

**Ep #212: Justin Short and David Maloley Podcast -
The Titans of Dentistry**



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David Phelps: Good day everyone, this is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders Master Mind Community and Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast. Today, I have two ... Yes, let's count them, two of some of my favorite people, people that I have really watched as they have, I think, really set their own life on course in the realm of their career path. Which for a lot of us, is the same. It's dentistry. It's professional practice. So with me today is Dr. David Maloley the founder and host of the relentless dentist podcast. David how are you doing sir?

David Maloley: It's great to be back with you David. I'm fantastic thanks for the opportunity.

David Phelps: And I have to say, David, I think you had to be one of the very first, at least, dentist podcasters out there. You were either the first or a group of a very small number, because I remember you starting that out. And I was honored to be on one of your earlier ones. So that was fun, and some number of years ago. Like, six years ago, wasn't it?

David Maloley: Working on six years, yeah. I remember reaching out to people, and I had to explain what is a podcast. When I interviewed them on the show, they're like, "Oh, yeah, I guess I'd be honored." So yeah.

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David Phelps: Yeah, I guess.

David Maloley: Yeah, it was awhile back there.

David Phelps: I guess I'll try anything, right? I'll try once and see how it goes. All right, Dr. Justin Short. Justin, you're almost not old enough to be on this show, but we're gonna let you anyway, sir. Because I think ... Didn't you just turn 40? Are you 40 now?

Justin Short: Let's not rush it. I actually turned 40 the day at the Freedom Founder in Dallas.

David Phelps: Oh, that's right, that's right, that's right. Yeah, yeah, you're coming down and so, that's right. I remember, that was part of the constraints of coming down. So Justin Short of The Lifestyle Practice. We're gonna talk today about a project that you gentlemen took on a few years ago. And what that really turned out to be, so, so many, I think, so many things to look at there. But I had to say first, what I really love about the two of you is that, you are, I would say, definitely outliers. And outliers in a good way. You're like renegades. And you know, I love to be around people that think and act differently. I am not a follower of the crowd, and I know neither are you.

And yet, that can be a little bit scary at times, to be different. To act differently, to do different things than the majority of our peer group, our colleagues. Our families would say, "No, you need to go down this path. This is the path, this is the path that's been laid out for you."

You guys definitely have not done that. So before we get into your project, I want to just get a little bit of background from you guys, because I think that's what

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makes this really interesting. So David, I started with you, so I'll go with Justin first. Justin, at age 38, you had already been in and out of a couple of practices and sold both, invested outside of dentistry. Created, really, a freedom track for yourself, for your family, to create more time in life. That's a pretty darn fast track, if I do say so myself. Was that something that you set out to do from the get-go? Or it's something that you determined relatively early on, then set your course? Tell us a little bit about that.

Justin Short: Yeah, it definitely was from the get-go, honestly. Maybe not necessarily day one when I graduated dental school, but very soon after. And I think it makes it, not saying it has to be that way, but I think it makes it a lot easier. And I was aggressive, but I had a like, what I felt like, was an aggressive goal. And kind of what you alluded to. You know, definitely, I feel if you do what everyone else does, you're gonna get the results everyone else has. Not that that's bad, but that's not what I wanted, and you know, that's why I set my course the way I did.

David Phelps: Well, I know that we talk a lot in our respective platforms, podcasts, the people we love to coach and help, and we talk a lot about the fact that we are blessed. Well, number one, we live in America, right? So we have to say, anybody that lives in America, we're blessed people, because we have freedom to really live our lives the way we want to live them. We get to choose, which, you don't get that in a lot of other countries.

Secondly, we were blessed because we were able to go to school and get relatively high educations that put us onto a career path that, not that it's easy, but it certainly

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can provide, and it does provide, I think, for the average person who's in professional practice. Definitely, a much better than average lifestyle.

And so, I think there's a tendency for some of us in the ranks to say, "Well, why do you want more? Why do you want more? Because don't you have enough? Look at all the people that don't have what you have." And I don't think that's really a point, because I think all three of us would agree that it's not having more stuff in life. It's what you two have both done in your lives and your respective practices, and that's create more time. Number one, more time for your families because that's first and foremost who we want to spend time with as much as possible. But secondly, beyond that, families, it's like, well, how can we have more impact? How can we create more of a dent in other people? Whether that's in a community-based situation. Whether it's with our patients and our staff, or whatever you want that to be. But there's gotta be more in life.

