

# Dream *to* Achieve

*Dr. Allen Nazeri is on a quest to give back to the dental community. Through his New Image Creation-sponsored seminars, he shares positive practice philosophies to help dentists reach their dreams and create exceptional dental practices.*



*From left: Holly Sharp, RDH; Sandy Olson, director of patient services; Magie Carter, RDH; Dr. Allen Nazeri; and Mercedes Castio, RDH.*

*Photos by Dave Stanfield of D & R Photography*





From left: Bita Nazeri, N.I.C. director of creative planning; Dr. Allen Nazeri; Arlen Davoodi, N.I.C. director of sales and marketing; and Linet Masibi, N.I.C. customer service manager.

About five years ago, Dr. Allen Nazeri decided to build his dream dental practice in Palm

Desert, California – a famous playground for the rich and famous. His concept: a 100 percent insurance-free dental practice; low-volume and high-quality white-glove service. What he created was Cornerstone Dentistry. The lobby of Dr. Nazeri's practice looks and feels as if you were sitting at a Ritz Carlton Hotel. Featured in several local and national media, the practice sets the standard in customer service and concierge health care. Cornerstone Dentistry represents how Dr. Nazeri has always wanted to practice – but it took a long time before he actually realized what he wanted to do, and that he could actually do it. Through pitfalls and challenges, Cornerstone Dentistry is the final realization of Dr. Nazeri's dream. Now he is on a quest to give back to the dental community by teaching other dentists how to avoid the failures he endured and how to build a truly exceptional dental practice. Dr. Nazeri also co-founded New Image Creation dental lab in 2003 with two other dentists and currently serves as the clinical director for the lab. Again, his approach to the lab business is quite different. Dr. Nazeri believes that a dental lab should be an educational source for its clients. He also believes that dentists must be exposed to different practice philosophies while they are still in school. It is through education and dissemination of his practice philosophies that have made his lab-sponsored dental seminars very popular among dentists and their team members. Dr. Nazeri wants dentists everywhere to realize their dreams, enjoy dentistry and become extremely successful.

**Dr. Nazeri, tell us about your early days in dentistry. How did you get started?**

The first job interview that I had was with a dentist who was running late trying to manage a multi-chair office. He hastily handed me a dental chart and said, "This is your interview." Thanks to the great education that I received at Creighton University, I ended up doing a perio flap and landed my first job at \$300 per day. I worked very hard, running from room to room like a rabbit and went on to open my own practice. Not knowing there were other ways to practice dentistry, I practiced like this for my first 10 years. Finally, I woke up and looked for a way to get out of the rat race.

**There are many dentists who work the way you did, why do you think that is and what led you to practice differently?**

Your first job as an associate has a large impact on the style of practice you choose. For me, working at a fast-paced office became the norm and I did not know any better. A series of events, including a health issue, made me reevaluate my goals and the way I practiced. Having mentors and coaches along the way certainly helped me in shaping who I am today.

**Who were your mentors and what recommendations do you have for other dentists?**

In my career, I have had several mentors and coaches along the way. I am very grateful to Drs. Bill Blatchford, Howard Farran, Bill Dickerson, Gordon Christensen, Peter Dawson and Richard Stevenson who runs a first class restorative Department at UCLA and many others who I am forgetting now. I think it is absolutely essential that every dentist finds a mentor or a coach and asks for guidance. I strongly recommend finding a mentor who is a practicing dentist. This will ensure that the mentor is in touch with the reality of every day dental practice.

**What would you say are the elements of success?**

I think the number one element is having an open mind.

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The open mind allows you to search for answers. The second element is continuing education. I am shocked at the minimal CE requirements for dentists. There are many fine dental institutions that one can attend, but only a small percentage of dentists actually attend them. In my opinion, the last element of success is the ability to accept failure. I have had my own share of failures and disappointments, but they've only strengthened my resolve.

**You are very open about sharing your own personal failures with others, which is fairly uncommon. Why do you do that?**

As a profession, we all do very well and we all have the ability to become very successful. Unfortunately, I see a lot of jealousy, envy and backstabbing among dentists. I think this is the result of dentists not being happy with themselves, their practices and their lives. If more dentists can achieve their dreams, the happier the dental community will be as a whole.

**Tell us about your seminars and how they have helped other dentists?**

The topic of our dental seminar "Secrets of Patients Saying Yes to Comprehensive and Elective Dentistry" has been a big hit. I talk about my experience as a dentist and share the road map to having a dream dental practice. Without exception, after every seminar, someone contacts me, whether it's a dentist, team member or a spouse, and thanks me for showing how dentists can get out of the rat race and enjoy practicing again. I have lectured to dentists and dental hygienists who were ready to quit dentistry. I was where they are now just a few years ago and I am just helping them realize their potential. I started doing these lectures in house for some very large group dental practices and we had amazing results.

**What challenges are there when it comes to training dentists and their teams?**

I think the biggest challenge is to convince the dentist that every team member must attend the seminar. It is like the game of basketball. Everyone who plays the game must be trained. The other challenge is obviously implementing what they have learned. This is where having a coach with monthly meetings help to stay on path to success.

