


DOCTOR *of* DENTISTRY

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR DENTISTS



Dr. Randy Todd
Collaborating Online with Skype

Feature
2008 New Car Preview

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**Dr. Steven
Glassman**

Perfecting the Art Behind
the Glassman Smile

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Dr. Steven Glassman

Perfecting the Art Behind the Glassman Smile

By Mark Ellis

If there were ever a dental award for the most successful smiles on television, stage and screen, it might go to Drs. Steven and Debra Glassman of Glassman Dental Care. With Tony, Emmy and Oscar winners wearing their smiles, few would argue that Glassman Dental Care is one the most successful and highly respected dental practices in New York City. What is the secret behind this success? Well, the plan was to interview both doctors and feature them in this cover story. After interviewing just Dr. Steven Glassman alone, it was clear that their career stories could not be contained in a seven-page editorial feature. To remedy this, Dr. Steve Glassman will be the focus of this story and Dr. Debra Glassman will be featured in a future issue next year.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

It was very interesting to learn why Dr. Glassman made dentistry his career path. "Dentists in the community, I think they were role models for me," comments Dr. Glassman. He confessed that as a youth he was impressed by the success, lifestyle and respect that many dentists in his community had achieved. "There is always the joke, 'You couldn't get into medical school so you became a dentist,' but for me I had no interest in medicine. I liked the type of practice and lifestyle that dentists had."

Not many dentists can say that they knew early on which dental specialty they would choose as a career path. On the other hand, restorative cosmetic dentistry was the clear choice for Dr. Glassman. "In dental school, I always liked the restorative cosmetic end of it. It was always interesting to me. If anything, maybe I would have gone into orthodontics," Dr. Glassman said.

A TOUGH ROAD

During his dental school training, Dr. Glassman met his now wife of 23 years, Dr. Debra Glassman. Reflecting on the struggles they experienced early in their careers, Dr. Glassman said, "It was a difficult balancing act. We had our first son before she graduated dental school. She took the dental boards when she was eight months pregnant! When we look back on all this we



laugh and say, 'How in the hell did we make it through this?'" He later added, "In the beginning, to build a practice and have no real stay-at-home mom was very stressful. We simply had to figure things out as we went along."

LEARNING THE BUSINESS

One of the biggest challenges for a newly licensed dentist is starting a practice. Unfortunately, many dentists are ill prepared when it comes to managing a business since the focus in dental school is clinical training. "Courses like management and the business side were laughed on by the faculty," says Dr. Glassman. "Looking back now I don't think dentists still realize how important it is to learn the business side as well. If they really don't know how to run their businesses, well, they can't be profitable. If they are not profitable they can't give the best care to their patients, they can't invest in the best technology, they can't hire the best staff to treat their patients and they can't take continuing education courses because your learning



When you arrive in the waiting area you immediately feel like you've entered a day spa with the warm, cozy furnishings, scented candles and bottled water.

never ends. Those were things that I stumbled across and made mistakes, but I got smart early on."

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

"One of the most difficult things we faced developing our practice was finding and developing the right staff," says Dr. Glassman. "This is one area that I think is often overlooked today. Many front desk people you have today are converted dental assistants who have decided to make a little more money or who didn't like dealing with patients or seeing blood. Some do transition very well and others don't. I have found that some of the best front desk people are those that understand that this is a service business and know how to treat people. There are some people who have good attitudes that you can develop over

time. There are others who are gene bright, but they just can't deal well in a boss and employee environment. As a young dentist I didn't have this ability and didn't know what to look for, so I made some mistakes. I tell my staff, 'Get 1% better each week and by the end of the year you're 50% better.'"

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Dr. Glassman pointed out the important role that continuing education and networking played in building a successful practice. "Things are changing so rapidly that dental schools are only really preparing you for dentistry today and not for tomorrow," comments Dr. Glassman. "You really need to get involved with people in the field who have successful practices. Unfortunately when you are in a small village like New York City, where there is a more competitive climate, you don't always find dentists who are willing to talk about their practice. If you find someone successful in the Midwest or California, they are much more open to talk about why they are successful. So I learned a lot from the early guys in laser

I don't think dentists still realize how important it is to learn the business side as well.



A sunny and airy operatory provides a relaxed and stress-free environment for patients.

dentistry and other practices outside New York City. I would always take one big course over the weekend — Pete Dorsen was one big course that I took. I definitely learned a lot from many of the speakers at the courses I attended."

STAYING ON TOP OF TECHNOLOGY

Dentistry, like many industries today, is becoming technology dependent. Dentists who don't embrace and invest in the current technology will go the way of the dinosaur. Dr. Steven Glassman, like many of his peers, has been an early adopter of dental technology. "I read in *Who Moved My Cheese?* that if you don't change you become extinct. There are dentists who are still practicing that have the same wallpaper since the '60s and '70s, the same old X-rays, they think things are a fad and they

are wondering why their business is winding down and why they are not enjoying it as much. I think what I have learned — I used to be very bad in wanting to buy the newest and the best — sometimes you don't want to be the first. Now when I look

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Dr. Glassman consults with patient on a suggested treatment plan.