And so to me, that's my answer. It's not like we're being disrespectful of people who just plumb out work hard and live a better than average life. But it's like, there's just something more there. Would you guys agree? Either one or both of you, jump in on that one?

Justin Short: A hundred percent. You want to go, Dave?

David Maloley: Yeah, absolutely. I think that's why we all connect is because we have similar life philosophies. And we've also seen the kind of, the treadmill that some dentists get on, and it'll be, it's like either they're running from something in their past where they're trying to be enough, or they'll chasing, "I'll be happy when." And we know that that finish

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line never approaches. And I've certainly been on that track, the achievement entrepreneur. But we've all found a better path. And I think once you kind of been, reached that ... I don't want to use enlightenment, that's a pretty strong word, but once you've seen a better way, I think if you're kind hearted and generous, it's natural to try and extend and share that with other people to make sure they're not running into the same brick walls that, in my case, that I did.

David Phelps: Yeah, well said. So Dave, again, like Justin, you took a different path, a path that most people, most advisors, consultants in our field would have said, "Buddy, why are you doing that?" And you decided to put your family and a, what you call, an epic lifestyle ahead of going to what would be considered, maybe, a better route to get profitability and practice.

You decided to go to Vail Valley, okay, back in 2009, really coming out of the death of the recession, which just seems like kind of nuts, right? But tell us how it ... Just give us a little fast forward. How'd that work out? I mean, did you at some point, did you ever question your decision with your wife? Did you guys ever say, "Gosh, why did we do this?" Or was it just like, "Okay, nope, we're gonna do this all the way."

David Maloley: I mean, the gloves are definitely off. I was willing to do whatever it took, but it was certainly more challenging than I expected. I was maybe a little over confident because I knew that I had the farm boy work ethic behind me, and that I could outwork anybody. But there's also strategy that I didn't fully understand at the time.

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The blessing that came out of it is that, out of the trials you can get pretty resourceful. And I learned marketing, and I learned how to make the phone ring and all that sort of thing. But the thing that kept us going is the long, long term vision. And I knew that I didn't want to wait for retirement and vacation to enjoy my life. There were certain things that I wanted to have, essentially, in my back yard. And in the days where I was wondering if it was gonna be a crash and burn path, those were the things that kept me going one more step, one more step, because I knew that if I could get it executed and get the cash flow where it should be, that at a young age, I could have resources that some people don't really get access to every. Or certainly, not until their senior years. And I didn't want to wait until I had no energy to enjoy some of those things.

So I think it's clarity and what Justin had talked about, it's clarity and long term planning that sometimes pulls you out of some pretty significant dips. And I would say, that and hindsight, that's the thing that kept me climbing when it didn't seem like as promising as I wanted it to be.

David Phelps: So I just gotta ask you this one other question. You know, a lot of times in the winter, when a city, town gets a big snow dump, they close the schools and kind of, the city shuts down except for essential services. I don't expect that probably happens in Vail too often, right? I mean, pretty much, you guys there are used to it. So I just have to ask you, when you get like, a big dump, a foot or more of powder, do you just close the office because you don't want to inconvenience your patients that day?

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David Maloley: They sometimes get sick on that specific day. There's a lot of illness that goes around. But I go back to the way I was raised, and when there's work to be done, I show up. So I've never closed on a powder day. Although, some businesses will. Nebraska farm boy, stand strong and seize the patients, despite the joy that may happen if I actually just put on the skis and went up to the mountain.

David Phelps: Very good, very good. All right, so I want -

Justin Short: That's impressive.

David Phelps: Yeah, it is impressive, isn't it Justin? So, let's talk about this crazy knucklehead idea that you guys came up with a couple years ago to write this book, which just came out at the end of the year, Titans of Dentistry: How the Top Performers Think and Act Differently.

So, what was the impetus of that? Who came up with that idea?

Justin Short: I think it was pretty collaborative. I send out a weekly email to those who have signed up at The Lifestyle Practice, and I had recently read Tools of Titans by Tim Ferriss, who both Dave and I are both fans of. And kind of got the idea of, "I'm gonna start profiling some top performers in dentistry."

