

## **Ep #283: Steve Parker - Coming Back Stronger**



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**Dr. David Phelps**

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You're listening to the Dentist Freedom Blueprint podcast, powered by Freedom Founders with your host Dr. David Phelps, where the word retirement is bad and true freedom can be secured in three to five years or less. You'll get anti-traditional advice to maximize the value of your practice and multiply your transition options. Create safe and steady wealth building through highly curated real estate and build extraordinary freedom for what matters most to you without depending on the volatility of Wall Street. More at [FreedomFounders.com](https://FreedomFounders.com).

David Phelps: Hi, it's David here from Freedom Founders. Just did a great interview with a good friend of mine, Mr. Steve Parker of the Profitable Dentist. We were talking here in April of 2020 during the coronavirus shutdown about what it looks like to come back in your practice and be strong. Steps you need to take right now. What's the future vision of what practice will look like on the other side? I think you'll find this very, very interesting.

Steve Parker: Good evening practice owners. I am thrilled to have our guest on. It's kind of pop up series we're calling, Coming Back Stronger. And as you know, what I've been doing is reaching out to our key opinion leaders, contributors, good friends of the Profitable Dentist Magazine, people whose advice we've counted on for many, many, many years. And today I'm thrilled to have on one of our old friends, Dave Phelps. Dave, how you doing today?

David Phelps: I'm good, Steve. If I'm not that old.

Steve Parker: Well...

David Phelps: There is some relevance to having some years in the trenches. Could we put it that way? But I still feel very young. Okay?

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Steve Parker: It's experience.

David Phelps: Exactly.

Steve Parker: And you know, we were talking beforehand, you and I, we've been through some things in business. A lot of practice owners haven't and the atmosphere out there today is very tense and stressful. So what I was hoping we could do today, with Freedom Founders you have a way that you approach financial independence, which is very, I mean, spot on and extremely relevant today. So what I'd like to do is ask you to share with the listeners and the viewers, what you do, kind of how you got to where you are, what Freedom Founders is. And then we'll kind of jump into a couple hands-on, tactical things that practice owners can do to find a little bit of financial security and a little bit of stress relief. So can you share how you got to where you are?

David Phelps: Yeah, Steve. I'll keep it brief. But what I help doctors with today, dentist with, is really creating what I call plan B wealth. Outside of the practice, and the practice is the primary engine until the day you're ready to let that loose, transition out, sell it, whatever you're going to do. That's your engine, but you always have to create plan B. And I think plan B income, sustainable cash flow, has become very, very relevant in the last few weeks. When the revenue from the plan, a practice has basically been shut off most cases. Who would guess? Steve, we said, you can try to plan for a lot of contingencies in life, but actually just being flat out shut down by the government, not by any other element, that is something that nobody plans for. But still, it speaks to the point of needing plan B, multiple streams of income. And I think also the other big

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key, which a lot of people haven't put a lot of emphasis on in the recent years is having liquidity, some cashflow.

Now, that's not so easy to do when you're starting up in life and practicing. You've got a lot of student loan debt, and you're just trying to pay the bills and the loans and having a lot saved up. But a gentleman I truly admire from his leadership standpoint, I don't follow all of his financial advice, but some of it's very, very good, and that's Dave Ramsey who talks about having a reserve. So I think getting back to a point where, when you get back up and running, having some liquidity, having reserve. Putting away some operating liquidity, cashflow that can help you survive at least two, three months. Ideally six months, you have to work towards that, if you're shut down. Because it may not be the government or a virus next time, gosh, it could unfortunately be your health.

Or in my case, it was my daughter's health that pulled me out of the practice back 15 years ago, when she was out for leukemia, epilepsy, and a liver transplant. I'm going, "Okay, I got to do something different." Because the practice, while it was my engine that drove my active income, Steve, I needed to be away. I needed to be with her. So, I was building my plan B since my days in college and in dental school, buying real estate. So I did both, kind of a crazy guy, I'm an outlier. I'm not saying it was easy. I'm not saying everybody can do it the same way. But I try to help people in Freedom Founders do it faster, so they don't have to do what I did, and that's have two careers. Which, juggling those two balls, again, was not easy.

