



"Hygienepreneurs"

What is a *hygienepreneur*? I define hygienepreneur as a registered dental hygienist who provides a product or service to other dental professionals. I coined the word after I attended a Speakers Consultant Network meeting led by Linda Miles, practice management consultant, author, and speaker. As a hygienist for many years, I was honored and humbled to be in the company of such bright, witty, intelligent, and articulate achievers in the dental field. While listening to this panel of hygiene consultants, the questions that came to my mind were: What inspired these women to pursue their business careers? Do they still practice clinically? What do these women have in common? The answers are interesting. I will introduce you to each of these hygiene role models, offer a brief description of their businesses, and provide insight into their worlds. This information should prove valuable for those interested in becoming entrepreneurs,

Casey Hein, founder of PointPerio, LLC, has worked diligently to transfer periodontal research and technological advancements to private practice. PointPerio collaborates with academic communities and the manufacturing industry to provide unbiased, evidence-based information and recommendations related to nonsurgical treatment of chronic periodontitis. PointPerio focuses on hygienists and clinicians who are committed to developing scientifically supported critical thinking skills, technical mastery, and excellent care.



Kimberly Goodson

Kimberly Goodson, president of PerioPal, developed a method to communicate periodontal data from the mouth of the patient to the chart. She shared her idea with a software developer, and

the result is an innovative voice-driven software program for periodontal exams. PerioPal is a verbal software program designed for recording, charting, storing, and reporting periodontal data. Utilizing PerioPal, hygienists can diagnose disease, maintain accurate records, and effectively communicate treatment plans. The advantages of recording include shortened enrollment time of data, increased accuracy of the exam, and less tediousness during periodontal charting.

Colleen Rutledge is founder of Perio-Therapeutics and Beyond, a consulting company that provides hands-on coaching for various periodontal therapeutics. These include placement of locally applied antimicrobials, piezoelectric ultrasonic training, periodontal probing techniques, risk assessment, host modulation, and other modalities that encourage a medical model in patient care. "This pioneering approach strives to exceed today's standard of care and embraces the future of periodontal medicine," Colleen said.



Colleen Rutledge

Lynne Slim, founder of Perio C Dent, Inc., launched a practice management and consulting firm that specializes in training dental hygienists and dentists to perform risk assessment, early diagnosis, and nonsurgical treatment of periodontal disease. Lynne enjoys helping dentists and dental hygienists develop a periodontal mission statement for their practices, and believes dentists and dental hygienists have an obligation to emphasize total health by promoting oral health and wellness. "My biggest reward

 Hygienepreneur:



Anastasia Turchetta

comes from mentoring others, especially hygienists who suffer from burn-out and who have had bad experiences in the workplace,” said Lynne.

Anastasia Turchetta, co-author of *Conversations on Health and Wellness*, owns a consulting service that focuses on the “assisted hygiene” model by developing oral hygiene care centers. She promotes team protocols, builds sound communication skills, and blends technological advancements for the “ultimate patient experience.” This strategy not only increases production, “It enables our profession to be at its best for each and every patient,” said Anastasia.

Lisa Wadsworth, founder of Lisa Wadsworth, Inc., developed a speaking and coaching program focused on hygiene department growth, implementation of ADA standards of care, integration of new periodontal therapies, and implant dentistry. Lisa focuses on uniting teams, and believes “knowledge is power.”

Inspired Hygiene, founded by **Rachel Wall**, offers coaching and consulting services to dental teams who want to deliver outstanding patient care, as well as create a hygiene department that contributes to the growth of the entire practice. Rachel said, “The biggest reward for me is when hygienists tell me that our program inspired their renewed excitement and dedication to dental hygiene.”

What type of education do these women have? These hygienepreneurs all have associate’s degrees in dental hygiene, two have bachelor’s degrees, and two have master’s de-



Lisa Wadsworth

practiced anywhere from 14 to 28 years. Many of them work part-time in a clinical practice, where they enjoy the interaction with patients and are better able to monitor changes in the field.

Colleen Rutledge commented, “I practice clinical hy-



Rachel Wall

grees, one in dental hygiene. Colleen Rutledge recalled a conversation with her employer, Dr. McDowell. She told him that an associate’s degree might not be sufficient to start her business. Dr. McDowell said, “It doesn’t matter if you didn’t graduate from high school. You’ve got what it takes — commitment and passion!”

What inspired these women to start their businesses? Although these hygienepreneurs were generally inspired by their love of the dental profession, each one recalled a person or need that helped them launch their endeavor.

Casey Hein said, “I recognized the tremendous gap between what science was telling us and what we have been able to integrate into private practice.” Kimberly Goodson founded PerioPal not only to solve the problems encountered during periodontal exams, but to equip fellow hygienists with the technological tools for success in today’s skill-driven job. Lisa Wadsworth wanted to educate young hygienists, as well as reignite the fire in those long-practicing hygienists who might wonder why they are still in dental hygiene.

How many years have these women practiced dental hygiene, and do they practice clinical hygiene today? These hygienepreneurs have

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giene part-time and attribute my business success to staying in direct patient care."

Did they work as consultants prior to starting their own businesses? Casey Hein and Rachel Wall worked as consultants before they started their own businesses. Casey worked in practice acquisition consulting for a national dental management firm, and in corporate management for a multimillion-dollar, multisite practice. Rachel worked for a company that delivered practice management and consulting services.

In addition to owning their own businesses, these hygienepreneurs are writers and speakers. They contribute to well-respected dental journals, books, and publications. Colleen Rutledge said, "I enjoy the fruits of my labor when I see my articles published, when I help practices achieve their goals, and when I hear applause after I speak."

In May 2005, Lynne Slim presented a paper at the Centers for Disease Control Diabetes Translation Conference, during which she discussed the research that she and her colleague had conducted. The paper discussed a survey she and her colleague had developed for people with poorly controlled diabetes in an effort to provide a risk assessment for periodontitis.

Why would they encourage other hygienists to start their own businesses? Colleen Rutledge said, "I enjoy the creativity and freedom that comes with owning a business. I love

the flexibility of managing my time and working from home."

I was fortunate to meet these women and hear them talk about their businesses, and there was tremendous energy in the air at this meeting. These women are excellent role models and care deeply about their profession. Each stepped out of her comfort zone and started her own business without any promise of success.

It's clear that each woman saw a need and conceptualized a way to fill it. Education, years of practice, and inspiration vary, but the common thread for each woman is her belief that her work will ultimately benefit patients and dental teams.

This altruistic behavior has clearly added a new dimension to their lives. It's important to remember this: *It is not what dental hygiene can do for you, it is what YOU can do for dental hygiene.*

*A note of thanks to all the hygienepreneurs who helped make this article possible.

Maggie Vivoda has been a registered dental hygienist for 26 years. She obtained her MBA in 2004 and is working toward her doctorate of management degree in organizational leadership. Ms. Vivoda is a proud member of the Speaking Consulting Network. She welcomes speaking engagements and can be contacted at DntlConsultant@aol.com.