh, I better be a better business owner.”

Allison: That's exactly what happened to me. I think most dentist are that way. You know, I'm reading *The E-Myth* again. He talks about that, that we go in as a technician.

Mark: Michael Gerber, yes.

Allison: Yes, anyways, it's just interesting. I read it when I first started practice 18 years ago and I'm reading it again now. It's very interesting. I can see where I've gone through those stages but I definitely agree. I don't know if all dentists are that way, I know some of us have business interests when we go out but not—I wasn't that way. I think when you work with dentists do you find most of them just want to do dentistry?

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Mark: For the most part, yes. You know some of us have grown up with sort of an entrepreneurial spirit or mind set. We weren't baptized when we were born or christened a business owner. But some of us just had, I guess, some natural instincts and then they were fostered and groomed along the way. Achievement begets more achievement.

I think at some point we figure out that if we want to do more of the work that we are called and/or compelled to do, the better business owner that we are, the greater the likelihood is that we'll do more of that work.

Allison: Right, yes, and I think we'll enjoy it more too because we're not so—I think it's when your systems are in place and your finances are in place, you're not near as stressed. You're not in that survival mode.

Mark: Yes, and one of the challenges that professionals face is, or one of the things that I help is, you know you think of your business or your practice having three train tracks. They're three parallel tracks. One is a—we'll call it the marketing track or the business development track—and the middle track is the delivery track of your services and programs and products. The third track is the money track.

The interesting thing is that our ego tends to run on the delivery track of our business. If you ask a professional how he or she is doing, most of the time we immediately respond with how full our calendar is or is not. Well that is the delivery track. That's what we have committed to or have on the calendar, of either what is coming up in the next 30, 60, 90 days or what we've just completed in the last 30, 60, 90 days.

Our emotions run on the money track. One of the questions I often ask is, "How many of you feel better when you have money in the bank?" Of course everybody laughs and it's like—

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but when you feel that financial noose tighten around your neck, that's when we begin to retreat like a frightened turtle.

Allison: Right.

Mark: It gets harder and harder to pick ourselves up and get back to center. I want people, or at least my area of expertise, is not on the delivery side. It's really on that first track. How do you look at your practice differently and really get your, I call it your booking track. How do you get that marketing and business development track moving at—how do you create a booking machine for your practice?

Because we'll always figure out the delivery challenges. And for the most part, we usually figure out the money challenges. It's not always pretty, sometimes we have to borrow money, or sometimes we have to use a line of credit at the bank, or once in a while a cash infusion. But we'll figure that out. But we don't figure out the marketing and sales track of our business or practice.

Allison: Yeah, you know there's a dentist in my area that is very comfortable marketing himself. I don't think he does as great, quality work as I do, but one of my employees gets so frustrated because I'm not comfortable marketing myself. I do a great service for people and yet it's a struggle somehow to brag on yourself, whatever, there's something about it.

I even think, even when I was in dental school which was 18 years ago, you know, 20 years ago, it was a little bit still the old school kind of taboo if you think about advertising. I mean, I know there's different ways to market and a lot of it's how you treat people and I know you talk about building value and all of that. But I just think it's interesting how so many of us are uncomfortable with this part.

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Mark: Allison, why do you think you have trouble marketing yourself?

Allison: I don't know, I guess I have this whole story that if you build it they will come. [Laughs] Like if you do the right thing and you do a good job that you're going to be successful and you shouldn't have to market yourself, I think is kind of the belief that's underneath that.

Mark: Well I hear you.

Allison: I know intellectually it makes no sense but I think somewhere in there that's what it is.

Mark: Well I just wrote a little piece titled *Build it and They Won't Buy*.

Allison: [Laughs]

Mark: I think what you're saying might have been true in the past when options were less. But today the competition for what we, for what so many of us do, is so vast and information is so readily available on the internet. We can check out any restaurant in a nanosecond and look at the reviews, good, bad, ugly, or great.

So I think the game has changed today. But here would be my suggestion to you and anybody else who struggles with the concept of marketing because I think you hit the nail on the head, maybe without even realizing it. That is, I think you're more uncomfortable with advertising.

Allison: I think that's true because I've been really good at teaching my team and talking about the value we provide to our patients, and to my team more of the internal marketing. Not necessarily asking for referrals, but just being who we say we are and doing what we say we can deliver and delivering a good thing for people.