So that's what we do today. And I'm not here really to talk about the plan B other than say, that's something people

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should looking at, start working towards. What you and I are here today to talk about is where we are right now and what practice owners can be doing right now, today, to prepare for coming back after this mandated shutdown. So let's talk about that and getting them ramped up. Right? But that's where I come from. Just a small piece. I've been through a number of downturns. Well, both recession and in my own personal, I kind of double dipped all this stuff, Steve. But the reason why I'm laughing today, I'm laughing, not because I laugh in the crisis mode. I know there's a lot of people that are going through hardship. People are sick right now. They have family members. They may know people in the community dealing with the virus.

Okay, I'm not laughing about that at all. The reason I'm smiling though, is that I'm a pragmatic optimist. Okay? I'm not a Pollyanna. All right? I'm not, "Okay. It's all going to be grand." I'm pragmatic, but here's why I'm smiling, it's because every downturn that I went through in my life, and I can count five different ones on my hands. Some that were economic recessions that I had no control over. And some were personal health stuff in my... I screwed up a practice sale. I sold my practice back in the depth of the 2008 downturn and had to take it back to litigation. And took it back at a time when there was no value on that practice, when I couldn't get a bank loan to save my life. I was dipping into lines of credit, going down the hole, probably like a lot of dentists are right now.

I'm thinking, okay, I'm taking these loans. I'm taking the PPP, the EIDL, I'm going to lines of credit. I am going in the hole faster than I can save my life. I'm just telling you, even though it sucked when I was there, I just didn't really see a way out of that hole at the moment. But I'm telling

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you, getting through these times of crisis will make every one of you stronger and better, not only in your business, but in your personal life. And that's the positive I want people to take away. You will get through this. I mean, unless the virus gets you and you don't make it through the virus, which the odds of that are slim to none, you will survive this.

And what you do today, right now, both in your mindset, how you think about who you are, and what you want to be, how you want to look on the other side. The decisions you make right now, today, tomorrow, this week, in the next 30 days, 60 days, are paramount to what you will look like and how you'll live the rest of your life with you, your family, and the peace of mind, security that you always wanted, but society made you always chase a different ball. Does that make sense?

Steve Parker: Yeah. And I think you're spot on. It's hard to see it when you're in the middle of it, in the depths of it. And especially young practice owners who came out of dental school, took on a lot of debt, got their practice up and going, and this is maybe the first big, big, big thing. And this is probably the biggest thing for most of us. I mean, you're right, literally we've never shut down business before. But even if you've been through it a few times, it's sometimes when you're in it, hard to look on the other side. But you're right, there always isn't another side. I've got a good friend, Craig Spodak, I think Craig in Miami. Craig's always... He's fond of saying... And he built this gigantic practice, like \$10 million.

And he goes, "One day, I just figured, at the end of the day I'm still a dentist. If it all crashes around me and instead of Miami, I have to move to Denver. Denver's

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nice, but I'm a dentist there." So there's a little bit of consolation there, but we'd rather not go through it.

David Phelps: Right.

Steve Parker: So maybe some of those things... And again, you do a great job with Freedom Founders. And again, we're not here to push or sell Freedom Founders, but it literally is... It was built around the idea of being able to sustain and survive through periods just like this. I mean, that's sort of your whole approach and your whole business now.

David Phelps: Yeah.

Steve Parker: It's exactly this. So you're living it right now.

David Phelps: Living it right now. And we have a lot of members that are feeling grateful. Again, it's not that they're not going to go through some tough times. Everybody is right now. There's no question everybody's in this, but having revenues to bring from outside the practice, having that volatility of the stock market and just having more sustainable cash flows is a big piece. But here's what I think practice owners should be doing right now, Steve. I think number one, we know in the last decade that the practice of dentistry, we know it's become much more of a business. You speak on it all the time. You come from a background of business. So you're one of the greatest speakers about talking to dentists and ROI. When you expand your practice, when you add labor, when you add technology, make sure you're getting the ROI.

Again, I think because we've had this bull market for the last 10 years or 8 years coming out of 2012 and on out. And we had low interest rates. And I think people have just kind of turned a blind eye to, "I could do that. I could

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add that everybody else is doing it. I need to be cool kid on the block." See, we've got to get away from that. That's got to be over. You've got to get lean and mean coming out of this. And that may mean, Steve, even sometimes maybe handing back the equipment and the equipment lease you just took on three months ago, six months ago, the CBCT. Or maybe you're doing some other the technology that, it was a cool tool, but grassroots is what you got to go back to.

