

At the cutting edge

Yiannis Kotoulas reviews the recent Henry Schein Dental Innovation Symposium.

Over 300 dental care professionals journeyed to the Pullman London St Pancras Hotel in June to experience an excellent educational participate in. The 2019 Henry Schein Dental Innovation Symposium was the first event of its name, and represented the new home of the much-loved Digital Symposium and Good to Great events. With two days of lectures and practical breakout sessions split between practice management and digital technology there was something for every attendee.

A strong start

The first day was kicked off with a welcome from Ben Flewett, managing director of Software of Excellence, a Henry Schein One brand, who questioned what the real importance of innovation was. Ben referred to recent studies which link oral health to health conditions such as heart attacks, dementia and diabetes, and asked anyone with a friend or family member affected by these conditions to stand up and look around. With most of the packed lecture hall on their feet, he then explained that seeking improved ways to deliver oral health care was of vital importance to everyone that wanted to address these issues. He said, "Together we in this room can make a difference. We can get patients to visit the dentist to help dementia, diabetes and heart disease, the plagues of our time. We are all guilty of working too much in our businesses, and not enough on our businesses."



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Ben's talk set the scene for the rest of the symposium by emphasising the importance and necessity of innovation in the dental profession and inspiring delegates to take back what they learnt to their practices.

Ben was followed by Steve Head, a hilarious motivational speaker who ran delegates through how to build resilient teams and mindsets. Dentistry is, sadly,

a profession which sees a high degree of stress induced burn-out leading to depression and other mental health problems. Steve's frank recounting of his own struggles with mental health were powerful, and when he told the room that "weak people don't break, strong people do", it resonated strongly. Dentists, as Steve explained, are often inclined to be perfectionists and



Workaholics, and with this mental wiring many struggle to think that any amount of work is ever good enough. According to Steve though, building resilience is as simple as maintaining a positive outlook, which he gave some salient tips on how to do. Letting go of small problems, focusing on the positives, giving feedback rather than criticism and not saying or doing anything negative for the first four minutes of being somewhere were just some of his top tips. All of this information was communicated through a series of exercises which had the audience on their feet interacting with those sitting next to them, and when he finished by inviting everyone to attend his afternoon session delegates were keen to get stuck into the first breakout sessions.

Breakout sessions

Focusing on business growth and practice performance, the first day's breakout sessions covered leadership and teamwork, implantology, orthodontics, marketing and communication and finance. Guy Meyers, director of customer success and marketing at Software of Excellence led a thorough session on improving patient experience at each touchpoint while Barbara Hutchinson, co-founder of Manan limited, questioned the belief that marketing is a waste of money and explained its value. Two consultants in the management of dental businesses, Laura Horton and Michael Bentley, who have over 40 years of combined experience in the grassroots of dentistry presented their breakout session entitled 'How to get buy in

from your team and have them all working towards the same goal'. The session was especially informative as the two hosts have worked both as practice managers and dental nurses, and their understanding was informed by the experience of working on both sides of the management divide. They succinctly explained that staff in a dental practice need to see their managers as human beings to get on board with solutions and new initiatives, and have to be consulted so that they feel like they are fulfilled in their work. The hierarchy of needs was also explained to attendees, wherein the lower level of staff needs, such as lunch breaks and comfy uniforms, have to be ensured before asking for too much from your team. Michael even admitted that he had once left a nursing job because the uniform was uncomfortable, perfectly illustrating the hierarchy. Michael and Laura also covered recruitment, creating a staff culture, building a brand story and staff retention, all of which are topical in an increasingly difficult recruitment climate.

Following lunch and an entertaining talk given by Mandy Hickson, the UK's second ever female Tornado GR4 RAF pilot, that covered the importance of camaraderie, communication and delegation, the afternoon's breakout sessions started. With topics ranging from improving customer service, building a brand, communicating with patients and increasing private treatments the afternoon sessions were just as informative and inspiring as the morning sessions. Of particular note was Barry Oulton's session entitled 'Your language of success', which

covered neuro-linguistic programming, non-verbal communication and subconscious influence in the practice setting and how to use these to make patients feel more comfortable through marketing, your manner and your communication.

Continued success

The second day of the symposium delved into the clinical and detail-oriented aspects of the educational programme with a focus on digital technology and especially intraoral scanning, lasers and 3D printing. Julian Caplan, the president of the Digital Dentistry Society UK, presented a session covering digital scanning with Dentsply Sirona's new state-of-the-art Primescan intraoral scanner, while Simon Chard simultaneously covered aesthetic cases with the new scanner. Eimear O'Connell explained how to merge CBCT to plan implant placements in her session, while dental surgeon Chris Lefkaditis gave an overview of various 3D printing technologies.

Ben Flewett closed the two-day symposium with a lecture entitled 'Implementing and managing change, starting today', which wrapped up the event nicely by reminding everyone of how to make sure any new innovations were implemented effectively. The extremely wide and diverse range of speakers and topics covered over the two days meant there was something for every attendee at the Henry Schein Dental Innovation Symposium, and the inspirational speakers were an excellent part of the programme sure to have energised delegates to put what they learnt into practice.