

Ep #80: Part 1 - Dentistry Uncensored with Dr. Howard Farran



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](http://www.DentistFreedomBlueprint.com) with Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris

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Howard Farran: “When you're spending a day doing fillings, crowns, root canals, and hygiene checks, you're not working on any aspect of your business. You go home tired. The time to start delegating and the time to focus the working on your business, not in your business, is the day you graduate.”

You are listening to the *Dentist Freedom Blueprint* podcast, with David Phelps and Evan Harris. Navigating you through the uncharted waters of a turbulent economy with straight-forward advice to transform your practice into a self-sufficient cash machine, compound your net worth assets, and multiply, multiply, multiply your passive cash flow streams.

David Phelps: Hi, Dr. David Phelps here. Fasten your seatbelts. I've got a two-part podcast interview with Dr. Howard Farran, a dentist renegade extraordinaire, entrepreneur, and founder of Dentaltown. Listen in as I take Howard back to his early beginnings and what formed his course into dentistry and the Dentaltown platform.

Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders mastermind community and the *Dentist Freedom Blueprint* podcast. I've got a real treat for you today, an interview that I've been looking forward to for months. Dr. Howard Farran is with us. If you are aspiring to have a DDS or DMD after your name, you should already be connected with this gentleman.

Howard, I'm going to read your short bio because if I read your long bio, we would complete the whole podcast and we wouldn't get any questions in. So let me run with the short version because we'll get in some good stuff here.

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Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, is a noted international lecturer on faster, easier, more efficient dentistry. He has captivated audiences around the world with his innovative, informational, and entertaining style. In his seminar entitled, “The Virtues of Profitable Dentistry” he gets down to the nitty gritty details of running a thriving family practice. He can show any dental team how they too can achieve their dreams and goals.

Dr. Farran graduated from the University of Missouri Kansas City dental school in 1987. He earned his MBA from Arizona State University in 1999. He received his Master’s in the Academy of General Dentistry in 1998. He received his Diplomate in the International College of Oral Implantology in 1998.

He’s also received wide-range recognition, such as being named Alumni of the Year by the University of Missouri in 1997, Arizona Public Health Dentist of the Year Award in 1995 by the Arizona Office of Dental Health, and the Arizona Award in 1989 from the Arizona State Dental Association for outstanding contributions made to the profession of dentistry efforts to fluoridate the water of Phoenix.

Dr. Farran is the founder and publisher of *Dentaltown Magazine*, which is mailed to more than—and I know this number has changed, Howard, but it says mailed to more than 120,000 dentists in 43 countries. I think you’ve reached every country, right? Aren’t your subscribers well over 200,000 now?

Howard: That’s right.

David: I thought that was the current numbers. Yeah. He’s also the founder of Hygienetown.com, Orthotown.com, and the

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flagship site, Dentaltown.com where more than, as I said, 200,000 registered dental professionals share information with each other on a daily basis.

Dr. Farran is the author of several dental practice management articles and multiple video series. His experience ranges from all aspects of practice management, including business planning, operations and finance, to ecommerce business and Internet marketing.

You've also got a book out, Howard, and I've read it. It's a great book. It's *Uncomplicate Business: All it Takes is People, Time, and Money*. Before we jump into that, I just want to say, I'm the proud owner of a VHS that I think is four VHS, they're red, red case. That was a precursor I believe of your MBA 30-day Program, right? Am I correct?

Howard: That's right.

David: Yeah, way back in the early 90s I grabbed a hold of that product and then got the MBA. I've been following you for years. I just want to say to our listeners, I feel like you are truly an icon in dentistry. You are true to yourself. In some form or fashion, I'd say you're a renegade but that's who we like to follow, people who say it the way it is and you don't play to any particular party or institution.

Let's talk a little bit about—well, one thing we left off. I don't want to forget this. Ironman. Ironman, that wasn't on this bio, but I know that you have participated. Is it three now? Have you done three? Are you doing more?

Howard: Yeah, I've gotten another one, my fourth one in 100 days. Every year I do the Arizona Ironman.

David: You started this when you were turning 50, is that right?

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Howard: That's right. I turned 50 and I thought, "You're short, fat, and bald, you better start getting a hobby where you have to exercise."

David: So how's that been? Was that a difficult thing to do? I mean, you set your mind to do it. Obviously you're a person when you set your mind to do something you're going to do it. But tell us, how difficult was that to get through that first one?