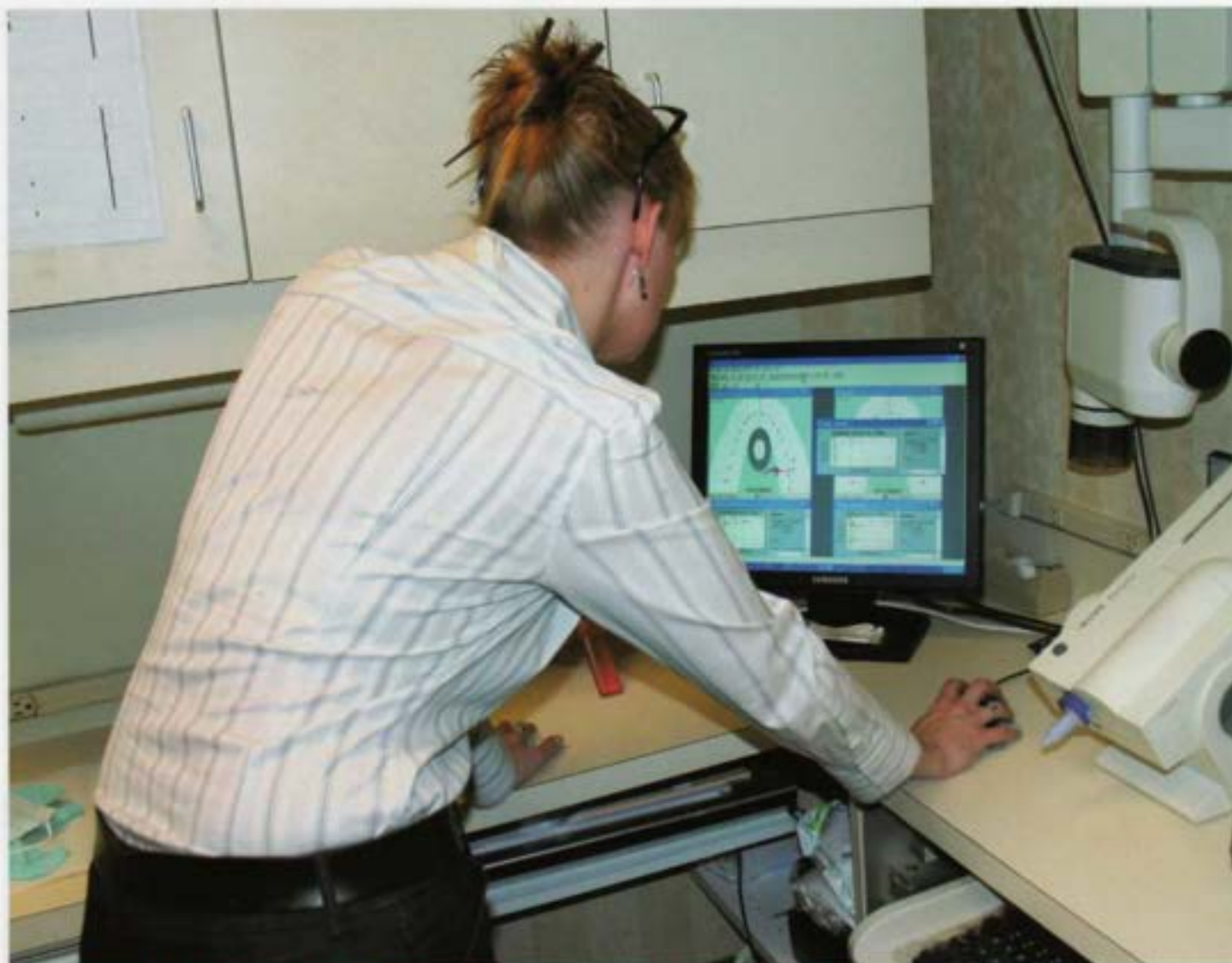
Shown here is the DELight Er:YAG dental laser system that has FDA approval for both hard and soft tissue applications.



at technology, I will say, 'What is the benefit? Who is backing it? Are they a startup? Are they backed by a big distributor like a Patterson or Schein? What will happen if I don't like it? If it cost this much, how will I make the money back?' I only make the money back by doing the procedure much faster, attracting new patients or creating additional revenue that I didn't have before."

Commenting on some of the technology that he adopted early on, Dr. Glassman said, "We were definitely an early adopter with lasers, air abrasion and intraoral cameras. As for the technology that has really helped his practice, Dr. Glassman said, "Digital X-rays, digital cameras, Invisalign, CAD/CAM abutments and digital impressions have really changed our business."