It wasn't gonna be a big project at that point, and Dave was one of those that I actually had interviewed for this email series. And I think he got his, or he liked the format that these were on. And he actually texted me one time. I was down in Florida, and said, "Have you ever thought about writing a book like this?"

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And I texted back and said, "You mean Titans of Dentistry?" And the rest is history.

David Phelps: So, Dave, you jump right in on that and was it as easy as it sound like? You know, selecting a number of dentists to interview and just slap it together as a book? Is that pretty quick and easy?

Justin Short: Like herding cats.

David Maloley: I think the planning stages were quite easy. That interesting thing when I look back, I was also on vacation at the time, and I was in Costa Rica. And I was waiting for my family, and I was maybe a little over-caffeinated. And I was actually reading Tools of Titans when my phone went off. And I got this email. And all of a sudden I had this email that looked like the book. And I had this newfound friendship with Justin, and it just seemed like moons were ... It was an interesting collision, let's put it that way.

But it took off pretty quickly. An interesting point that most people don't know is that, Justin and I have never been in the same room to this day. So the first time we'll meet is when we join you in Dallas, David.

David Phelps: Oh, cool, I can introduce you to each other. Excellent.

David Maloley: I would say as far as the process, Justin and I agreed on what we wanted the outcome to look like. We agreed on the format. And then there was some debate on who do we include. It finally distilled down into that we didn't want, necessarily, to be a ranking of three dozen of the best dentists. We wanted to essentially show that success was a matter of your own choosing. There's not one path, but there's unlimited paths. And so from there is where the

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work really started. When you start interviewing people that have done incredible things, you quickly find out that they tend to lean a little bit to the over committed side. And so, there's a little bit of cat herding involved in it and making sure that there's follow through and extension of deadlines.

So it took maybe, a little bit more, maybe a year longer than we anticipated. But I would still say it was an enjoyable process because of the people that are featured in there, I think, are kind and giving, and certainly people that personally, I learned a lot from in the process. So Justin had said it, and I'll reiterate it, that if the book was only for he and I, I still think it was time well spent because of the connections that we made and the insights that we gained, in putting things together.

David Phelps: Yeah, no question about it.

Justin Short: Yep, we probably learned the most.

David Phelps: Yeah, no, I totally get that, guys. I mean, that was great that you decided to share it with everybody else. So Justin, did you and Dave both kind of split up doing the interviews? Or how did you work that?

Justin Short: We did. A quick, funny story here. I think it was in the spring of maybe, 2017. And Dave's like, "When are you planning on launch?" Or he told me, "Hey, I'm thinking we should have this project ready by December of this year." And I was thinking, and I said, "Man, I'm thinking August."

And he's like, "Dang, you're optimistic." And then, it ended up taking us to the following November, past both of our deadlines. So it definitely was not a fast process. But

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yeah, we each, we worked together on the list for the record. David, you were on both of our lists. That was cool. But we each said, "Hey, I already have a connection with them. I feel like I know them well enough to connect or reach out."

Or if there was someone that neither one of us did, we just flipped a coin and just kind of split the list up evenly, and started to track them down.

David Phelps: Most of the interviews, I assume, were done like we're doing today, virtually or by phone. But David, you actually got to sit down with Pete Dawson in person, right?

David Maloley: Yeah, so that was kind of an incredible, and I gotta thank Justin for the opportunity. But it speaks to the character of Dr. Dawson as that, we kind of customized the interview based on time commitments. So some people filled out a form. Some people wanted an audio interview transcribed. But he insisted on doing it in person, and he just so happened to be at Beaver Creek, which was three miles from my office, at a convention in his name. And he cuts out for an hour and a half lunch, one on one, with me. And I mean, still, I'm like getting a little bit chills as I'm speaking to you.

The wisdom and the depth of the sharing. Certainly he talked a bit about a collusion here and there, and that's his masterpiece, but his wisdom and his life engineering, and the depth at which he gave the interview, and at the end he asked a question that I'll never forget. He said, "Did you get what you wanted?" Meaning if I needed more, he would have given more.

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So, probably one of the top five highlights of my career. Not something I expected. Certainly introvert Dave Maloley is really intimidated when he goes to sit down with one of the legends of dentistry, but he made it really comfortable, and something I'll never forget.