You can come back and decide later, but right now you've got to get lean and mean. You've got to really get your cashflow projections down. And I mean, right now, you're not even back to a run rate. Coming back out of this, whether it's two months, three months, June, July, we don't know, but you're not going to hit the gate running. Yeah, there's going to be some pent up demand. Certainly there's people with emergencies and temporary crowns and need extractions. Yeah, there's going to be some pent up demand. But once we get through that, consumer behaviors is going to be different for a good while here. So there's going to be a gap. And I think hitting a run rate that we were used to six weeks ago is going to take time. We may get back, start up 40-50% run rate.

We might take till the end of the year, just guessing, to get to 80%. Well, if you're at 80%, and that's months down the road, what happens if your overhead is greater than 20% and you're taking a bunch of PPO insurance that's driving your reimbursement's down. See, you're going to have to decide what your model looks like coming back. Are you going to do all things, all people, are you going to take all insurance? Are you going to have this big staff? The whole scheduling and choreography is going to be

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different. So I think figuring out your model and getting a grip on your cash flows right now... And project every week right now, because you're paying bills, you've got overhead. You haven't been able to defer everything. What's the cashflow like going out right now? What are the reserves you have in terms of the loans or lines of credit, or maybe you have some cash reserves? How fast is that going to dissipate?

You need to have a run rate every week and check it every week. Because it's going to change, it's going to change. So mitigating your outgo as best you can and watching the cashflow that you're putting out right now, as you get ready to hopefully ramp back up. Who are you going to bring on? This is the second piece. What's your leadership in your team going to look like, Steve? This is a time when there's going to be, unfortunately... For some people it's unfortunate, but for you coming back, it may be a good thing. You're going to have ample opportunity for people that you want to bring on the team, to either replace people that were not so good or eventually to add on. There's going to be an ample supply of good people, both in the dental industry and outside. You're going to be able to hire like never before, if that's your game.

So don't come on board with all your staff. I think right now we're having staff meetings on Zoom, checking in with them, but you kind of get a chance to see who's on board and who's not. This is a time, a reality check, to say, "Maybe I don't bring back everybody." And I know some staff will listen to this to go... But staff, if you're listening to this, it's your chance to also step up right now while your team is out of work for the most part. Step up and show your doctor, your owner, that you are the one that needs to come back. Be first in line. So both sides

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can be proactive in this Steve, it's not one side or the other. But you've got to step up right now. You can't just put your head in the sand and go, "Well, I'll just wait until they turn the green light on and go back." No, right now is critical. Cashflows and team coming back, I think, and be lean, those are the two key things that I focus on right now. There's more, but I'll stop there on that.

Steve Parker: Okay. So when you say cashflow, you and I understand that well, but for a lot of docs... And you and I've talked about this before many times, they don't know what their cashflow is. If you say, "Hey, let's take a look at your P&L," they'll call their accountant and give you last year's tax return. And that is not what you're after. You're after literally... Do you recommend weekly or monthly? You break it down in a chunk and say—

David Phelps: Yeah, I think right now that's a weekly exercise because look, Steve, and you know this, the discipline that's necessary to really run a business, period. And that's what dentistry is. It's not a mom and pop hobby anymore, gang. It just isn't. It's got to be run like a business, no matter what your model is. We get away with a lot of stuff. Look, back when we got away with a whole lot of stuff, Steve. I mean, trust me, I'm not talking like I had this dialed in back when I was in practice. I'm just telling you what I know today. So please understand, I'm just like anybody else. I had to figure this stuff out, and learn the lessons the hard way. But these are lessons that I've never forgotten. So yeah, it's weekly.

And Steve, as much as I know people struggle with, "Well how much do you pay for an accountant," and that kind of thing, find the right one. Well, an accountant CPA is one piece. If you don't have somebody in your back pocket on

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your team that really helps you manage the cashflow side, and most CPAs don't. Some perhaps do, most don't. Most are always historical. And that's what you're talking about. "Well, here's what we put on your tax returns. Here's your P&L, here's how much you estimate." "Great, but what do I do looking forward?" "Well, I don't know, we'll talk next year." Right? It's not their fault. It's just, that's their structure. You really need a financial officer. Now, I don't want to say you can go out and hire a full time CFO, you can't. Okay? But there's fractional people out. There's fractional CFOs that do a great job for small businesses like dentists. We use one at the Freedom Founders.

