

# Business Development for Denturists

- 2008 March BC Denturist Magazine

## Have You Got A Screw Loose ?

Handy people in Canada know that the best type of screw on the market is the Robertson square head. However, in most parts of United States the Robertson is completely unheard of. There are always flat/blade/straight/slotted (pick your term) screws and Phillips screws (otherwise known as the one with the criss-cross on it, right?).

So what do these screws have to do with your business? At first glance nothing, but it actually is yet another example of an inferior technology that wins. The point we are going to make here is that it is not always the best denture that wins either, right? The next logical question is: why is that?

The Robertson is such a *vastly* superior screw! Interestingly, anyone that has ever used one is an instant convert. Easy to go in... easy to come out. You can't strip the head and thanks to perfectly machined tapering you can put a Robertson screw on the end of Robertson screwdriver and it will *stay* there while you hold the screwdriver at all sorts of different angles. This allows you to work the screwdriver with one hand -- simply not possible with a slotted or Phillips screwdriver (well, unless you have a magnetic tip that provides a little help, but nothing like what a Robertson can do.)

Well, the fate of the Robertson screw is one of my favorite stories. In 1908 a Canadian screwdriver salesman named Peter Lyburner Robertson, of Milton Ontario, was tired of cutting himself when demoing screwdrivers. So he invented a new screw and had it strongly patented in 1909. It was an instant success. Soon Henry Ford took notice. The screws sped up production of his model-Ts by 2 hours per unit and virtually eliminated scratches on the paint from slippage. However, Robertson was having trouble keeping up with demand in his patented production facility. Henry Ford offered to buy a license to produce the screws in his own facilities on a per unit basis. Peter Robertson wanted to keep total control over production and declined.

Along came Henry Phillips with his criss-cross screw which also would be less likely to scratch paint. Phillips had no problem licensing his screws to whoever wanted to produce them. Car companies were happy because they could produce their own screws and have a guaranteed supply and the giant American Screw Company was happy to produce and sell Phillips to the masses around the world. The world markets became saturated with Phillips screws. Henry Phillips did not work as hard as Peter Robertson and his product was technically inferior. In fact, while Phillips essentially sat back and collected cash, Robertson struggled day in and day out running his own company. He ran his own production facilities, headed his sales team, design team, supervised operations ... everything.

Peter Lyburner Robertson might as well have been a typical hard working denturist. One who makes great dentures, works late every night, and tries to do everything himself. This is a very common business problem especially for competent people. This is a pattern which can lock a person in a direction that results in becoming increasingly "busy" and stressed, trying to do everything and not having time to do anything about it. It's the old lumberjack who is too busy sawing to stop and sharpen his saw. It's a story we see over and over, in every type of business.

The answer is simple but very hard to do. Stop and create some time to make some changes. Be prepared to give up some responsibilities and initiate some new ones. It's the secret to everything really. Just take a moment and visualize your ideal business. The more often and the more detailed you can do this, the more clearly it will become a reality. It is helpful to break your business down and decide what you are doing well and what could use some attention. The following is a short example.

For each item select whether you do it yourself or another staff member, rate how well it is being done from 0 (not at all) to 3 (very well), and then circle "Needs Attention" if appropriate.

<b>Business Development</b>				
Developing Relationships with Dentists	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Producing Specialized informational Brochures	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Asking for Referrals	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Tracking Referrals	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Advertising	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Follow up outstanding Treatment Plans / Quotes	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Follow up on Missed or Cancelled Appointments	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Recalling Patients	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention

<b>Front Desk</b>				
Scheduling Patients	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Greeting Patients	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Distributing Personalized Welcome Package	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Confirming Appointments	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Printing Treatment Plans / Quotes	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Sending Pre-Authorizations	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Printing Receipts	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Printing Claim Forms	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Collecting Accounts Receivables	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention

<b>Managerial Accounting – Regular Reviews of...</b>				
Aged Accounts Receivable comparatives	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Outstanding Insurance Claims	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Outstanding Pre-authorizations	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Work In Progress	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Money on Deposit for Future Work	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Discount Comparatives	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
New Patients numbers	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention
Wanted and Unwanted Procedure Summaries	Self	Staff	0 1 2 3	Needs Attention

Monthly Expense Comparatives	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Advertising expenditure as a % of Revenue	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Advertisement Effectiveness	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention

<b>Human Resources</b>							
Regular Team staff meetings	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Regular checks on Staff Clarity of Clinic objectives	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Regular assessments of Staff Job Satisfaction	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention

<b>Interior Decorating</b>							
Regular Cleaning	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Modern Confident Inspiring Office	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Updated Relevant Reading Materials	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention

<b>Operatory</b>							
Documenting Oral Examinations	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Digital Images Taken	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Instant Access to Information you Need	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
In Operator Patient Education	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention

<b>Laboratory</b>							
Tidy and Organized	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Finishes are all on time	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention
Quality of dentures match your vision	Self	Staff	0	1	2	3	Needs Attention

Invariably, schools of business teach that about 15% of one's financial success is due to one's technical knowledge and about 85% is due to skill in human engineering, to personality and the ability to lead people. Peter Robertson was a very hard working and technically competent man. But he spread himself too thin. He was always just too busy trying to keep up. By taking time to define all aspects of your practice, you can figure if you might be spread too thin, what is being neglected, and how you could "tighten up your practice".

*Dean Fenwick is the lead software developer for the DOM (Denturist Office Manager) practice management system for denturists. Dean has been helping denturists improve practice management across Canada for the last 8 years.*

*Before his work with denturists, Dean was a computer science and business teacher at both the high school and college level.*