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Mark: And see, that is the essence of marketing.

Allison: Yeah.

Mark: So my thought for you would be reframed the challenge. It's not so much marketing, because marketing is really a very simple process or set of practices or steps that have more to do with communication than they do with—advertising is just one of what I call seven new contact strategies.

Allison: Okay.

Mark: So it might be that advertising is not something that you choose to do but there are a lot of different ways that we market ourselves without even knowing it.

Allison: Yeah, true. So you help people with their marketing strategies and then what do you mean by business development?

Mark: Well think of business development as the umbrella for a messaging platform, a mix of strategies, and marketing tools.

Allison: Okay.

Mark: So whenever you think about marketing, every small business, every practice, every large business, every division of a Fortune 1,000 company has some kind of a marketing plan or initiative that's really built upon three legs. One leg is messaging, one is marketing tools, and one is marketing strategies.

So when I think about strategies, now I break those down into two different groups: new contact marketing strategies and leveraging your, or what I call, executing new contact marketing strategies. That's one of the nine best practices. Then the other one is leveraging your database.

Allison: Okay.

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Mark: Okay, so even when you think about the idea of doing a quarterly or a monthly newsletter, the newsletter is a marketing tool and communicating with your existing or active and inactive patients and prospects and key relationships, you know that's part of your database world. So I like taking the fear or the mystery out of marketing and trying to reframe it so that people say, "We do this and this and this but I never thought about that as marketing before."

Allison: Wow, I did not realize this is what you did. I mean, when I first met you I didn't know. Have you been doing this for least a couple of years, is this mostly the kind of coaching you do?

Mark: Well I do and...

Allison: That's so interesting.

Mark: You know, I've given over, oh gosh, well over 700 workshops and presentations and coached over 1,000 professionals on these issues. Of course we tend, sometimes we tend, to teach what we struggle with the most and learn how to do.

Then of course, through coaching over a 1,000 small business owners, every day I'm connecting the dots and learning on the go as well. Somebody said to me once, "Mark do you want to know the great thing about you?" And I said, "Well, yes."

Allison: Of course.

Mark: Do we have time?

[Laughter]

And he goes, "You are a quick switch artist." And I said, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "Well you have the unique ability to try something and then step back and look at what worked and what didn't work and you quickly let go of what

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didn't work. Then you get back to what does work. You're always tinkering with different forms and formulas and formats and templates and the way you frame language. You shape things in a way that most people have a hard time understanding."

But he said, "You sculpt and you make it easier. You take very complex issues and break them down into chunks." I thought that was a really, that was a great compliment, I thought, that's exactly what I do.

Allison: Yeah, that's a gift. Really, that's a huge thing, yeah. Because most of us look at what worked and what—well maybe we don't even step back and look at it, we're in it. But then when we see what didn't work, we kind of beat ourselves up a lot and try something different.

Mark: Yes.

Allison: Without a strategy.

Mark: That's right.

Allison: So, cool. That's neat, that's a great gift. So that's why you're so good at this.

Mark: Thank you.

Allison: Yeah, okay, so let's see. I had some questions when I read your book. I don't want to take us off track, where we talking about something we needed to keep talking about?

Mark: You know, if I could just add a little piece before I take your next question. That is, go back to the idea of the three train tracks, the booking track, the delivery track, and the money track. One tip that I would like to share with people is to focus more on the booking track. One way to do that for building momentum in

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and seeing your revenues grow is to create what I call a monthly optimistic number.

Most people have some kind of an annual goal usually based on the calendar year. If you have that, what I would suggest is simply divide it by twelve and make that your monthly optimistic number. Then look at creating a path and a plan to be at or near that monthly number, every 30 days.

In fact, I think the secret to our success lies in the phrase every 30 days. I'll just use some example numbers. If the target is a million dollars a year, well the optimistic number then is roughly \$80,000 every 30 days. Well let's not focus on delivering it every 30 days, let's focus on booking \$80,000 every 30 days. If we can create a path and a plan to be at or near \$80,000 every 30 days, the delivery and the collections will begin to take care of themselves. Does that make sense?

Allison: Yeah, when you say booking it, do you mean scheduling the treatment? I'm thinking when you first said book it I was thinking of new patients coming in the door.