David Phelps: Outstanding, outstanding. Justin, you made a comment in the book, and I really like this, is you said that looking at people from the outside, and this can be people in dentistry, like the titans like in your book. Or it could be celebrities or athletes, or career people, business people, but you talked about the iceberg affect, and the fact that from a success standpoint, we only see the top 10 percent, like an iceberg, right?

But there's 90 percent below the water that often, is not revealed. At least not on a mass basis. Maybe you get it one on one, right, doing those interviews, which you guys did a great job of, by the way. Getting that 90 percent, talk about the 90 percent under the water, if you would, a little bit, Justin.

Justin Short: Sure, and I think that comes down to, if any successful person ... You know, always the person I always picture is the one up onstage. Whatever that means metaphorically to someone. You know, that's all we see. And we think either they just were born with a silver spoon in their mouth, or they just were lucky, or whatever. But what we don't see is the massive amount of work that it took to get to that point, to be the one asked to be on stage. Or, we don't see them when no one else does, when they're staying up late, when they've gotten up early, when they're skipping social functions so they can stay home

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and study or work on their craft. Or you know, all the things that go behind the scenes.

And I always kind of think, you know, I have a lot of friends ... As you know, I invest in real estate a fair amount. And I always have a lot of friends who always said, "Man, I should be doing that. I want to do that. I'm gonna be doing that." No one says that about dentistry, but when it came to real estate, they always did. And because I think they always saw the top 10 percent. And they never saw what it took to get to that point where you have the properties or the rental and passive income and stuff like that.

But I mean, I just think that's always the case. It's easy to make assumptions or make judgments when we have no seen the blood, sweat, and tears that has gone into making a person who they are, or that has allowed them to achieve to the point that they've achieved.

David Phelps: Yes, very well said. Very well said. So, how did you go about the selection process? And as I look at the titans that you have in the book, you've got a really great group. You certainly have some of the ... At this point, they're the senior leaders, influencers in dentistry. Pete Dawson, we already mentioned, and Gordon Christianson, Bill Blackford, just to name a few. And then of course, we have the new generations that Justin, kind of like your generation. Dave, your generation, that are definitely coming on strong and bringing new thoughts and innovation to the market place, to the industry. How did you go about trying to get this group? Was it a hard job? Did it kind of go through it? Because you only have so long a book, right?

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David Maloley: Yeah, I think if we were gonna distill it all down is that, we wanted a very diverse sample because we knew that we'd find commonalities, but we also wanted to show differences. And if we just put a bunch of seven year olds in there, the bar seems out of reach. And so, we wanted small practices, big practices, mega practices, massive DSO's. All of those represented. Different ages, different geographic areas, because the thing that is a little bit challenging or frustrating to me, now that I'm speaking to a fair amount of dental students is that, I don't feel like there is a huge sense of optimism, and they don't see that golden ticket that's available to them. And they almost see a dental diploma or a dental license as a finish line, when I know that it's the starting line.

And if you can see that this is a golden ticket and oh my gosh, like, this is like a choose your own adventure book and I can do this, I can do that, I can stay chairside as long as I want. I can extract myself from clinical responsibilities and just become an owner/manager. Whatever your personality is in dentistry, you have that option. And I think it was really important for Justin and I to show that if you want time, you have time. If you want money, you have money. If you want to be the greatest clinical dentist around and teach others to do the same, that's also available to you.

So playing the strength, playing to passion, all those sorts of things, we wanted to show that there's ... I mean, you could fill up five volumes and still not find two people or two practices alike. And I think that was really important to us to display, because if I were gonna talk about insecurities and challenges that I had early on, is that I always wanted to study from the masters, but then, I

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would sit in their lecture and feel like my practice, my days, my clinical outcomes are never like this.

And it wasn't that I couldn't get there. It was just that it was too big of a gap for me to bridge mentally. And so, having that resource, I felt, would be valuable. And it's essentially the book that I wish I had 10 or 15 years ago.

David Phelps: Yeah, very good.

Justin Short: No, I think one thing that we do in the beginning of the book is define titan. You know, I think that's a big explanation. If you look up the definition of titan, it's someone who's known for a greatness of achievement. And I think if we learn nothing else from the book, we learn that success looks different to each and every one of us. But each of these people featured in the book, that's only our uncommon in one respect of it or another. You know, it's not the richest people in dentistry. It's not most popular dentists in dentistry. It's titans in dentistry because each of these have done something that we considered to be greatness of achievement.