Howard: You know, it really wasn't because basically all my dental friends, our hobby was we'd go to the bar and eat cheeseburgers, drink beer, and watch football games. Now, I have just as much fun with a bunch of dentists like Louis Core, Brad Sandvik, Jay Reznick, all these local dentists. I never thought that it'd be fun to meet up with a couple dentists and go on a 50-mile bike ride. But it's just as much fun laughing and giggling while you're peddling your bike for four hours as it is sitting at a bar drinking beer, eating cheeseburgers.

Sometimes you've just got to audit your friends. I was just getting too old and fat to be doing that anymore. Now, all my dentist friends, local, are guys that I bike, swim, run with and it's just, I look forward to the event just to be with them. It's the same conversations, you're just swimming, biking, running. It's a blast.

David: How many hours a week do you train going into the 100 days before?

Howard: I have two personal trainers, two ladies that are, one is a seven-time Iron Man and one is, they're just two beastly 50-year-old women that live within a mile of me and they trade off. Every morning at 5:00 they're knocking on my

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door and it's going to be two, three, four hours every morning. Year round.

David: Wow, that's awesome.

Howard: I'm still short, fat, and bold, I'm just more fit.

[Laughter]

David: I love it. Let's talk about where you started because every business owner, every dentist, anybody who is out there in the world doing great things, we all came from an environment. We all grew up with a family environment, be that good, bad, or otherwise. I know from reading your book, from talking to you in person, one of the people that was key in your life was your family and certainly your father.

For people that don't know the story, we'll talk about your book, and you talk about it in your book as well, but let's talk about your father's influence and where he went from working as an employee in a business to his epiphany that there might be something more. Then what that did for you as you rode around with him and we'll get into what he did. Let's go back there. Talk to me about your dad and where this started.

Howard: I was born in 1962. My mom and dad were Catholic. They got married. They had like seven kids in three hours. My mom stayed home and did the mom thing and dad delivered bread. We were so damn poor we didn't even know we were poor. I lived in the poorest part of town. That was during the Vietnam War, there was like 10,000 Vietnamese refugees down there. Just really, really poor.

My dad, he decided that he'd been saving up his money, he saw these franchises rolling out: McDonalds, Kentucky

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Fried Chicken, Long John Silvers. So when I was ten years old, he bought a Sonic Drive-In franchise and he quit his job with seven kids at home. He started this little Sonic Drive-In. Do they have those where you're at? Do you know what I'm talking about?

David: Absolutely. Got them all over, yep.

Howard: He was making about \$10,000, \$11,000 a year delivering bread and the first year he made \$60,000 and we moved out to the suburbs. I was just so impacted, like holy moly. I had no idea a job and your income could make so much difference. I mean if you've ever gone from your wages to six times that earnings, we were in shock.

Then he started opening one every year for nine years in a row. We eventually ended up in the richest part of Wichita, where my neighbor was Kenny Anderson the dentist. So I was going to work with my hero, my dad, but we were just making hamburgers, onion rings, and tater tots. I started going to work with Kenny Anderson and he was doing root canals, build ups, and crowns. It was right then in the sixth grade I decided, oh my god, I'm going to be a dentist.

David: Did you see back then that what you were learning from your dad and opening the numerous franchises that he did, did you start to see quickly that dentistry could be run in a similar fashion with processes and systems and demographic studies? You were putting all this together I assume at that time as you were going through school. Am I correct?

Howard: You know, I was my dad's only son. My brother was born 17 years later, so I either had to stay home and play Barbie dolls with my sisters or go to work with my dad. I

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was learning all that stuff. He took me to all the meetings: banks, marketing, finance. He took me to all that stuff. I didn't realize that I was learning something significant. I didn't realize this would apply to dentistry until I got out of school in '87. I'd been open for a year. I was so looking forward to our one-year class reunion party.

I went back to UMKC in Kansas City thinking all my friends, we were going to pick up like we left and go out and drink and have a ball and they were all just incredibly depressed. They were saying things like they wish they didn't have their student loans. One guy said to me, "I wish I would have been a plumber like my brother. I wouldn't have any debt and I'd be making \$50 an hour." So we start talking about everything that I was doing, because I did a million bucks the first year.

We're talking, next thing I know, the sun is coming up and there's actually my classmates saying, "Dude, you got to write a book. You've got get this out. They didn't talk about any of this in dental school." That's what motivated me to write the book, *The Business of Dentistry*, way back in the day. I just sat down and wrote that. It's got more typos than I do anything in my world and sold a gazillion copies of that thing because it just wasn't picked up.

