

## CAREER MANAGEMENT IN DENTISTRY

The key to a rewarding career lies in the harmony between who We Are and what We Do.



Orlando Monteiro da Silva, President of the National Association of Liberal Professionals. Former President of the Portuguese Dental Association.

**M**anaging a career is a huge challenge, especially for those who are starting a highly qualified professional activity such as dentistry.

There are many factors that influence a career path. Today I'm going to talk a little about the importance of self-knowledge in personal and professional development with some examples applicable to the various aspects of dentistry today.

Most religions and spiritualities describe in their principles, formulations, and practices, although in very different ways, the centrality of self-knowledge in decision-making and in the choices that we are permanently making throughout life.

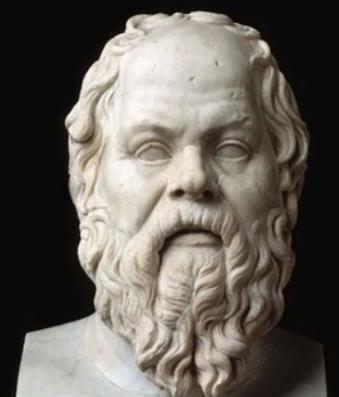
Philosophy has also been doing so since ancient times.

Socrates said, "Know thyself".

Lao Tzu wrote more comprehensively: "He who knows others is wise. He who knows himself is enlightened".

**Know thyself, and you shall know the universe and the gods.**

**Sócrates**



In other words, self-knowledge and the knowledge of others are intimately linked in a desirable balance and harmony.

Subsequently, Psychology through various currents has emphasized over centuries until today the importance of our family, genetic, environmental context, our thoughts and our emotions in the Choices and Decisions that we make throughout life.

In recent decades, a panoply of diversified proposals for all tastes, inside and outside the traditional branches of religions, spiritualities and science, has become common under the general concept of self-help.

In fact, the paths of self-knowledge and the knowledge of others have no end, they are processes, permanent constructions and always unfinished. Our decisions and attitudes must arise, as far as possible, from the balance of these two aspects, that of the external approval that we all seek, from patients, from our colleagues, from family, from friendships, with the integration of a more interior, more personal aspect that, when harmonious, exalts us in the various existential planes.



It is important, regarding the management of a career in dentistry, to emphasize that the awareness of some aspects of our personality must be, as far as possible, considered in the choices we make, proving to be fundamental for the type of path, of career we build.

It is therefore important when we embrace a profession to know our strengths, our values, our goals, so that what we identify as essential in the professional path we aim for is not only determined by the interests and expectations of others, but also by those that each of us values.

Understanding our strengths means that we should focus on paths that enhance them. It is much easier to evolve professionally from good to excellence than from mediocre to enough.

The developments of the last 25 years have progressively transformed dentistry from a narrow-band profession to a broad-band one.

Contributing to this is the recognition of the various skills and specializations that dentistry currently has, the technological possibilities in data science and digital and, above all, the growing and increasingly robust relational evidence of oral health with systemic health. These developments are in themselves generating enormous opportunities in the oral health profession, in addition to those in which the trinomial |dentist | turbine | chair | they were dominant.

There is now room for the provision of generalist dental procedures, the most sought-after, as well as in the areas of clinical specialization, orthodontics, oral surgery, implantology, rehabilitation, endodontics, pediatric dentistry and non-clinical, such as management and public health.

In addition, there are the differentiated skills that the dentist can acquire with growing demand from the public, such as harmonization and orofacial filling, temporomandibular dysfunction, acupuncture, sleep dentistry, ozone therapy, supportive dentistry in home continued care and dentistry in conflict contexts, among others.

To make career decisions, the dentist can and should study himself and ask:

Which profile is dominant in me?

Will I be a Reformer or a Perfectionist?

A more Altruistic , Caregiver?

A Doer, Motivator, driven by results?

An Individualist, more of an Artist?

A more Theoretical Researcher?

Someone who prioritizes the group, the organization, the security? An Enthusiastic, Optimistic who favors change and novelty?

A Challenger, Protector, Punisher?

Or a Pacifist, Conciliator?

If we are good in a surgical area, if we are interested, for example, in implantology, why would we waste time and resources on a professional career in public services where such expertise is not applicable?

Or, on the contrary, I would say if a young dentist has within him characteristics of an entrepreneur, of a doer, if he shows interest in concretizing, in achieving results, he should not value this aspect and, in addition to the clinical practice of the profession, improve his management skills, making an organization grow, making it more profitable, creating more value for himself, for teams and for society?

Someone who recognizes himself as a perfectionist, who favors a more artistic, integrated, harmonized aspect, attentive to detail, often seeks the more aesthetic aspect of dentistry, dentistry, rehabilitation. Does it make sense for a perfectionist to be integrated into an environment where detail, detail, is devalued in terms of functionality at the lowest cost?

Should the individualist, who chooses solo exercise, who has difficulty working in a group, who feels comfortable working directly with his patients, not valuing the organizational aspects that make the viability of a structure possible, privilege the path of team management in an organization?

It is not intended to answer this type of question other than through the importance of each one of us analyzing ourselves from the point of view of their personality, their professional profile, the skills they have acquired, those they want to improve, the specialization they want to achieve in order to make compatible choices that can bring satisfaction to each professional path, Fulfillment and compatibility appropriate to the individual personality type and abilities.

We cannot ask someone with a vocation for orthodontics to dedicate himself to endodontics.... They are very different choices.

Regarding the longevity of careers in dentistry, there are few studies on the subject; But, in general, the high degree of demand in the oral health professions, in physical terms, in posture, in the degree of visual demand, auditory, mental demand, communicational and among others, makes them relatively short, compared to other careers in the medical fields. In addition, there are generally few opportunities for differentiation and progression outside the clinical field. As such, the construction and projection of a career should provide for parallel or complementary alternatives, whether around management, business, volunteering, civic intervention or others so that the dependence on exclusively clinical practice does not prove to generate frustration due to its relatively short life span and the lack of a previously planned alternative parallel career.

In a world where differentiation and specialization become increasingly important, understanding oneself deeply makes it possible to identify specific niches within dentistry where one can not only survive, but actually thrive. Be it through surgery, management, dental aesthetics or any other of the numerous facets of this profession.

Dentistry is diverse enough to respond to very different career visions adapted to very different personality profiles. ■