David Phelps: So let's talk about some of the, in this case, uncommon commonalities, if we can. You talk about looking at the people who had personalities that would think and act differently. So you looked at what sets them apart. How do they approach life and practice differently? How do they handle setbacks that we all encounter? What are their habits and routines? And as you already said, how does each person define success? So again, let's just have a little conversation here. What were some of the commonalities, even though as you said, great diversity in practice models and the areas that each person defined

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as success. What were some of the commonalities that you found?

Justin Short: I think for me, and it's probably for Dave to some level as well, I mean, the top two that came, that stuck out to me after I was all done with the book, we were all done with the book is number one, each and every one of the people featured in this book have had setbacks. You know, whether it was losing a finger, cancer, losing their license, divorce, getting out of dentistry for a couple of years at one point. Each and every one of these titans had a setbacks, had a hurdle or something they had to overcome. It wasn't as I kind of pictured as I started this project, I just assumed everyone either were born with a leg up, or their success story was always up and to the right. And that is just so far from the truth.

And so, they each had something like that, but the mindset was always the same. You know, it wasn't this is gonna stop me, this is gonna hold me back. It's, this came up. How do I learn from this and come out even stronger on the other side? That was my biggest takeaway from what I got.

David Phelps: Dave, how about you?

David Maloley: Well, I would reiterate that. And now, when I look at the book, I see that little man on the cover climbing the mountain. And I know that mountain is despair and challenge and self doubt. And not the well paved path that I commonly thought as a younger dentist. But the one thing that I found unique is the uncommon clarity that people have. They know what they want. They know why they want it. And they don't feel guilty because it may be unique to them. It's their own path, their own choosing,

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and while they're using mentors together, gems and ideas to speed up the pace, the road map is essentially one that's created specifically for them.

It's a customized process. And in knowing your outcome, you can get there a lot faster. The other thing that I would say is that, there's a habitual nature that's driving a lot of this success in an upward manner, meaning what they do in the morning. How they're learning and innovating on a perpetual basis. It's not like this home run phenomenon where you can go to a course or hire the best marketing resource in the world, and then all of a sudden your world's on fire. It's stacking these rituals to make sure that it's giving you power and you're able to take that onto that road map that we talked about, that you have a clear ... Maybe the path isn't clear, but the outcome that you want at the end of the time or at the end of the year, the end of the quarter, for most of these people, I would say, is significantly more vivid than what most people have as far as their life plan, their practice plan, and so forth.

David Phelps: Justin, any follow up on that?

Justin Short: Just my only follow up would be that I a hundred percent agree. You know, I think you have to have that plan of where you're going. If not, anything can sound good at any time. But if you have that ultimate vision that you want for your life, or your practice, you can base every decision to tell you, "Is this taking me a step closer? Or is it taking me off track? Is it taking me a step further away?"

And I think not only with the people in the book, but with any high achievers that I've ran into in the years, it's they have that clarity of vision, of where they're going. And they had that end destination very clear in their minds.

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David Phelps: You know, guys, I will say that throughout a lot of my life, my early, early life, early career, I've felt like I needed just to strap on the weight, strap on the pack, if you will. And kind of like the cover of your book, I felt like I was the guy and I had to carry a lot of weight. Did you ever feel like, you know, carry all the weight of a lot of people, a lot of responsibility, right, up this mountain to the top. And what I found though, not early enough in life, but at least I found it at one point, that really, the climb should begin with other people that are on, as you said, a similar path, but still customized or individualized for each person.

And so what I envision in getting to the top of the mountain, and of course, when's the top? Because when you get to one top, there's another top and another top. It's an illusion. But I envision people tied together and helping each other up. And that's kind of really what this book is. I think everybody in the book talked about mentors and people that helped them. That's kind of the thing.

So, it's kind of the antithesis to the John Wayne rugged individualist, right? You gotta have some of that in you. You've gotta have that dogged persistence, determination.

Justin Short: Yes.

David Maloley: Yeah.