Mark: Well and it could be new patients or new services with existing patients.

Allison: Okay, it's just treatment on the schedule.

Mark: Correct.

Allison: Basically, okay.

Mark: Yep.

Allison: Okay, yeah, that makes sense, totally. And actually that's funny that you, what I was going to ask you about was I remember in the book it talked about a written plan, your executive summary. I don't know if I ever heard it talked about that way.

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Most people teach the values and the vision and mission and philosophy and then an action plan. You talk about an executive summary, which I was just curious what that is or if you thought that was important to talk about.

Mark: Well most of the time when people are going to go to a bank or they're trying to raise money to start their practice or to expand it, they often put together a more complex plan. The best business plans—and again I'm just using some examples—might be let's say 20 to 40 pages long. But the best plans have a summary at the beginning, that sort of encapsulizes—let's say if it's a 40-page plan the executive summary part is the introduction to the plan but it gives an overview of what's, it might be a four-page overview, of what's in the next 36 pages.

Allison: Okay, I got you.

Mark: Sometimes that four, five, six page executive summary of the plan is all that people really need. Then you attach a solid set of practical and proven marching orders. And for many in the small services world, that's going to be sufficient.

Allison: Okay. And that plan is you take people from that plan because I don't think in my plan I would write anything about marketing. I would write the outcomes that I'm trying to achieve which I think, I remember, I did this, but I don't remember what it was like but it would be to me almost like what I would think of as a vision, of what I think my practice, the services I'm going to do. I do remember we had to put in there our estimated, the money we were going to make.

Mark: Sure.

Allison: So we could pay back our loan, right?

[Laughter]

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That's what the bank wanted to know.

Mark: Because that's what they wanted to see. But yes, but certainly in the executive summary we would want a half a page or something like that, or if it's a four, five, six page executive summary that one of those pages would be dedicated to our marketing message, or what makes us different. What are some of the key marketing tools?

Marketing tools today are dramatically different than they were 20 years ago. And then, what are some of the core strategies that we want to adopt and execute on a regular basis? I'm a firm believer in fewer strategies executed more intensively and with greater frequency than this huge mix of strategies that we do sparingly. Does that make sense?

Allison: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I've heard many times that consistency is the key to marketing especially. But I think to everything. Success, like you said, the things we do every day is what really impacts our lives the most, not the things we do sometimes.

Mark: One of the phrases that I've developed over the years that I'm often known for is: consistency trumps commitment.

Allison: Yep.

Mark: You know all of us are familiar with the great commitment. There are two times of the year when the great commitment tends to kick in and that is of course, January 1st.

Allison: Yeah.

Mark: We make the great commitment. Then of course we know that for the lion's share, the vast majority of people, New Year's resolutions tend to last not even five days. We're back to our same attitudes, habits, beliefs, and behaviors. So the concept

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of the New Year's resolution and the great commitment sometimes does more to discourage us than it empowers us and keeps us going over the next twelve months. The other time of the year is Labor Day weekend.

Allison: Really?

Mark: Yes, there's something inherent in our psyche that Labor Day weekend is sort of a back to school, back to work, vacations are over. Now I don't know about you but I work pretty much all summer long but there's just something. You know, a lot of people just downshift slightly around Memorial Day weekend.

Even if they're going to the office, they're just, it's a little more relaxed state. Then of all of a sudden you get to the middle or end of August and it's like, "Ah, Labor Day, can't wait till Labor Day. Then we're going to hit it hard for the rest of the year." I hear that time and time and time again.

Well think about this, if a person is off track by Labor Day or by the first of October, if he or she is off track from what they wanted to accomplish on January 1st of that year, the tendency is to, even if it's subconscious, it's not a conscious decision, the tendency is to step back and say, "Well, gosh, I'm off track from what I wanted to create here in this calendar year. Well I think I'm going to take the next couple months and I'm still going to work hard, but I'm going to get ready to get ready for the New Year."

Allison: Yeah.

Mark: "You know, we're going to work on our website, we're going to get more organized, we're going to do a little bit of training, and we're going, of course, we're going to have our holiday party, we're going to stock up on stamps for the New Year. But by

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God, we're going to hit it hard come January 1st." And they repeat that cycle again of what I call that great commitment.