**You mentioned that you have had success in training dentists in some of the largest group dental practices. Can you tell us the challenges associated with that and how you have overcome them?**

Groups have their own sets of requirements and rules. I generally meet with the top management to understand their business philosophies and how we can implement a program to improve upon them. In a group practice, doctors are generally not very motivated as they are barely making the necessary productions and they have not been able to realize their true potential. This adds a lot of stress to the associate as well as the management because office overheads are fairly high. The introduction of comprehensive dentistry allows the associates to realize a much higher production and income, and the management realizes a much better profit margin. Also, these groups realize much better recruitment, as dentists like to work for groups that are progressive and focused on comprehensive care rather than the volume. I also help them establish an in-house training program or refer them to a teaching institute such as LVI, Pankey or Bicon for example, depending on their needs.

**When you are talking about comprehensive dentistry, are you referring to high-cost full-mouth reconstruction?**

Not at all. Comprehensive dentistry can be a collection of seven occlusal fillings for one patient or 10 crowns for another patient. Approaching dentistry in comprehensive fashion allows the dentist to take the time to diagnose and treat comprehensively. The result will be a much more satisfied patient, doctor, team member and much higher production per hour. No matter what the patient needs or what the fee structure is, "comprehensively" means more profit and less overhead.

**What are your thoughts about dental insurance? How does your philosophy work for a small-town dentist or one who works in a blue-collar area?**

Dental insurance is certainly a benefit to both patients and dentists. The problem with most practices is that their approach to insurance is very wrong. In my seminars I teach the office team and the dentist how to approach insurance in a comprehensive fashion. This actually helps both dentists and their patients. My teachings can be applied anywhere; in a small town

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From left: Marketing Assoc. Joey Rodriguez, Technical Manager James Kivimaki, Admin. Assistant Jaimee Borden and General Manager Eva-Maria Pede.



or a large city. The concept is very simple: exceptional customer service and comprehensive dentistry.

### How did you motivate your team to provide exceptional customer service?

Hiring team members with strong people skills is mandatory. About three months before I opened my dental practice, I hired my dental team and put them through the Ritz Carlton Leadership program. We also met every week at a local Ritz Carlton where they experienced my vision and my expectations as to how each patient should be treated firsthand. Now they go out of their way to make sure that each patient has a unique experience visiting the practice.

### How did you get involved in the lab business and what is different about New Image Creation?

The lab business is unfortunately a dying business in the United States. I think the way dentists practice in this country has affected the lab business. Many labs are closing up since they cannot afford the new technology and the prices the dentists are willing to pay. About five years ago, two other dentists and I saw the opportunity to make a better lab by becoming devoted to training dentists in all areas of dentistry. Labs have to be proactive in teaching dentists about new technology; they must become more productive by doing comprehensive dentistry. This is a win-win situation for both the lab owner and the dentist.

### How do you ensure consistency with your lab products?

We have two separate distinct departments: basic and advanced. The basic department is an assembly line. For example: a crown goes through several technicians at each step in the assembly line to ensure that each step is done perfectly. This allows us to reduce the percentage of errors rather than if one technician was working on the same crown from start to finish. Our advanced department is different. Each technician has an eye for dental aesthetics and each has been trained in the principals of LVI teachings.

### What are your favorite lab products?

In the removable department, I love our ComfortPlast par-



Arlene Davoodi (left) and Linet Masibi (right).

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tials. These are all flexible nylon partials and they fit like a glove when a good PVS impression is sent to the lab. The other product I like is our new Z-Crown, which is a Zirconia crown that possesses great strength and aesthetics. These have become very popular as a replacement of high-cost, high-noble metals.

### What are other unique features of the lab?

The lab is more than a place to have a crown or a denture made. It is resource and a training center for dentists. We employ several competent restorative dentists who can help our clients with treatment planning cases in a comprehensive fashion. With most dental labs, the treatment plan is only done between the dentist and the laboratory technician. However at New Image Creation, our advisory board members are well qualified both in the laboratory aspect as well as the clinical aspect. This allows our clients to get greater feedback in understanding treatment

options. We also hold clinical classes throughout the country through our affiliate doctors to demonstrate new techniques.

### How do New Image Creation's prices match those of other dental labs?

The dental lab business is a very competitive business and the prices are based on both the volume of the work they receive from one dentist as well as how fast dentists pay their lab bills. Our dental lab tries to stay very competitive, yet provide high-quality products.

### What are your future plans for Cornerstone Dentistry and New Image Creations?

Twenty years ago I would've told you, "I want to have an office or a lab on every street corner." Over the years I have learned that it is not how big you are but how good you are at what you do. This does not mean that I reject the idea of expansion. I certainly have been approached by several dentists and institutions who want to duplicate my prototype of highly service-oriented dental practices. I am open to ideas and look forward in receiving proposals. As far as the lab is concerned, I hope I can help to revive the dental lab industry in this country by educating and helping dentists to achieve their dream dental practice. ■