

# A social success

A look at how one practice owner has embraced the world of online engagement.



**D**entist Paul Gallop is not your typical Instagram user. The latest statistics reveal that almost one third of the 32m users in the UK fall into the 25-34-year-old age bracket, with the 18-24-year-olds hot on their heels.

But at 60, Paul has a youthful exuberance for sharing videos, reels and photos that would put many of these younger cohorts to shame.

His Instagram account (@motcomb\_street\_dentist) is designed to amuse as much as educate, Paul uses the platform to 'edutain' patients with aplomb. Making dentistry fun is his forte, it seems.

From an end-of-the-day reel to the theme tune of Benny Hill to

Paul having his teeth cleaned by a colleague, from myth-busting with his hygienists to patients posing in ugly safety glasses to the tune of the infamous, Je t'aime, this is a dentist who does not take himself too seriously.

His enthusiastic efforts certainly elevate a practice profile to new levels and, if it ultimately puts patients in his chair, he is also being richly rewarded.

It's been a hectic year for Paul, as it has been for many dentists up and down the country. The pandemic continues to have impact.

Graduating from Bart's and The London back in 1984, Paul purchased Motcomb Street Dentist in 1988. It is a private practice within London's

affluent area of Belgravia with a patient base that is varied, vast and multi-generational – many clients are long-term and loyal.

Paul's passion for all things dental is evident. And championing his team is a key part of his enthusiasm. Hygiene plays a huge role in his dentistry and his focus on Instagram is more about raising the profile of oral health care and connecting with patients in a straightforward way than showcasing his own wealth of clinical skills.

"What you see with us is what you get, and we speak a language people can understand," he says proudly. "Our posts on Instagram are very representative of what patients experience in the practice. ☺"

“We are a friendly and warm team and make people feel welcome and keep things simple. Patients generally don’t wish to know the finite detail of their treatments. Mostly what they want to know is whether it will hurt, whether it will look nice, and how long it is going to take. With Instagram, people just want to see people like them – and I encourage patients as well as the team to get involved in making the videos. It helps to cut across the boundaries.”

Paul enjoys what seems unwavering staff loyalty – topping the list is practice manager, Sandra Huttly, who has been with Paul since the beginning, with the pair enjoying more than 35 years of mutual support.

Nurturing talent evidently pays dividends. He often employs students (former dental nurses) from the Dental Therapy & Hygiene BSc course at King’s College London to work Saturdays, and many have stayed on. There are some close bonds in the hygiene team and they stay in touch when they leave, sometimes returning when needed.

Longevity cuts across the whole team – and the hygienists too have also clocked up some years between them. Anna Sarisvili-Gorevic joined seven years ago, Ciara McKenna in 2016 and Tulsi Patel in June 2020.

Paul was an early advocate of sharing clinical responsibilities with a hygienist. He recalls, “I have always been a huge fan of hygienists and keen to embrace their skills early on. I was inspired by Mervyn Druian, who advised me to invest in a hygienist to support what I was doing in order to grow the practice. At first it was challenging trying to convince my patients to see a hygienist rather than me. But once I had explained that they had a better chance of keeping their teeth by seeing a hygienist regularly – they were specifically trained to advise them and help improve their dental health – they listened.”

It is evidently a tight-knit team and Paul is proud that it’s formed on firm friendships, honesty, and great communication. He is committed to invest in his hygiene team, too.

“Nobody else is going to be enthusiastic if I’m not, or if they are unhappy. I rely on the team to be as open with me as I am with them. My



daughter worked as the practice receptionist in the summer and she said, ‘dad you need to replace the chair in the hygiene room. It looks tatty’. So I asked the hygienists if there was anything wrong with it and they replied, ‘Shall we make a list for you?’. I suddenly realised we had kept the same Belmont Voyager 2 chair for 17 years. I went to one of the dental shows and immediately ordered a blue Belmont Voyager 3 from SPS Dental who delivered it the following week. It’s sleek, affordable to maintain and easy to use – and I just love the LED lights as much as they love the chair!”

Paul’s joie de vivre is, it seems, what keeps his patients coming back and his staff committed. But, behind the Instagram fun lies something far more paramount – the embracing of a modern-day approach to dentistry that places his patients at the heart of the whole team who are also made to feel highly valued.

“It’s all about making people feel special,” he says. “I learned very early



on in my career that it is important to make the patient in the chair feel like they are the only patient you treat. Although if one of my patients is in the other surgery with one of the hygienists, I’ll always pop in to say hello.” And if that offers up an opportunity to ‘do it for the ‘gram’ then all the better, one suspects.