Fractional, great for us, steps in and helps us manage our cash flows. Talks to us about how much operating liquidity, that is reserves in the bank for how many months? Just for a situation like this. When you start operating that way, every decision you make about, who do you hire? Do you expand your practice now? Do you add more chairs? Do you add this equipment? See, that can all be done by math. It's all money, math, not just a guess. "Well, Joe down the street just did it. I guess I should do. I just took the CE course, they say I need to go buy this stuff."

Well, you need some math to put behind this. So I think that's one of the big pieces. I don't know how many people really go do it, but I would say, go out, search Google for fractional CFOs. They're out there. You can do interviews with them, get references. They're not that expensive if you get a fraction one. I think you got to put that together with your CPA, do it now because that's what's going to make you stronger coming out of this, and stronger going forward.

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Steve Parker: And that helps you look forward. Would you recommend even somebody who's... I know a lot of practices are on QuickBooks, which is just literally... They call it checkbook accounting. It's as if you're writing checks. Money's coming in, money's going out. Right now though, I think you could look back, say three months, and say, "All right, in the first week of the month, what goes out, the second week, the third week, and the fourth week," and probably get a good feel for the money that you know is going out. And something you said a while ago, maybe you need to get out of the big fat lease on a piece of equipment that's costing you three grand a month in generating \$500 a month. You can't be upside down like that for long.

On the other side of it... And this is just a sort of a thought thing or an idea thing. In normal business, you measure your incomes and your outflows. So if my business is off 25% and I'm running at a pretty thin margin, my costs need to be off 25%. So back to staff or back to whatever, I don't need a hundred percent of staff when I'm at 50% of capacity. Can you kind of speak to how you might look at... I mean, as a practicing dentist and practice owner, you had to deal with those things, real deal. Can you kind of speak to how a doc might look at that, making those things match up?

David Phelps: Yeah. Well, just as you said, you've got to look at what revenue is coming in and what's going out. And that's different right now because most practices are, even if they're seeing emergencies, there's not a lot of it. There's still accounts receivable coming in. So working the accounts receivable to get what you can out of the insurance or other receivables. That's part of it. So you're working that side. What's my receivables? They're certainly diminished and will be more diminished the

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longer we stay out, got that. I've got some cash in the bank. I access some lines of credit. I got some other loans from the government. Okay. What's that going to look like once you have that together? And then yeah, I mean, part of it will be modeling how you come back and how you strategically set your schedule.

So I've been talking to other people, as you have, in the field, and talking about triaging and setting up the opportunity for certain patients who actually are looking forward to coming in, and getting some of those bigger cases done. I mean, not everybody lost their shirt. I mean, people have taken a hit, but people still want to come in and get their bigger cases done, whether it's implants, or it could be ortho cases. It could be some cosmetic cases, they got put on hold, too. Right? So going out to those patients and strategically setting up, "When we go back online, we're going to be stacked up for a while. Like to be able to help you, Joe, you've been a patient with this for a long time. If we can go ahead and get a commitment from you," and I'm talking about getting some deposit money in. Yes folks. Yep. Come on, and do it. Get a deposit, because you got to pay to play.

It will set you up early in schedule. Well, we don't know exactly what date that is. We're saying right now that could be May 15th. You pick the number, but it doesn't matter. Pick a date, get them on the schedule. If you have to move the date, it's okay. Start locking up some front end, more highly profitable cases. You'll be having plenty of other emergencies to work in. But figuring out the schedule is important. So, now you're looking ahead, we've mitigated as much of the outgo during this downtime by forbearance, deferring patient payments where lenders will allow it, credit cards. Take what you

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can take, what the market gives you, because again, everyone's in it together. But watch that weekly, so then as you're starting to ramp back up and the same thing, you'll start getting more revenues in, but how much staff do you need?

That's my point with scheduling, you have to tell your staff, "Look, Janey, April..." If they're the ones that you can't bring on right away, you got to tell them, "Look, you stay on unemployment a little bit longer. Because I think they can stay on unemployment till June 30, I think was the date. So you can keep some people staying at home. And just say, "Strategically as a business, to survive, I can't take everybody back." And you don't pinpoint what I'm saying, "I don't like you. You're no good." No. Just say, "Strategically, Amy and Jane were the ones that can help us get going here." And hopefully Sally and Jill will understand. They'll probably just stay at home and get their unemployment.