One of the latest technologies that Dr. Glassman is currently using in his practice is Cadent iTero digital impression system. The system enables Dr. Glassman to take 3-D scans of the patient's mouth and use this data to perform a variety of restorations. Commenting on the benefits of the system, Dr. Glassman said, "Instead of using the messy impression goop, we use a



Anja demonstrates the diagnostic functions of T-Scan software for analyzing occlusal problems.

Cadent iTero digital scanning system provides 3-D impressions of the patient's teeth for model-making.



scanning system where we scan the preparation and it can be used for inlays, crowns, bridges, implants and, pretty soon, Invisalign. So now we don't have to pour models, disinfect it and pack it for shipping. Now we simply send the image data to New Jersey where the model is milled out of polyurethane. The finished model has no distortions and will not wear out. When I receive the finished restoration, they literally drop into the patients' mouth. With regard to time savings, Dr. Glassman said, "On the patient side, an appointment that used to take me 50 minutes now takes me 25 minutes. On the inserts sometimes it used to take me 20 minutes, it now takes me five minutes."

Another major advantage of the 3-D digital impression system that Dr. Glassman highlighted is that it has relieved him of the stress associated with taking a multiple-unit impression where getting the margins exact is very critical. "When taking a multiple-unit impression my heart would really race because you have to get the margins right, and if the patient gags you would have to make the impression again. Now we simply scan the mouth, press a button and the information is sent to the laboratory."

IMPLANT DENTISTRY

"Implant dentistry has become so much fun for me," says Dr. Glassman. "Surgeons



Debbie documents a completed procedure with a digital photo.

are putting them in so perfectly, and patients walk away with little pain or discomfort. Dr. Mark and I have done implants on 85- and 95-year-old patients. The prosthetic part of it, unless it is a very difficult esthetic case, fit so much better than crowns, and they just go so smoothly now that they are really fun for me."

Dental implant software is having a significant impact on the dental industry with regard to placement success and the overall quality of the finished restoration. "There is computer technology that calculates the correct abutment, that takes into account the bone level and morphology of both the adjacent teeth and upper teeth, as well as the soft tissue, so the fit is perfect. It's like the difference between getting a suit off the rack and a custom-tailored, made-from-measure suit where everything is done precisely. This is the standard of quality that we at Glassman Dental Care strive to deliver to all of our patients."

INVISALIGN

Dr. Glassman, like so many cosmetic dentists who first heard about Invisalign, viewed ortho as something you would refer to an orthodontist. When the technology was first introduced, Dr. Glassman reluctantly attended an Invisalign presentation and began to see how it could work well in a cosmetic practice. "If you told me 10 years ago that I would be doing all this ortho and teaching it, I would say, 'You're nuts.' Now it is one of the most fun things I do today. I enjoy treating patients and I enjoy teaching it. It lets me go around the country, meeting dentists and certifying them. We still do mostly easy to moderate

cases. The advanced cases we refer out to the orthodontist. There are so many patients in our office that have minor crowding or spacing issues who don't want to wear braces or visit a strange office and will ask, 'Can you do it here doc?' — with Invisalign we have the tool to do it here."

PROBLEMS IN THE INDUSTRY

"There are some doctors out there that are way over-treating patients," says Dr. Glassman. "They are not giving patients enough options which is informed consent. For example, I have seen patients who were told they needed a complete smile makeover consisting of a full-mouth

Krystyna prepares for an Invisalign procedure.





Dr. Glassman and staff

reconstruction. I see these same patients and all they needed was some regular ortho or Invisalign, some whitening and two veneers, and their cases are fine. There is a lot of misinformation out there that patients are being told simply because some dentists don't have experience in that area. Don't say what you don't know. If I have a patient that has a problem with an implant or TMJ disorder, I have no trouble referring them to a specialist. I don't know everything. Unfortunately, there are some dentists out there that are telling patients they can't have a certain procedure done because they have no experience with it." ■

Steven Glassman, D.D.S.
Glassman Dental Care
160 West End Avenue
Suite 1R
New York, NY 10023
(212) 787-4860
www.glassmandentalcare.com

Training

Graduate, B.A. Chemistry and Biology, Brandeis University (1980)
 Graduate, D.D.S., Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery (1984)

Associations

American Dental Association
 Academy of General Dentists
 First District Dental Society
 International Congress of Oral Implantology
 American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry
 Founding Member of World Congress of Microdentistry

Technology

Cadent iTero — 3-D digital impression system
 T-Scan III — Dental Occlusal Analysis System
 Invisalign — clear, removable orthodontic aligners
 Zoom one-hour teeth whitening system
 DELight — Erbium YAG dental laser