David Phelps: But what of that can correlate? What would you guys say in your own lives, or what you found in the interviews, how much of a part was "success"? Also, determined by the people that these titans surround themselves with?

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David Maloley: I think that's an important point to point out. I certainly, my career did not take off until I started podcasting. And the podcasting had nothing to do with my practice. It just increased my network. And some of the impossibilities became possible because I found somebody that was doing it, and it was just these little doors that got unlocked for a simple conversation over beers or whatever. So as a real independent person myself, that cliché, you know, clichés like your network is your net worth. I was like, "Yeah, whatever." And I wanted to be a self-made man, only to find out there's no such thing.

The other thing that I would add to that is that, using a Jim Rome quote, "You are the five people, the average of five people you spend the most time with." For most of these people, it's their team. So they're all leaders and team builders. They don't, while they might be maniacal about the clinical details and a really good technician, they extend and they delegate, and they know how to onboard people to see in this clarity vision that we talked about.

So both kind of a peer network and also, a support system, a team that comes with you, I think, is a real important commonality that I certainly learned the hard way. But if a young dentist or a struggling dentist is in their practice suffering in silence, know that there's people out there that are willing to help you and happy to help you. And peer groups that will collaborate, although sometimes there can be a little bit of tension in local markets. Certainly, if you work hard enough and are willing to give as much as you get, that's available to you. And it accelerates progress like no other.

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Justin Short: Yep, and I would ... You know, in my own life, no doubt, I know I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the mentors that helped me. And I mean, that's one of the reasons I do coaching. Because I know the profound effect that having others around you to help guide and push and you know, sometimes slap you if you need it, is so important. And whether we want to admit it or not, because it's not cool and it doesn't make us sound great, we all have doubts and insecurities, and things that we don't have the answers to. And problems, and I think the better that support system is, and I think this book is really good because I feel like there's a strong sense of camaraderie through the book.

Yeah, I just think the better support system that we have, basically, we're better together than we are apart, in a nutshell.

David Phelps: Yeah, no doubt, no doubt. Well gentlemen, I want to know what's next. Is there a next project? Or do you want to give me a bigger scope of a bigger plan for your individual lives? Either one, I mean, do you guys have something on the table together, or ...

David Maloley: I think we're both open to a part two after maybe taking a bit of a breather. As far as me personally, I still am in the office 11 or 12 days a month, so still enjoy running a little bit of small practice in Avon, Colorado, doing some coaching, working with dental success network, speaking. So that keeps a lot of plates spinning, but like we've mentioned at the very beginning, harvesting time to spend with loved ones is my ultimate passion. So certainly, there's lots of passion projects out there, but being out there with my little eight year old and vacationing with my

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whole family is really the name of the game for me, creating memories.

I'm just grateful that all these projects help provide for them.

David Phelps: Excellent. Justin ...

Justin Short: Yeah, same thing. I mean, any chance I get to work with old Dave Maloley is a good day for me, so I think there definitely could be a part two in the works in the future. Personally, I'm still figuring out life post practice, post hands on dentistry, and one of my dreams when I was practicing was to be able to go spend the winter somewhere warm when it was cold in St. Louis. And this is the first year we're doing that for the winter. So we're down here in Florida and just getting to enjoy each other as a family. And just build, strengthen those bonds.

But work wise, I'm still investing. And you know, my main top priority is lifestyle practice and working with other doctors so that they can achieve the things that I've been blessed with, or even bigger and better things that they have. And so, that's where my passion lies at the moment.

David Phelps: Dave, I think we need to get Justin into politics, what do you think?

David Maloley: I think he'd like that.

David Phelps: He's got a lot of free time, you know. A lot of think time. Well gentlemen, it's really been a pleasure to have you both here together, to talk about your book, *The Titans of Dentistry: How the Top Performers Think and Act*

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Differently. It's a gem of a book. Really, I had so much fun reading it. And you did such a great job asking the right questions and just pulled the nuggets out from everybody. I would highly recommend.

And you don't have to be a dentist to actually get this book. You know, the commonalities are there for any person who strives to have a "better life," more successful by their definition. More time, more freedom, I think this is a book that anybody who might be listening today ought to check out, The Titans of Dentistry.

Great job, gentlemen, and I look forward to seeing you in just a couple weeks.

Justin Short: Thank you.

David Maloley: Thank you, David.

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