If you can get them back in play before their employment runs out. If you want them back, then you should be able to get the back. Maybe you don't want them back. Okay? That's your call. But this is, again, as a business owner, you got to make that call. And if that's the call you're going to make, and if you know you're going to make it, then let them know as soon as you can, because then they can be looking. Because again, we're empathetic people. We want to do the best we can. We have to keep our business alive because if we don't, the employees that we do have, and our patients we want to serve, we're no good to anybody.

So you've got to, as a business owner, as much as you want to appease everybody, make them happy, I get it.

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But you can't do that. You've got to have a start up mentality. You've got to think about, this is a start up mentality. I don't care how long you've been in practice. Coming back, think startup mentality. When you were a startup, what did you have to do? Well, you probably had loans, right? You had loans or improvements, and you're getting loans for improvement and so you have bank loans. Well, you've got loans again now, you probably have more. Right? So same thing, you didn't hit a run rate right away out of the gate.

So again, it's an investment back in. You're going to be pouring some money back in before you start seeing the positive return on investment, but do it like a startup. You wouldn't just hire eight staff members back in your day one startup, would you? No. That's the way you got to talk to your staff. It's the reality of the world, Steve.

Steve Parker: So you're thinking of it as, from 25 years ago, it was zero to full capacity in three years. Now you're faster than that, but you're literally from zero to how do we get back up? You're not attracting all new patients, but you're going to have to treat them almost like... As you start filling the pipeline back up. And that's a tough thing for a lot of docs to do. I think a lot of practice owners are sitting around right now at home waiting for somebody to say, "Okay, today's go day."

David Phelps: Right.

Steve Parker: You turn the ignition, and bam, the whole thing starts up. And what you're saying is, it's not going to. And I agree, business doesn't work that way. So, if we can transition, say we've stabilized, you've called your vendors and said, "Listen, here's..." You've got that big, fancy new piece of

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equipment and you can say, "Listen, we got two choices, come get it or defer payments for 90 days." You've made all those tough calls and you've kind of gotten things stabilized. And again, we talked ahead of time. My belief is we are coming back and you have a choice of coming back the same, and maybe struggling because the world's going to be different, or you can come back stronger.

You can realize things are going to change. Some of them, you'll be right about, some of them, you won't, some of them we can't even anticipate. But you can come back stronger. You can come back with a little bit more momentum. What are some things that a practice owner can be doing today to lay that foundation. And assuming they've gotten back, they've found their new normal, to maybe mitigate this kind of situation going into the future.

David Phelps: Everybody, Steve, is going to be much more aware of their cash flows. I think more business owners in general, dentists included, are not going to live on the edge as much. With over expanding, with this whole idea of growth, growth growth. Just because I can, I can have a bigger practice. I can have multiple practices. I think there's going to be a reality check, as they go back they're going to be a lot more careful about just all of their cash flows, all their investments. I think, as I said earlier, starting to build up some more cashflow reserves wherever you feel like you can put some money. I know it's not sexy to get 1% on your money in the bank. Because nobody wants to do that, we all want to get the big returns, but you got to have that margin. You've got to have access to capital.

I mean, I've talked to people this week, you don't want to be dependent on third parties. For most of our life, a lot of

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our life, we are. We are, you have to. You have to take home loans to get started. Right? Right now people are dependent on the government. I hate that. I hate the fact everybody's depend on the government, but everybody, to an extent, depending on the government, more so now than ever. Not a good place to be because you're just hoping, hoping, hoping you get the loan. And employees are hoping, hoping, hoping they get the checks that are promised, all this helicopter money. So not being dependent. More and more, Steve, we as business owners have to further differentiate ourselves from the commoditization that's been happening in our industry for the last decade because of managed care.

Again, people are going to do what they have to do when they have to do it. And so a lot of people kind of floated, they kind of treaded water. They hear about it, "I should market, I should up my game here. I should be more proactive, but I'm tired." Now, if you're going to go back, you can't be tired. You can't be passive about this at all. You got to go back with determination. The aesthetics of your practice, how you look well, how you look just even on the phone. Again, front end communication, what's that look like? Because patients, consumers in the health industry are going to be more apprehensive. Most of them. Most of them are going to be more apprehensive. They're not going to just want to just jump back on their hygiene schedule.