Allison: Yeah, is this kind of where the benchmarking comes in where instead you do something every day, the consistency piece?

Mark: It does. And my definition of a benchmark is a benchmark is a number. It's simply a number that measures an activity or a result. So you know, walking one mile a day. The activity is walking, the benchmark is one a day, or thirty miles in a thirty-day period.

If you do a newsletter once a month, okay, the strategy is the newsletter strategy, the benchmark is one a month. You can have annual benchmarks, you can have quarterly benchmarks, monthly benchmarks, weekly benchmarks, and daily benchmarks.

Allison: Okay.

Mark: Typically what I recommend is that people develop a blended set of benchmarks in five different categories: money benchmarks, marketing benchmarks, selling benchmarks, health and exercise benchmarks, and fun benchmarks. Those five areas, the essence is, if it is important, benchmark it.

Allison: Okay.

Mark: If it's worth doing, it's worth tracking. If it's not worth tracking it might not be worth doing.

Allison: Okay.

Mark: So even when I say, "You know, if your monthly optimistic number is \$80,000 a month that's a monthly financial benchmark."

Allison: Yeah, that one's pretty easy.

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Mark: I do two presentations every 30 days to grow my own business, so I call that the showcase strategy and my benchmark is two every 30 days. My wife and I love to watch movies and so our benchmark for either renting a movie or going to a movie is four movies every 30 days.

Allison: Wow, interesting, okay. I'm sitting here remembering why I liked your talk so much. But I also can feel a part of me that is like, doesn't want to commit to something like that because it feels like, it's funny and this is just a personal thing. It is a personality thing, it's like, it feels like, I don't know, like it's like I don't have the freedom to choose what I want to do. Does that make sense?

Mark: It makes a lot of sense and it's very common. Now Allison, you've heard this phrase, it's not about working harder it's about working...

Allison: Smarter.

Mark: Smarter. Now we've heard that for years but I've never heard anyone define what working smarter means.

Allison: Right, I haven't either.

Mark: And I don't think it's about working harder, although certainly there are many people that could work on their work ethic a little bit. I don't think it's about working smarter although certainly there are people that could stand to make some better decisions. I don't think it's about working harder, I don't think it's about working smarter, I think it's about being deliberate.

Allison: Yeah, I do too.

Mark: And moving forward in the direction of your dream, however you define it.

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Allison: Right.

Mark: So when we can develop a blended set of benchmarks in a well-rounded set of categories and you have two or three benchmarks in each of those areas, now what happens is you begin to create an every-thirty-day foundation. It helps build your foundation and make it stronger. Verses the idea of kind of going wherever the wind blows you, or whatever I feel like today. Because being in practice for yourself is hard.

Allison: Yeah.

Mark: When our cash flow is tight, or our confidence is low, or there's all kinds of people, challenges, and issues and for an owner or a professional it seems like every day is Thanksgiving and we have too much on our plate.

Allison: [Laughs] Yeah.

Mark: When instead of doubling up on the three or four things that we would really like to eat, we take a little bit of this and a little bit of that and never enough of what we want. Never enough of what we want to eat and love to eat, but we take some of those things we should eat. You know we don't want to hurt somebody's feelings, so we take this salad or that dish and all.

You know, I read an article, I should eat more green stuff so we take and we don't even want green vegetables on Thanksgiving Day. We put too much on our plate and we eat too much and that same scenario gets repeated day in, day out. So if you think about driving to your practice every morning, we wake up with the weight of the world on our shoulders.

Allison: Yeah, we're full.

Mark: We're full before we even get to the office.

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Allison: Yep.

Mark: It's like, how am I ever going to get through this day? Then we've got to walk into our practice and put on a cheery face. First for our team and then of course the first patient is coming in at 7:50 or 8:30. We get through the morning and rush through lunch and get through the afternoon appointments. By four, five, six o'clock we're exhausted.

So I think it's really identifying what matters the most in these five areas and making sure that you're deliberate about the actions and the activities that go into—and it's not just growing your practice from a revenue perspective, because you and I both know many dentists and many professionals who have grown a practice successfully, been profitable, and had no happiness, no joy, and suffered their own health challenges...

Allison: Definitely.

