



# HUMAN RESOURCES WITH SYNERGY DENTAL PARTNERS AND BENT ERICKSEN & ASSOCIATES

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Dr. Mustafa Shah Khan and Dr. Richard Offutt started Synergy Dental Partners 12 years ago. The subject today is HR and their guest is Ms. Adrienne Twigg, CEO of Bent Ericksen.

The practice of dentistry requires the dentist to have competency in many disciplines. Clinical competency is only part of the puzzle. The puzzle, however, has many pieces. Today we would like to discuss HR. The employment market is overwhelmingly challenging in the current economy. The dentist must develop critical strategies to recruit and retain key employees.

Synergy Dental had the pleasure to interview Ms. Adrienne Twigg. Ms. Twigg is the co-owner of Bent Ericksen. Bent Ericksen is an industry leader in HR solutions for dental practices. We asked her to provide an overview of her company and follow up with a Q&A session.

## QUESTIONS:

How does a dentist know he could benefit from an HR service provider?

How does the dentist start the process of integrating HR services into their practice?

Is the service expensive? Can investing in HR services save a practice money and reduce overhead?

Can an HR partner help an independent dentist compete with the DSO's?

What other services are offered by the HR provider?

## INTERVIEW WITH DRs. SHAH KHAN, OFFUTT, AND ADRIENNE TWIGG

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### How does a dentist know he/she could benefit from an HR service provider?

The interesting thing about HR and Employment Compliance is that every single dentist, whether they like it or not, is already “in the game” regarding HR. The moment the practice employs just ONE person, that practice needs to comply with about 95% of all labor laws and rules that are out there, both on the federal side and individual stateside.

These regulatory and compliance laws also have what are called “employee” thresholds that determine the applicability for a given practice. And if that doesn’t make it tricky enough, the rules and laws are always changing. Being in compliance with all of these is the HR foundation that all practices should be built on for long-term success.

More than ever, having the HR pieces of the puzzle in place in a practice is crucial. What makes this challenging to the dentist is HR is not something that was included in the dental school curriculum. The dental schools do not instruct the student on how to run the “people” side of their practice. And yet, when a dentist opens up a practice, or even joins as an Associate, he or she is expected to know the labor laws and what is required of them as an employer.

So, for me, the question becomes: what’s the best use of the dentist’s time and money? What we know from experience is that it is more cost-effective to utilize an HR service provider to handle this area of risk management and asset protection, than attempting to do it via the DIY approach.

### How does the dentist start the process of integrating HR services into their practice?

This part can actually be very easy. You first start with an HR company that is specific to dentistry and therefore knows the ins and outs of the profession, as well as has a proven track record of success with a great reputation. The next step is onboarding with that company whereby a customized, comprehensive and compliant policy manual is created for you that outlines all the required and discretionary policies the practice will operate by, along with making sure all team members have read and understand those policies. These are the first two steps to integrating a solid HR foundation in the practice.

## **Is the service expensive? Can investing in HR services save a practice money and reduce overhead?**

Given that today, the likelihood of a dentist finding themselves involved with a labor board complaint or labor-related lawsuit is actually higher than the risk associated with a malpractice claim, (the average cost of an out of court labor-related settlement in healthcare is now averaging \$40,000.00), we believe this investment is extremely valuable. Taking into account a startup investment and ongoing support for 20+ years does not equal one out-of-court settlement, plus you'd have the peace of mind having your "HR House" in order. So, is this cost-effective if you cover your bases? Absolutely! It protects the practice, diminishes the number of misunderstandings, and gives the dentist some peace of mind knowing that s/he is meeting the labor law requirements out there for his/her practice.

## **Can an HR partner help an independent dentist compete with the DSO's?**

The short answer is: Yes. We believe that when a practice is operating with fair and consistent administration of the required policies and all team members know the "rules", this creates an environment of trust and security. These two qualities can be the make a huge difference in how a team member feels about their employer, their job and how they are contributing to the overall success of the practice. In turn, this feeling of trust and security always translates into lower turnover of team members. Statistics show that turnover costs the practice the equivalent of what you pay for that position for a year! Lower turnover in a team means a more cohesive team. We all know and understand that patients like to be greeted by team members they know and see regularly. The big win for the private practices is quality dentistry and great relationships between the team and the patients, coupled with low turnover and higher retention of quality employees.

## **What other services are offered by the HR provider?**

Naturally the policy manual is a foundational part, but there are a number of other important and complementary components that streamline HR processes, which are a standard part of our HR Director package, such as:

- Job descriptions for each position in the practice that are complete, up-to-date and fulfill all the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements,
- Personnel forms to assist and ensure that documentation requirements are met,
- Ongoing updates as laws and regulations change and the practice grows, and
- Ongoing telephone support with our HR Specialists to answer questions and advise on events that happen with employees in the practice.

From us specifically, we also have available a proprietary software program for administering a bonus and incentive plan in the practice. And a unique assessment that our clients use for hiring and teambuilding.

# ABOUT BENT ERICKSEN & ASSOCIATES

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Bent Ericksen & Associates has been a specialized provider of HR and Employment Compliance support services to the dental profession since 1972. Our corporate headquarters is located in Eugene, Oregon, consisting of a team, all committed to supporting and addressing client HR and Employment Compliance needs and questions.

With clients throughout the United States and a long and proven track record, we understand the nuances, uniqueness and requirements on the federal as well as state level, facing the dental profession.

Our team of professionals at Bent Ericksen & Associates embody specific experience and knowledge in dentistry, business, practice management and HR/employment compliance and stay current with and evaluate applicable compliance legislation and regulatory requirements to ensure that clients remain up to date and informed about affected changes.

Our consultative support services take a “minimal risk” approach that is both managerially sound, people-centric and compliant. The HR Specialists have a base of knowledge and experience that goes beyond just rules and regulations. They help clients understand all of their options, the pros and cons of each, and help them find the option that works best for their practice. HR is rarely a black and white landscape, and our HR Specialists help clients navigate the gray area for optimal success and peace of mind.



**Bent Ericksen  
& Associates**

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