Some of them are going to be actually very fearful, and you're going to have to work through that. Number one, by how you show up. If you give me confidence on the phone, on your website, when I come to your office. That things look like you have even taken what you did before, which hopefully was a high standard, and you've upped

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the game, I'm feeling better. I'm feeling better. Now, I'm not going to go to the details what all those things are, PPE, equipment, what's you're doing to actually clean room sterilize, keep patients apart. All that stuff you're going to have to figure out. There's certainly a lot of studies going on right now to do that. But you're going to have to show how you are different than the others out there. Because if you don't, some of those patients won't come back and some will come back to you. Even if you had a good relationship, they're going to be thinking in terms of their safety and the safety of their family. In spite of your great relationship you had before.

Steve Parker: I was on an interview the other day and I said... It just sort of popped out, I had happened to read a story, and I said, "I think you're going to be shocked at how many of your patients, six weeks from now, understand dental aerosols versus six weeks ago, who never even knew it existed." And I agree with you wholeheartedly. To come back stronger, you're going to have to realize that there is a very heightened awareness, whether it's coronavirus, whatever it is, there's a very heightened awareness, I think, about how we spread things just in touch and feel. When we sneeze, when we cough, when we grab a handle.

In fact, I tell a story about one of my sons, who's 23, he was all excited. And this was just like a week or so ago, he said, "I got an idea. I know what they should do. They should put that hand sanitizer in the grocery because when you go to the grocery store and you grab the cart, there's a whole bunch of people have touched it." And I said, "You know what? They've done that for years." He had no idea. Never even noticed it. I guarantee you, now he will notice, and so will a lot of other people.

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David Phelps: Yes.

Steve Parker: So I agree with you, to be able to come back, you've got to be able to address it. You can't just come back and say, "Okay, we're open again. We blew some dust off." You do have to make some of those changes. The other thing I wanted to ask is, again, this isn't a pitch for Freedom Founders, but your whole idea is, correct me if I'm wrong, you take the cashflow, the engine, if you will, of cash that comes through your practice and you carve off a piece of that and put it over here for, whether it's retirement, whether it's financial independence, whether it's just financial security. But a lot of docs, I don't think, think that way. Their burn rate on their practice is exactly what's coming in, or a little bit different. They don't pay their future self or their emergency self.

David Phelps: No.

Steve Parker: What can they start doing today to say, "Okay, when we get back, I'm going to take X percent," I don't know if you have a suggestion, but X percent and say, "I'm just putting it over here. This is for future me, for retirement me, for secure me." How can they do something like that?

David Phelps: So there's a great book, which probably most people have heard that by now, by a good friend of mine, Mike Michalowicz, Profit First. So, I would get the book Profit First, so I don't have to go in all the detail. But you're exactly right. Profit First says you pay yourself first instead of paying yourself last, which is what most business owners... It's what I did for years. Whatever was in the bank account at the end of the month. I go, "Okay, I guess I can take that home, right?" So when you go profit first, then you're doing exactly what we're saying. Now,

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what you do with that profit first that you take out every month, top line, then you pay your expenses. So you reverse engineer the whole thing. Now what you do with that profit.

Yes, and that's what we do really well in Freedom Founders is, I'm not a big fan of the stock market, just let you know. We don't put it in 401ks because that's the lockbox, you can't get to it until you're 59 and a half. Many reasons I despise that, except for the discipline. So we show our members how to put their capital into... once they've optimized their practice, Steve, and again, put your money back in your practice if you can make that, because you can get the best ROI in your practice. So let's not forget that. Okay? There's still places that you can better your practice, then you take that profit first and you go, "Okay, I'm going to put it right back in the practice here, here, here." But again, know what the return on investment is. Don't just throw it in there.

But once you've done that, you've grown the practice, you're throwing off more capital, okay. Now what you do with it from there, that's what we help people hit what I call their inflection points. They take that wealth box, practice box first, wealth box second. And we help them pop that wealth box so that they can get that inflection point and they can move to what I call their freedom number. Where they have the active income replaced by the quote, recurring annuity income, much sooner than they hope for, getting to 65 or 70 years old. We can get it done a lot sooner.