Mark: And issues. So developing that blended set of benchmarks to me is critical. I call those repeaters. Benchmarks are repeaters.

Allison: Okay.

Mark: And on the flipside, we have what I call enders. What are those tasks and those to-dos on our master to-do list that once we do them we check them off the list and we're done with them? When I look at an owner's master to-do list, most of the time I see a long list of things that need to get done. I don't see a lot of things that are regular, re-occurring, and of a repeating nature.

Allison: Yeah, I think you're right about that. That's interesting.

Mark: So finding that, having a set of marching orders where you have a healthy blend of repeaters and you have a realistic list of enders makes for a much healthier practice and bottom line.

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Allison: Wow, that's a cool concept. I've never heard that before, that's interesting.

Mark: I always want, my definition, of course I talk about that monthly optimistic number, that booking number. But the truth is, the definition of that optimistic number is, what is that number that you want to be at or near every 30 days with your fun meter on max and having the kind of balance you want between your home and work life? Hence the reason for health and exercise repeaters and fun repeaters. You know, let's face it, it's very difficult to separate home and work.

Allison: Yeah, it is.

Mark: So why even do it anymore? Just collapse them and make the personal just as important and as much a part of your actions and activities as growing your practice. It's sort of the growing your practice, growing your life in tandem.

Allison: I like that. That feels more integrated and realistic. I mean, people say, "Leave your personal life at home," and that's just not even possible. Oh, I don't think it is. I mean I think you could try but it's...

Mark: You can try but it's incredibly challenging at best and something is going to suffer. If you leave your personal life at home, and not that you want to bring your personal problems or challenges into the office, that's not what I'm suggesting.

But when you organize your mind, when you organize your thinking, when you organize your action plan, if you're looking at them side by side it can be energizing. Now you said something, Allison, that I want to underline and you said realistic. We want to look at our benchmarks and say, "I can do that."

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Allison: Yeah.

Mark: I'm not about setting these super optimistic benchmarks. Or, someday when have a bigger team, and a larger office, and more chairs, and we're in a better location, that might be a vision, a someday vision. It's what's your current capacity to deliver is and what's your current fee schedule for your services look like? What's your primary focus? Start to build your financial model around that and then create a comfortable stretch. I want people to set themselves up to succeed.

Allison: Yeah.

Mark: Not to, "Oh my gosh, I'm going to have to work morning, noon, and night in order to achieve this goal and sacrifice my life and my health and well-being and my personal relationships along the way."

Allison: Right.

Mark: Those dentists are everywhere.

Allison: They are burned out.

Mark: Yeah.

Allison: Or, and/or going to be burned out, yeah.

Mark: I know dentists who it's not uncommon for them to say to me, "You know, Mark, I built a practice up," or "I built two practices up and pretty soon we were doing three million a year or four million a year and you know I was working crazy and I had a good team, but I never had any time off. Our numbers were good and our profit was good, but we were going crazy." I'm now hearing more conversations from practice professionals that it's not worth it.

Allison: Right.

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Mark: I would rather do less, simplified, and streamlined and really build a great team than growing simply for growth sake.

Allison: Yeah, the pendulum has kind of swung the other way, I think. I mean for individuals and maybe even as a, I don't know what you call it, an overall theme. Yeah, I can see that for myself as I get older. I definitely think, "Oh my gosh, this is not worth it." You know?

Mark: Yeah.

Allison: I would have liked to have spent more time with my family and so making some changes that—yeah, I love what you're talking about here.

Mark: Well and I'll give an example. I mean, and again I don't know where we read this, I don't know why it's so ingrained into us, but we're so committed to achieving this goal. Then about the time we hit that goal the tendency is, "Well, I hit that goal, I better raise it now." We're constantly fighting the raising of the goal. We never allow our foundation to catch up to us.

Of course, for many professionals that magic threshold is a million dollars a year. Well about the time they cross that finish line and get up and over a million dollars a year, it's like, "Gosh, I think we'd better go for a million two this year." Then a million four and let's add a second practice and let's start all over again with the second and the third practice. We never allow our success a chance to catch up, when I would much prefer to see somebody get to a million dollars a year and perfect a million dollars a year.

Allison: Right.

Mark: Before going onto a million two.

