The number of dentists currently considering an imminent move to the private sector may be open to debate, but it is true to say that the question probably lies at the back of many practitioners’ minds for at least some of the time. Obviously the financial implications of any move are a major consideration both in terms of costs and future revenue predictions, and although often the grass may seem greener on the private side of the fence, most dentists still need a little reassurance before leaving the comfort and security of the NHS.

When I discuss the conversion process with dentists it is usually against a background of dissatisfaction with their NHS circumstances or in the hope that moving to the private sector will enhance their life, their income or preferably both.

Stop of the list when it comes to making the decision to convert are the financial considerations and cash flow is a critical factor. In my experience many dentists enthusiastically embark on their new venture without giving due consideration as to how they will juggle their debts and creditors. Unfortunately for some it doesn’t take much for the pendulum to swing in the wrong direction.

Gary Anderson offers reassurance to dentists considering the move to private practice

The decision to introduce a payment plan as part of your strategy to convert is an important decision for a practice and having the right kind of assistance is vital to ensuring the process runs smoothly, without disrupting the day-to-day running of the business.

As DPAS, we have many years’ experience of dealing with these situations and have helped to allay many of the fears of those in charge. We can advise and assist in communication with existing patients from the outset and have the experience to guide a practice through the process. Using our in-house facilities and the expertise of our external partners we have the capacity to create your payment plan and then develop it as an integral part of your practice brand.

**Payment plans**

Payment plans can play a huge role in helping to ease such cash flow concerns. For the principal, being able to predict consistent income levels is of huge financial relevance, as is the ability to maintain income during holidays or periods of natural slow down. There are many questions that a dentist who is considering conversion should consider:

- How many patients do I need to attract to ensure that my practice is viable?
- What should my plan charges be?
- How should I communicate the change to my patients?
- How can I ensure new patients?
- How do I make my patients feel valued post-conversion? This may include further questions about methods of marketing your services, treatments and advanced technology that is available at your practice.

**Protecting your brand**

In addition, the sustainability of the financial and ‘intellectual’ value of your business is a key motivating factor for many practitioners who make the move from NHS to the private sector. Most private practices spend financial and human resources on developing a brand and some have found that the credibility of this has been undermined by their enrolment with a nationally branded payment plan – causing the differentiation of the two areas to be of real value for both parties, and without doubt dental plans have a role to play in providing a sensible means of budgeting for patients.

For practices there is the peace of mind in knowing that if patients who have already paid for routine care are more likely to attend and ii) that a certain level of monthly income is assured. This solution ensures a good level of preventive care can be maintained, which will reduce the need for extensive, often costly treatments that can result from neglect. Communicating this message in a clear, concise and positive manner is essential and can prove highly beneficial.

As a business owner it is important to be aware of the need to keep control of costs. By choosing a plan provider that understands your needs and those of your patients, it makes the process of convincing patients of the benefits of change much easier.

For practices who convert a high percentage of patients with the help of DPAS, the benefits are further enhanced due to part of DPAS’ charges being a flat monthly charge, which have an 'intellectual' value to your business.

Gary Anderson has a distinguished track record in the insurance industry, with 30 years’ experience and senior management leadership roles with global insurance giant ACE Group behind him. Since joining DPAS in November 2006, Gary has been instrumental in overseeing and fine-tuning the DPAS business processes, practices and procedures to support the ever-increasing number of dentists now choosing DPAS Dental Plans. Previously operations director, Gary assumed the role of managing director effective from January 2013. Gary is a fellow of the Chartered Insurance Institute.

**Added value**

Dentistry www.dentistry.co.uk

Some practices have realized that DPAS does not compromise on the quality of our service and in addition to low cost plan administration, we offer a variety of business and marketing services to help practices maximize plan take-up.

Be it through the support of a team of experienced consultants, excellent in-house facilities, or resources on practice marketing – be sure you get value for money when introducing a payment plan.

So for anyone teetering on the edge of the decision of whether to convert some or all of your practice, let me offer some reassurance. The introduction of a practice-branded payment plan makes financial sense and offers benefits to patients, so the most important discussion is which plan provider to choose.

I would encourage all dentists to work with a provider that understands the conversion process and has experience of dealing with practices taking this step. In this way, you and your staff can relax and your patients can be assured that your move is also in their best interests.

Executed in the right way, a move to the private sector enables a practice to control all elements of its service provision, helping to attract and retain patients, building levels of satisfaction that will provide a strong foundation on which to build substantial future growth.

**Contact**

Gary Anderson offers reassurance to dentists considering the move to private practice

Contact DPAS today on 01747 870910

Visit our website at www.dpas.co.uk for information and case studies and how you can help you make the most of private practice.

_Executive_