That's when I realized that you shouldn't go out and lecture on root canals to general dentists because endodontists are better at that. I thought orthodontists are better for... you know, all the specialists are better on clinical. And I did all that stuff. I got my fellowship, mastership, diplomate, I love the clinical. But the only thing that I had unique was the business side of it. Then I think it was in 1998 I started wondering, did my dad really teach me everything right?

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I signed up to get my MBA program, which was probably the singular best thing I ever did. I'm only ten minutes from Arizona State University. They had a night program Mondays and Wednesdays, nights from 6:00 to 10:00. So I applied to that, I got in. I went there and every Monday and Wednesday from 6:00 to 10:00 you go there with 200 people and you would just talk about all these great business stories, success stories, managerial accounting, financial accounting, marketing, operations, logistics, everything.

It was three trimesters a year for two years, so for four months, it'd just be like two courses. It might be like HR and marketing. So the first two hours you just talk about marketing. The next two hours, you talk about HR. I was applying all of that to my dental office. I was taking notes. In fact, when I graduated from there, that's when I wrote *The 30-Day MBA* just from my notes for two years and dental school.

By the way, your VHS, I put those *30-Day Dental MBA*, I put them on YouTube and iTunes. Even though that was from 1999, I put those up on YouTube and everybody says, "Yeah, I can tell by the examples that this is 15-year-old information and it's awesome because nothing changes." Math and geometry are still the same. It's kind of timeless. So I'd love to see you put your VHS tapes on YouTube and iTunes because they are, they're classics.

David: They are. They are some of the best stuff. When your dad was making that leap from a steady paycheck, which was not keeping the family where he wanted to be and looking at this franchise, did you see any fear in him? Was he afraid? Do you remember? Because you were like what, ten years old?

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Howard: I absolutely remember. We talked about all that stuff. My mom and dad were so Catholic they made the Pope look like a hippy liberal. They had so much faith in God that they were fearless. When you have that mindset that God is on your side, then he believed that that was the next journey and mom believed it. When my mom and dad got scared, they'd go to mass. They'd say a rosary. They'd do a novenas, Stations of the Cross. So they were so religious, they were fearless.

David: With the MBA, what would you tell young doctors who are in dental school right now or heading out? The MBA you said was some of the cornerstone of your ability to run a practice as a real business. Would you recommend that every young dentist get an MBA? Or are there alternatives?

Howard: Oh my gosh, yes. You know when dental school was over I almost kissed the ground and cried that hell was over because it was like getting out of the Marine corps boot camp, you finally get back from Vietnam, Afghanistan. When MBA school was over, I was sad and depressed. You're with 200 like-minded people of every industry, age group. You're hearing all these stories. You're talking about all these exciting companies and Apple and you're hearing what all these people are doing and all this stuff while you're taking notes saying, "How am I going to apply this to Today's Dental?"

Then what was neat is they always had, each class would have a semester project. No one would know what to do it on and I was a great extrovert salesman and I would just sit there and stand up to 200 people and say, "Please, if you don't have an idea, please, please join my team. I want to do this for my dental office."

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So every single project, every one of those 2-4-6—12 courses, I got four other MBA students to help brainstorm of how this is going to impact Today's Dental. It was all these exercises that you would never go into this depth on your marketing or your HR policies or your managerial accounting or financial accounting. You know, all these things. It was kind of like when we were little mom would make us go on these two-day Catholic retreats at the end of school on Friday. You'd have to go to the retreat and you wouldn't have your friends and you'd be forced to think about something different.

So these class projects forced you to go into your office and tear apart your HR manual, where if it wasn't due next month and you didn't have four other guys working on it. Sometimes we'd take all that stuff to my house in the front room and dig over this stuff. A lot of this I hadn't even gone over, or maybe I bought an HR manual, never even read it, you know, whatever. It was just the coolest dang retreat. When that MBA was over, that was starting the projectile of total amazing success.

Look at the difference in the mindset of you as a dentist versus your assistant. Your assistant has been in there 20 years. She sees what you're doing. So you think your assistant is a dentist but your assistant is really not a dentist after 10, 20 years because she didn't take the math, the physics, the chemistry, the biology, the biochem. She didn't learn all the guts of it.

When you go through MBA school and you know the guts, you might have a friend who says he's good in business and she really is and she makes a lot of money, but when you go to MBA school, you will never think the same again.