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Allison: And when you say perfect, do you mean like, live in it for a while, have your life be balanced, enjoy yourself, have all your systems working properly, is that what you mean by perfect it?

Mark: Exactly, it's like you go back to that blended set of benchmarks, that's your foundation. I think it's all about getting in shape. We need to get our bodies in shape to perform. We need to get our mind in shape for success. We need to get our heart in shape for love. But at the end of the day, it's all about getting into shape.

On the way to a million a year, and I'm just using of course that as an arbitrary figure, but it's like we learn how to do \$200,000 a year well. And then we learn how to, you know, we get systems in place for \$400,000 and then to \$800,000. We get in shape for that. But it is like when you reach that goal, better to stay there for a little while and work through the challenges and the kinks in all areas and in all systems. Then going to a million two becomes a lot easier with a strong foundation than crossing over a million dollars and it's like, "Okay, how fast can we get to a million two?"

Allison: So you're really helping people—this is interesting—you're really helping people with their quality of life.

Mark: Yes.

Allison: It sounds like more than, I mean the marketing is sort of a means to an end.

Mark: You know, I'm a marketing and business development guy but somebody once, in fact this has happened several times in the last 20 years, where I've had people pull me aside and they'll say, "You know LeBlanc, you hide behind that growing your business stuff but you're really about growing your life."

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Allison: Yeah, that's what it sounds like to me. Which is probably why your name got referred to me, now I'm getting it.

[Laughter]

It's like, "Oh, that marketing stuff is great" but I don't think that's what I was looking for when that lady told me to talk to you.

Mark: Yeah.

Allison: Yeah. Two years ago when I came up and started talking to you, that's the reason that she told me. Yeah, that's awesome. I think the other notes that I had were about, you had said something in the book about your concept or your defining statement... I'm trying to look at my notes here.

Mark: Well, yes, I talk about—this ties back to your messaging platform. There are, for every professional, there are a handful of questions that we are charged with answering. One of those, the one that you are referring to is the answer to the question, what do you do?

Allison: Okay.

Mark: And of course the typical professional from any walk of service is, well you know, I'm a chiropractor. I'm a dentist. I'm a consultant. I'm a speaker. I'm a writer. I'm a printer. I'm an insurance agent. That's what I refer to as positioning by titles. So that's positioning strategy number one.

Positioning strategy number two is positioning by your services. Well I'm a dentist and I specialize in X or I'm a dentist and I specialize in XYZ. I'm a financial advisor and I focus on estate planning and retirement planning. That's positioning by titles and services.

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What I recommend is that people go to, not to discount our titles or the importance of our services, but when we position ourselves by our titles we're right smack next to our competition. When we position ourselves in our writing, in our language, when we position ourselves by our services the only place a patient or a prospective patient has to go to is, "Well what do you charge? Can you send me some literature? Can you put together a proposal or a treatment plan for me, because I want to compare it to somebody else."

We find ourselves fighting that sort of proposal or treatment plan game. If we can move beyond our titles and beyond our services and specialties to the third positioning strategy, which I refer to as positioning by concept. Another way to look at that is, what are the outcomes of your work? What happens as a result of someone engaging you in your services or using your products or being a part of your program?

If you can lead your positioning or your messaging platform with a primary outcome and just use me for an example. When I started Small Business Success, which is a great company name, I came out positioned by my titles. You know, I'm a consultant, I'm a speaker. Then nobody was interested in what I had to offer so I went for six months with no business.

Then I took a look at all the challenges and needs and problems out there in the small business world and they fit neatly into one of five distinct areas of service. Those were business planning, financial management, selling strategies, human resources, and developing your marketing or your map, your marketing advertising and promotion. So when I went to the marketplace and said, "Hello world, I'm a consultant and a speaker and I work in these five areas."

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Not only was no one attracted, I actually repelled people. I went for six more months with no business. Well that's twelve months. When I say I didn't earn a nickel in twelve months, I was the epitome, Allison, of build it and no one would buy. Not only did I build it and no one bought, I built it and no one even wanted to talk to me.

Until one day in sort of a desperation or a resignation, I came up with a simple sentence and the sentence was, "I work with people who want to start a business and small business owners who want to grow their business." I went to the marketplace and I skipped my titles, I skipped my services, and simply said, "My name is Mark LeBlanc and I run a company called Small Business Success. I work with people who want to start their own business and small business owners who want to grow their business." In the next 30 days, seven prospects wrote me a check and engaged them in the process of helping them start or grow. The only change was my messaging.

