

Untied from the Chair

Helping dentists to achieve their true life goals and maintain their desired lifestyle.

By Jonathan Gibson CFP, director of Verus Chartered Financial Planners.

Scottish Dentists are time-pressed professionals and they face numerous challenges: deciding whether to move from NHS to private practice; keeping pace with the rapid development in dental technology and treatment methods; the threat of NHS procedures in England being adopted in Scotland such as the Unit of Dental Activity or UDA; higher service levels being demanded by patients; starting a new practice or refurbishing an existing one; dealing with suppliers and the vast number of hardware and software vendors; finding the time to resource competent and reliable electricians or technicians; the threat of competition from Richard Branson's Virgin and other corporate entities (maybe Tesco?) and of course, the looming recession.

A Life Tied to the Chair

Dentists also continue to face the challenge that their practice is a cash-flow business and, for a dentist to be 'untied



from the chair', they must establish a disciplined strategy to manage lifestyle expenses and transform their practice's cash-flow into productive wealth.

Dentists deserve financial success, however the traditional, sales orientated, financial services model, which is still prevalent in the UK today, is not really prepared to help dentists achieve that success and very often adds to the many challenges dentists face.

Lifestyle Financial Planning

Verus Chartered Financial Planners propose that dentists are best served by the emerging field of Lifestyle Financial

Planning, incorporating Total Wealth Management, taking dentists from high income to wealth and well-being.

This can be a time consuming and technically complex process best managed by a 'Family Finance Director', who is able to sort through an interconnected number of wealth issues while keeping the best interests of the dentist professional and his or her family foremost.

As a result, dentists can devote more of their time, energy and talent to that which is most important to them and their families.

Lifestyle Financial Planning offers a unique solution to the challenges dentists

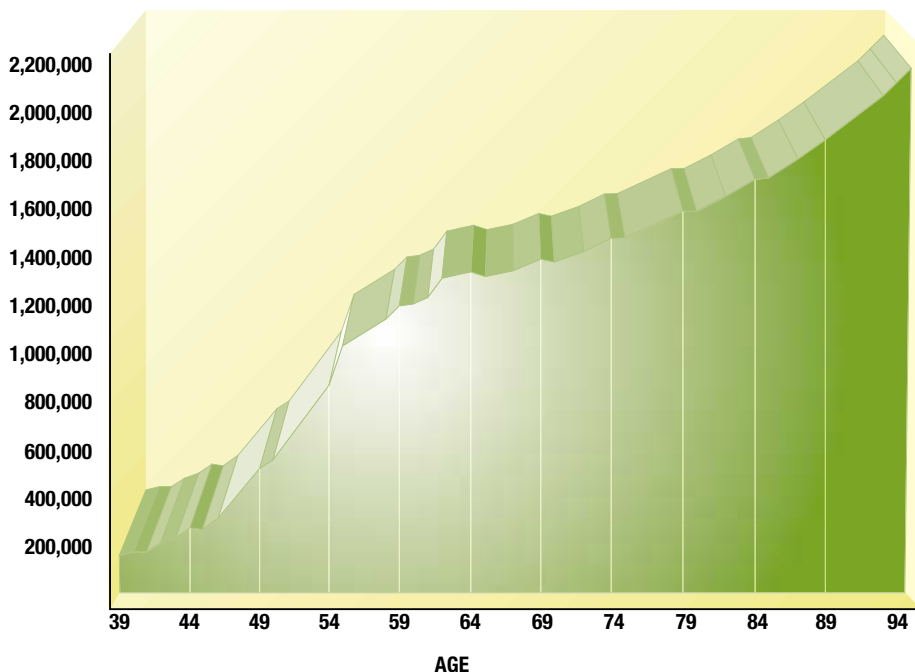
face and is a comprehensive, value-centred approach that helps dentists to identify and achieve their true lifestyle goals and maintain their desired lifestyle without fear of running out of money. Through this process dentists understand the real truth about their money and benefit from an ongoing relationship with a professional financial planner or 'Family Finance Director'. Understanding the real truth about money is not whether 'this fund' is better than 'that fund' or 'this product' is better than 'that product'.

The truth about money is far deeper and far more important than 'funds' or 'products' as it helps dentists to answer important questions such as:

"When exactly can I afford to stop doing the things that have become a drag...and start doing the things I really enjoy?"

"What do I have to do to ensure I NEVER run out of money?"

"How much do I need to earn, save or



sell my business for to give me what I want out of life?"

"Exactly what level of investment return do I need to achieve my goals?"

"How much is enough?"

Three Distinct Services

Lifestyle Financial Planning involves three distinct services which all comple-

ment one another: (1) Life Planning; (2) Financial Planning; and (3) Independent Financial Advice.

(1) Life Planning is an enjoyable part of the process as it addresses what dentists want to do with their life, now and in the future.

(2) Financial Planning involves un-

derstanding the dentist's current financial position, analysing existing financial arrangements and exploring lifetime expenditure requirements. A financial model (see diagram) is developed to show the dentist what the financial future looks like and to identify what needs to happen to ensure that their life-goals are achieved, whatever happens.

(3) Independent Financial Advice occurs only when it is clear that financial products or investments are needed to achieve the lifetime expenditure requirements. Dentists deserve to be treated fairly and no financial services firm has the right to 'sell' or arrange a product or investment unless they have first carried-out the Life Planning and Financial Planning stages explained above.

The Future

When dentists consider their future, especially as they near retirement, many will find themselves in a predicament when they think about the thousands of pounds that have passed through their hands in their practices. The money dissolves and dentists are 'tied to the chair' longer than they would like so they can maintain their family's lifestyle into retirement. Without the dentist, none of it works and that's an awful situation to be in.

■ For further information on how Lifestyle Financial Planning could help you to identify and achieve your lifestyle goals and maintain your desired lifestyle, please contact Jonathan Gibson on 01382 223455 or visit www.verusfp.co.uk.