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David: Where's the balance between clinical expertise and business? Again, I'm bringing this back to young students coming through dental school and graduating. What would you tell them today in terms of balancing that? Because I agree with you, the business is so left out and that's what you brought to the fore. The way you did it, do you recommend they get out of dental school, start working somewhere? Where should they start working? How should they start building their business acumen?

Howard: I feel bad telling you the answer but I'm always going to tell you what I absolutely believe. The answer is that every hour you spend doing clinical dentistry you're hurting your business. Look at McDonalds taught everybody that. Mom and dad spent all their time running a hamburger and french fry store in Parsons, Kansas for 20, 30 years. Then in comes McDonalds, which has a franchise team that doesn't make hamburgers, fries, they just work on the business and whenever they'd open up their McDonalds, a mom and pop store would be out of business in 30 days.

You look at the people that have like, Rick Workman, the only billionaire dentist on earth, has 1,500 offices. He hasn't seen a patient in 25 years. Look at Steve Thorne of Pacific Dental Services. His dad is a dentist. His brother said, "Come on, Steve, let's go to dental school." He thought, "Why? I can hire a dentist in five minutes. By the time you get out of dental school, I'll have a dozen dental offices." Now he has 500 and a Learjet. Rick Kushner of Comfort Dentists, 500 offices.

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Go back to the restaurant, I mean, they wrote a whole book on this called the *E-Myth* saying why are these franchises wiping everybody out? Because the franchise headquarters wasn't serving customers. They were working on operations. Here's this mom and dad owning a hamburger and every time they needed pickles, they had to walk back to the refrigerator, open the door, open the can, get three pickles, put it back. McDonalds was eliminating hundreds of little, minor steps and perfecting advertising and finance. It gets to a point where you can't compete. So I would say that—no, let me give you another story.

This is one of the neatest stories that happened to me when I got out here in '87. I was looking for a job. I got out May 11, 1987 and I didn't get my office open until September 21. So I was looking for a part time job for four months. They said, "Go apply with this lady." I said, "Who's this lady?" They go, "She's like some 85-year-old Jewish lady from Germany with four offices." So I went and met her. But here's her story.

Nazi Germany was rising to power so she knew she had to get the hell out of there. She came to America and they wouldn't accept her dental license. They told her she had to go all the way through dental school and it was a time in her life she couldn't do that. So she went to a lawyer and the lawyer looked at her and said, "You know what? You can't practice dentistry, but you can own a dental office." That's a hell of a loophole. It forced her, she could only work on the business.

By the time I met up with her, hell, she was 85. She had an office north, south, east, west. Each one was doing 2.5 million. I thought to myself, "Would she be doing ten

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million dollars a year, 85 years old, driving a Mercedes-Benz if she would have been at the chair doing dentistry 40 hours a week her whole life?" It's just not going to happen.

Now there's other people, like look at Billy Graham. Billy Graham, I'll never forget when he was on Larry King's show, Larry King said, "Come on, Billy, there's 19,000 towns in America, they all have a half dozen churches. They're all reading the same book. Why you? Why are you so successful?"

He goes, "I'm lucky. When I started out, I got me an inside man. I found me a business man. I said, 'Look, I'm going to read the Bible and preach. I don't want to worry about collections, bills, church.' So I got me an inside man who was a bookkeeper and he did all that. I could just work on my message and since I was the outside man, I was the front man, he was the inside man."

In fact, he asked Larry, "Do you even know his name?" He said, "No, I don't even know his name." He goes, "He's working on the business of my mission and I'm doing the mission." So some dentists are lucky. Like farms, you see it all the time. The old man would be out on a tractor 24 hours a day while the wife was in there at the kitchen table crunching calculators, fertilizer, all that stuff. Some dentists have a spouse that's truly passionate to be that inside person. Some do it with an office manager.

I would say the time to start delegating and the time to focus on working on your business, not in your business, is the day you graduate.

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David: I think that's what you talk a lot about in your book, *Uncomplicate Business: All It Takes Is People, Time, and Money*. A great book. It's been out a year? Two years?

Howard: I think one year.

David: Yeah. That probably wasn't real hard for you because you had content galore out there for the last 25 years, right? So it was a matter of compiling everything that you've done, but let's talk about it. You make it sound simple, the uncomplicating it. People, time, and money.

Let's talk about the people part first because I think that's what you're alluding to. Instead of being that typical solo, rugged individualist that we as dentists think we have to be, we have to do it all, we have to focus on the clinical aspect, is you've surrounded yourself with great people. You couldn't have the largest dental media company or seminar company in the world if you had to rely only on you, right Howard? There's only so much you can do.