Allison: Wow. Yeah, that's the product of the product, right?

Mark: Right, nobody wants a consultant who can help them do a plan.

Allison: Right.

Mark: Okay, because a plan is, "Well I don't need a plan, Mark." Or, "We put together a plan a number of years ago, in fact I don't know where it is, but it's got to be around here somewhere." But all of a sudden when the messaging changed, I immediately got more notice or more attention in my marketing. I got a better response to my marketing tools. I got almost an immediate response when I was in person or I was at a networking event.

All of a sudden, that was one of the big turning points in the evolution of my business. Allison, I think, if it's okay with you, chapter two of my book, *Growing Your Business*, is dedicated

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to this concept or this idea of positioning by concept. It's got the seven rules and the three tests and the four tips and the eight uses of a defining statement. I would love to gift everyone the electronic version of my book, *Growing Your Business*. I'm assuming that would be okay with you.

Allison: Yes, I downloaded it and I was just going to say when you started mentioning that that was just one question out of several, and the questions got, I just think there's so much value in this little book and I really appreciate it.

It's a very easy read and when you said you were willing to do that, I thought that people would love that. I downloaded it and read it in an evening. I mean, I haven't been able to go through all of the—there's a lot of great things in here. There's a lot. You're giving a lot of good value here. I appreciate that.

Mark: Well, you're very welcome.

Allison: You guys, Mark is not going to have you guys opt into his list or anything like that. He's just going to send it to you so don't feel like you're—Mark they can contact me I guess and I can send them a copy or?

Mark: Yeah, if you want to send them the copy that you have, that's fine with me.

Allison: Okay.

Mark: I can always be reached, Mark@SmallBusinessSuccess.com. And Allison, you're right, people are not going to automatically go on our database. You're not going to get bombarded with emails. You're not going to go into a drip campaign. I'm just going to send you the e-book.

Allison: That's nice, yeah, there's a lot of that. We have a question. I'm going to unmute you, Jill.

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Jill: As an employee, how can this information help as far as with an employer? I mean, do you have any thoughts on how that could help for employees to employer?

Mark: Which part of what we talked about tonight?

Jill: Well, the marketing. Actually, the whole thing. I mean as an employee, because I'm not the business owner.

Mark: Sure.

Jill: I was just curious, like what would be a good phrase or suggestion?

Mark: Okay, I'm going to give you two. The first one is very, very simple. That is, get your employer, or you know, your dentist, get him or her connected too, let's talk about what is our monthly target?

Jill: We do that.

Mark: Okay. Do you have visuals of it?

Jill: Yes, we do.

Mark: Does everybody know exactly what the monthly target is?

Jill: Yes, we have it posted in our breakroom.

Mark: Okay, perfect.

Jill: And our daily—what production and collection was.

Mark: Okay, and then the second thing would be, every person on the team should have their own set of repeaters and enders.

Jill: Okay.

Mark: And of course, everybody's roles and responsibilities are a little bit different, but even to make the life of the dentist easier. For

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example, I have a full-time assistant and one day I thought, “Well why aren’t she and I sharing our enders and repeaters so we know what’s important to each other?” What’s hot on her plate and what’s hot on my plate.

We’ve developed a much better working relationship because we know what’s going on in each other’s respective roles and responsibilities. So if every team member had their own little action plan of things on their to-do list that need to get done and checked off. Then if each person on the team had their own unique set of repeaters or a blended set of benchmarks and gosh, you would see teamwork start to improve and morale go through the roof.

Jill: I got you, yeah.

Mark: That’s a simple answer to a complex issue.

Jill: Right, right. I understand.

Mark: But that’s where I would start.

Jill: Okay.

Allison: Well, and I was thinking too, what do you think, and I was just thinking in terms of the question what do I do, even just walking around talking to people. I think it makes a difference in how you see yourself too when you say I change people’s lives by brightening their smile, whatever—creating healthy whatever, however you want to say it, but you know instead of thinking of yourself as a hygienist, thinking of yourself as a person who helps people enjoy their lives and smile and show more confidence. Or you know, something like that I don’t know. I just thought that would be fun to play with too.