Steve Parker: Those docs today, even though the practice literally goes to zero, and as you said with your daughter, you had to make a choice. Do I go in and practice because I need

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the income or do I help my daughter who has a very dramatic medical situation? And I think that was your light bulb going off and saying, "I don't have to make that choice. If I work on it today, I don't have to make that choice." And a lot of the community, your people, I think today are a lot more comfortable than the average practice owner, just for that reason. Now, they don't want to burn that cash, they'd rather be practicing, but if they can't, they at least have income instead of zero.

David Phelps: Correct.

Steve Parker: So if somebody was watching this right now and they said, "I'm going to go out and look," where would they... Would you look at investments? Would you look at part-time income? Where would they start? What would they start to look for?

David Phelps: Well, I think it comes back to, where's the best return on one's time. Where's the best return on your time? For most people that are in practice or in a business, their best time is in the business or practice. Now, as you start to evolve and you want to build a practice where it's not so dependent upon you, then that's where you build a better culture, and you have other providers that provide income so you're not always in there. Now, once you've done that, whatever that model looks like, Steve, then you got to determine what investment model you like. And some people like the stock market, and they'd like to get in the weeds of that. I get it, I see the posts. And so, if that's what they like, then go for it, get good at that, or whatever it is.

I think though, that the key thing I would say is you've got to be the primary orchestrator of your financial future.

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Does not mean that you don't use advisors. Does not mean you don't have a financial advisor, some kind of estate planning, asset protection, but you need to drive that. Because if you leave it to them, singularly, they all have a bias. And you can't do that. So you've got to develop your philosophy. And I think to do that, you got to read. That's where I started in life, I found groups of other business owners. And for me, it was real estate early on. I found real estate, men that taught me from the ground up how I could use real estate as a primary plan B asset of the practice. And I just learned a heck out of that. So you've got to be intentional about your life. Practice, number one, but don't abdicate your financial future to the 401k Wall Street money manager. I'm sorry, they do the best they can, but it's very limited. It's your life, it's your future. It's your money. You've got to be responsible for it.

Steve Parker: And a lot of people are figuring that out right now. That's a hard, expensive lesson right now. Well, good. With that, it looks like we're about on time. This is unprecedented, this is something that... There are a lot of words of wisdom out there, but you have any parting thoughts for practice owners who are, again, they're struggling. They never would have imagined this. They've got teams over here. They have loans over there. They have all this. Any parting words you'd like to help them?

David Phelps: Again, I just want to go back to what I said earlier. I'm a pragmatic optimist. Okay? So this is not a time to go into super dark mode. It's time for you to lead. With your family, again, you can be vulnerable. Hey, talk to your family. Talk to your family first about, "Look, maybe the house is too big. Maybe all the stuff we've been doing..." And you've had time to spend with your family, use this opportunity to get back to really the roots of family. They

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want you. They want you more than they want your money. Okay? We think, and I thought this, Steve, I thought I just need to provide security. Yeah, that's number one. But I thought if I could provide a bigger, bigger, bigger life for my family. That turned around on me, that's not what they wanted. They wanted me to be there, not stressed out worried.

So if you start there as a family, what are you as a family willing to give up, sacrifice? What are your non-negotiables? What is absolutely important to your family? Have that conversation? Because that'll start to take stress off of you as you go back to work. Now, knowing what that is, you can go back and be leaner and meaner with your practice and go, "I don't have to bring home..." whatever your run rate is six weeks ago, "I can cut that back and we're going to be fine." When you can have that peace of mind. Now you're back to grow or being more intentional and not just trying to blow things up and it gets out of hand. And we you a reset like this, it brings everything back down to reality. So start there, develop a peace of mind about this. It's going to be okay, but just don't try to go back the way you were right away. Okay?

Steve Parker: Very, very, very well said. We've known each other a little while and I think this is your thing, and your passion, and appreciate you sharing that today with us. So with that, I think we'll draw this one to a close. Again, these are less formal than our normal courses or CE. And what I want to do is really just dig down deep and find guys like Dr. Dave Phelps, who really, I mean, he doesn't talk it, he lives it. I mean, this is his thing. So David, I appreciate you coming on and helping practice owners find a way to come back stronger.

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David Phelps: Steve, thanks for having me.

Steve Parker: All right, thank you.

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