So how did you make the shift so quickly from being a very good and aspiring clinical dentist to working on the business so fast? Again, I'm just looking for the balance there. What came first? How quickly did you bring in the right people? Like A-teamers. Talk about A-teamers versus B-teamers. What makes this work for you?

Howard: I'd say what makes it work for me is an exercise I've done throughout my whole life. I think I learned it from a priest when I was in 7th grade is that when you lay yourself down in bed and you're going to bed and you pull that blanket up, you've got to envision that they're closing the door to the coffin. There's going to be a day when you go to bed and you don't wake up.

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What happens to your business? Look at the greatest managers in the world, are all dead. Ray Kroc is dead and 40,000 McDonalds go on. Sam Walton and his wife Helen took 20 years to open up the first 18 Walmarts. Now they're dead and they open up 40 a month. So my mindset is that I am going to die. This business is going to be managed from the grave and I am not going to give you money and then do your job. I'm not going to give you money and micromanage. If I give you money and you're not doing your job, I'm going to fire you and find someone that can because what the founding father has to do is get the founding lifers, your employees.

I've got a whole bunch of employees that have been with me 10, 20, 30 years. I transfer my mission and my values and my goals to the founding team and I can die and those founding team if they hire you and you don't fit their values and their work, everything, then they're going to release you. So then it will just keep going on. You don't really add value if the minute you die a bulldozer comes and just knocks down your fort. I mean, to really be sustainable it's got to survive your grave.

So if your dental office is going to have to run when you're dead, then you've got to ask yourself, "Can Amy really run this when I'm gone? They all know it in sports. Look at the NFL, probably the most competitive industry in America, 38 franchises doing ten billion a year. Everybody is backseat driving, you'd know you have to have the best quarterback. You know you have to have the best wide receiver. Nobody goes cheap on a quarterback and a wide receiver and a running back. They have full time people in HR.

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When you have an opening in the NFL, you have four or five people that know the name of every single kid who ever played in college that could be a running back. They know if they're 32 or 33, they know their names. They know everything about them. Then dentists, when they have an opening, they'll throw an ad on Craigslist on Saturday. Two girls walk in on Monday, neither of them have a resume. They hire one of those two.

In our company, a lot of times if there's an opening for a job, we might interview 35 to 50 people before we hopefully find a lifer. Then when we hire that person, a lot of times in one day, two days, three days, thirty days, you're like, nah, that's not going to work out. I'd rather have one Charles Barkley, Michael Jordan that's going to be with me 10, 20, 30 years than a bunch of riffraff. You want patients for life. You want employees for life. It's so easy. If you have the right people, it's so easy.

The other thing is so many dentist, they'll even tell you that when they're having a staff meeting, they're the smartest person in the room. If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room. You need to hire people smarter than you, more energy than you, a different perspective. Then don't micromanage them and let them go. But humans are control freaks so they're always trying to control everybody around them.

You go to so many staff meetings that the doctor just lectures and there's like zero input back from the team. I'm saying, "Doctor, I need you to be dead. Six feet underground with worms coming in and out of your eyes and these people to keep going." Just find the best people, get the hell out of their way. If they aren't taking

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you to the top, you got the wrong people. If you're the smartest person in the room, get out of the freaking room.

David: Did you already have this attitude, this mindset, when you started Today's Dental? Because you didn't get your MBA until, was it ten years later, thereabouts?

Howard: Absolutely. My dad had five restaurants in Wichita that he could manage, but he had a store in Abilene, Kansas, Childress, Texas, Kearney, Nebraska, Louisville, Kentucky. You just can't micromanage a store that takes you 12 hours to drive to. It was all about I need to find the best store manager. I need to be able to go down there two or three weeks, make sure the values are down there, leave, and visit them maybe once or twice every—three or four times a year. I mean it's not like every Friday is like I'm going to go to Childress, Texas, then Monday I'm going to go to Louisville. You need to find the best people.

If you think that's a stretch, imagine a dentist, a dentist can't manage their own office let alone if they manage five in one town and then had four other offices that were eight to twelve hours away. If you think that's impossible, I'm saying, dude, you've got to manage this from the grave. You've got to die and it goes on. So it's all about the people.

Then that's part of the time. When I'm doing a filling, I can't be working on my business. When I'm spending an hour doing a root canal... I mean, I can hire 100 talking monkeys to do a root canal, but there's only 30 dental office corporations that have more than 50 offices. So what do you think is harder? To find 30 CEOs to run 50 offices or find someone to do a molar root canal? What do you think would be harder?