Mark: Sure.

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Allison: If you haven't already done that.

Mark: Well because I think each team member, I mean again, each role would have a different defining statement.

Jill: Yes, well I think more of where I'm coming from is, the way the economy is, I'm in Phoenix, Arizona and in 2010 500 dental offices close down. So the economy is definitely, this is an older practice and the economy is definitely taking a toll on a lot of practices and other hygienists I've talked to that work in different practices. I just feel the stress on everybody.

It's not just my office but also other offices and especially not so much newer offices, because I'm not really affiliated with newer offices. I've been in the industry 20 years so it's hard for me to see the stress, money, and trying to come up with new ideas and things like that. Just trying for everybody to work together un-stressfully and make it through the day, or the month, or the year even. We're trying to come up with new ideas where I work, but it's still, the stress still, it affects everybody on the whole team.

Mark: Yeah.

Jill: And it starts from the owners down to everybody. Not just because I'm a hygienist, I mean, it's just, it's the whole team it affects.

Mark: Thank you so much for raising your hand and answering such a great question.

Jill: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to go off. I just, I feel the stress everywhere, not just my office.

Mark: Yeah.

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Allison: Yes, it feels like, I don't know, Jill, I'm in Midland, Texas and the economy is great. I mean, it's almost like a weird, I don't really believe in the full moon stuff and all that, but I just feel like it feels like life is very stressful right now.

Jill: Right.

Allison: I don't know, I mean it's not to do with our economy, I mean we're almost, I'm not talking about my practice, I'm just talking about in Midland in general, it's very busy. It just feels like things are very stressful, I don't know how to explain it, there's something.

Jill: Right.

Allison: Anyway. I don't know, that's a big question.

Jill: Yeah, I know. I came from Ohio six years ago to Arizona and I mean I talked to my former employers, I was there for fourteen years and they're going through the same types of issues.

Allison: Yeah.

Jill: A lot of it is, I don't want to put this down because I'm not one of those type of people, but corporate coming into our industry.

Allison: You know, I'd love to have a conversation with you about that later.

Jill: Yeah.

Allison: Yeah, that would be, I would love to talk to you about that.

Jill: Okay.

Allison: Hugh was talking about that at the beginning of the call.

Jill: Right.

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Allison: I've recently learned about some things that I think will empower us to have some power. I don't want to say against that but to stand and be able to compete with them.

Jill: Exactly.

Allison: So, yeah, I would love...

Jill: I didn't mean to go off the subject. I'm sorry.

Allison: Oh, no. No, it's a big, it's a challenge, I mean Hugh brought it up earlier so I know, I so appreciate your question.

Jill: Okay, well thank you.

Allison: And I appreciate you being on the call.

Jill: Well thanks for having me.

Allison: I love it when teams on the call, yeah. Thank you. I think we're going to go ahead and close it up. Mark, is there anything you want to say in closing?

Mark: You know, I think she raised a good point. There's a tremendous amount of stress out there and there's lots of reasons. Of course, different parts of the country identify with different challenges but I think there's so much coming at us today. There's so many options, there's so many choices, there's so many different ways that we can live our lives and work our practices that the issue of choice is critically important.

And what we let go by is just as important. What we decide not to do is just as important as what decide to do. No matter where you are at on your path or the evolution of your practice or your career, I went on a little 500 mile walk across Northern Spain and I was scared to death. 500 miles is about a million steps and it took me about 33 days.

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On day one, I got a piece of advice and this woman from England said to me, “Mark, no matter how miserable you are, no matter how badly your feet are bruised and blistered and bleeding.” And they did, I walked the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrimage across Spain. She said, “You can always take one more step.” I held on to that little “one more step” pearl of wisdom for over a million steps walking across Spain. Boy, that has sure helped me since coming back from the Camino because it’s a definite challenge out there.

Allison: Yeah.

Mark: So thank you so much, Allison, for having me.

Allison: Thank you so much. If you guys want a copy of the book, I think you all know how to contact me. You can just email me. Mark has given me permission to email you the same copy that he gave me. I love what you just said about the one more step, that’s not quite as overwhelming as thinking about the whole picture in front of you and the end goal. Well, you already know your end goal but you can take just one more step.

Mark: That’s right.

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