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David: Yeah, exactly. So when you started Today's Dental, then just tell us, who were the first key hires that you made since you had already seen what your dad had done with Sonic. You understand how this had to work. Do you remember who were the people that you first brought on?

Howard: Yeah, I hired my first assistant, Jan Sweeney. She's still there. She was the same age—while I was in school for all those years, she was assisting a pretty unbelievable successful dentist up in north Scottsdale who's still there for all those years. Then when I started looking, a lot of them are gone because when I was 24, I looked at all the hygiene applicants and at the time, most of them were all young and I just kept interviewing.

I was waiting until some 50, 60-year-old lady walked in there. Then I told her, I said, "Look, I'm straight out of school. I have no idea what I'm doing. I'm looking for someone that's got 20 years' experience. I want you." She's like, "Oh, I love it." Same thing with the front office manager. I was saying, "I don't know these things. I was in dental school learning how to do operative dentistry." So I hired one young person, the assistant, who's still there 30 years later. But I hired a bunch of 50, 60 years olds who taught me all the lessons.

David: Let's talk about Dentaltown. Where did the aspiration come to do this? How did Dentaltown get started? What brought this on?

Howard: I have four boys: Eric, Greg, Ryan, and Zach. Eric was born in 1989. When he was nine years old, which would have been 1998, he walks into my office and he says, "Can I borrow your credit card?" When your nine-year-old asks for your credit card, you just give it to them out of morbid curiosity to see what this guy is going to do with it.

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He gets up on the desk. We had gotten this internet for school and for homework. He gets on there, starts doing this crazy, stupid AOL dialup busy line, more dialing, and he finally gets on and he goes to a website. They're talking about skateboard wheels. I'm just sitting there thinking, "Oh my god, I would give anything to be doing this. Talking about root canals, fillings, crowns." You know, you do a root canal and it swells up and you're like should I have not done it in one step? Should I have two-stepped? Do I put them on ...

Everybody that loved me would just say, "It's all right." They were just a cheerleader. You know, my dad, "Oh, you'll be fine." It's like, I want to talk to a dentist. I just wanted a place where I could show a picture, show an x-ray, and talk to another dentist. I envisioned that all of us guys would put our kids to bed about 8:30 and maybe the first and last Tuesday of every month from 8:30, 9:30, maybe 25 guys would get into this chat room and talk shop.

The first month, 1,000 dentists signed up. That was in 1998 and I've never had less than 1,000 dentists ever sign up ever after. I think we just past 217,000 members because the whole motto was with DentalTown.com no dentist should have to practice solo again.

When the internet came out, everybody was thinking it would do 5 Cs. It would sell commerce, like Amazon. It would have content, like Huffington Post. It would have commercials, like banner ads. It would have connectivity, connect with other computers. But then the 5th C was this community.

Back in 1998, about 20 companies came out and they were selling dental supplies and they were going to go

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against Schein and Patterson, all this stuff. I said, “It will never work because of that community.” That Schein rep, that Patterson rep, when the Benco lady walks in, the only thing I use her—I don’t ask her which file she uses, I’ll say, “On this endo file, which of the endodontists use it?” She’ll start rattling off names. I’ll say, “Oh, really? Gettleman uses the ProTaber? Well that means a lot to me.”

I’ll sit there and say, “I’m having problems with this, does anybody use it?” She’ll say, “No, everyone else uses this.” I knew the dentist wasn’t going to cut his only lifeline to the rest of the deal. That’s why in Dentaltown I didn’t go after the supplies. I went after the community. Supplies is what, four to six percent of cost? What they want to know is, what the hell should I do with this tooth? They were all practicing alone.

So I went after the community and those other 20 companies that went after the supplies, they’re all gone. Some of them got a lot of venture capital. I mean some of them burned through 20 million dollars in cash and went bankrupt and here I had little Ken Scott, who’s still there, he was my programmer in 1998 and he’s still just beating away at it.

So we went after the community because me being a dentist, I knew it was incredibly lonely to be a dentist and think to yourself, “What should I cement this with?” Then you would wait for a course and maybe the convention was three months away and you have an endo question right now. I just thought with the internet that we could all be connected and that would just be so much more gratifying and fulfilling.

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David: Wow. Catch your breath. Next week, part two of my interview with Dr. Howard Farran. Don't miss it. Some predictions for what's coming up next in dentistry.

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