

GMCP Ep. 004 - Daniel Gibbs: from practitioner, to business owner, to Telstra Business Awardee

[INTRO MUSIC]

This is the Grow My Clinic Podcast by Clinic Mastery where we help you deliver amazing client experiences to grow your clinic

JACK: We are your hosts today, Jack O'Brien and Daniel Gibbs from Clinic Mastery and today on the podcast, we are talking all about Daniel's story. Daniel, how are you today?

DANIEL: Good day Jack. Nice to have you and nice to be here on the Grow My Clinic podcast. It is my first one!

JACK: Welcome, welcome. It is very exciting. There are plenty of ears listening in and really interested in your story. So let us dive right in. Tell us, you are a podiatrist by trade, is that correct?

DANIEL: That is right, and I do not know how anyone could imagine they want to work with feet the rest of their life, right?

JACK: I do not understand. I am a physio by trade and you know, cutting grown toenails and fungus off people's feet does not sound like my idea of fun but each to their own. So tell me then if that's the case.

DANIEL: You know, you know as much of anything and most health professionals as well, that it is not so much about what you are doing. It is not so much about the feet. It is about the people that are attached to the feet, right?

JACK: Right.

DANIEL: And as health professionals, we all got into this because we wanted to make a difference for people. We wanted to help people. And, you know, that really resonates with me, that "Yeah, okay!" so I choose Podiatry as my avenue to be able to help people much like you

choose physiotherapy as your avenue to help people. Of course I wanted to be a physiotherapist but I missed by a mark so -.

JACK: Everyone wants to be a physiotherapist, let us be honest.

DANIEL: Everyone wants to be a physio. That is right, but you know, this is where we are. But no, I have really enjoyed being a podiatrist and helping people in terms of the clinic, in the clinic and the people that I see one-on-one, but now also moving into the space where helping other business owners as well. So that is being quite a journey to get there.

JACK: All right. So let us go back to the start. So, you started your clinic, Posture Podiatry, from scratch in Adelaide, is that right?

DANIEL: Yes, that is right. I started Posture Podiatry back in early 2009 so just after the GFC hit, and of course, thinking about wonderful places to open the clinic. There were many signs up on the road and I thought, "Gee, each one of these places could be a wonderful place to open a clinic." Not realizing that an indication of a poor economy is a whole lot of "for lease" signs.

However, going there a little green, realizing that I wanted to create a podiatry clinic that was the premiere podiatry clinic in hometown here in Adelaide in South Australia. So I started up by trying to make it look nice, try to really get a good look and feel for the place and really trying, and take this clinic somewhere special.

JACK: Yeah, it is exciting. And, did it get somewhere special? I assume that you did not just hang the shingle up the front and people dripped in. Did it take off?

DANIEL: Look, it did and I was really pleased with the way things were going at first, and I really sort of measured what I thought my success as a successful health professional was in terms of how booked out I was. And at once, I was booked out four months in advance, so I am seeing people up until midnight sometimes just because there were no other times in the day to be able to see these people.

But I quickly realized that I came to a point where the business is quite heavily reliant on me, especially when it came about time for the birth of my first daughter. And I kind of committed a cardinal sin here. See I was given some really good advice at the beginning. And the advice that I was given was "Do not put your name on the sign," because if you put your name on the sign, then the business becomes heavily reliant on you. And I thought, 'Yep, that is not going to be me. I am not going to - this is going to be a clinic that is going to help lots of people. It is going to help other practitioners to be able to help lots of people and it is not going to be reliant on me.'

There were few indicators of that at the beginning with the equipment that we got. I do not know if I am ashamed to admit this but I spent a thousand dollars per waiting room chair. You know, I

wanted this clinic to really look the part, and really do a good job. But not everyone needs to do that obviously. But that was sort of the level I was thinking, the vision that I have for the clinic.

Like most health professionals, you know, they want to create something that is special, that is different, that actually helps them to create those great client experiences and become a successful business. But when it came time for the birth of my first daughter, and the doctor said, "Hey, it will be good if you take a two weeks off to enjoy the birth and be there for your wife," and all that. I thought, yeah, I mean I really want to do that, of course. That is why I created a business, so that I have the freedom to be able to do that, the freedom to spend as much time with my family.

JACK: Yes, of course.

DANIEL: But I realized that, I do not know if that business could actually survive a few weeks without me there.

JACK: Interesting. So even if you said not to have Daniel Gibbs Podiatry and have everything revolve around you, you did not realize that until you had an impending birth coming that everything did actually revolve around you. Is that [inaudible]?

DANIEL: That is right. It was that moment where things had - I had to take that break. I know a lot of people come to this point as well where either they have a baby themselves so they have to take a maternity leave and then like force into this realization that the business is quite reliant on them.

All people who get to that point of burn out. Now for me it was not burnout; I was happy and motivated by seeing lots of people and being really busy. But this is sensibility around running a business. A lot of people get into business because they want to have the freedom, to have time, to be able to be in control of their own time. And maybe an element is also that want to be able to have more money as well by being successful in business. That was never a big thing for me. It was more about having the freedom and time and the ability to be in control of my own diary. But then, realizing that by getting into business I actually lost that, the very first thing [inaudible] I lost that. That was the big sort of knock on the - that reminder of what have you created for yourself.

JACK: It is interesting when you said 'create for ourselves', how often does it seem like we get into business but at the end of the day we end up just having a job? We work for ourselves. We are our own boss and we are a pretty crummy boss. You cannot even take time off from your own job. That sounds like - well you have a job but not a business, right?

DANIEL: Well yeah, that is right. And it is funny because business would be a lot easier if you did not have clients and you did not have staff.

JACK: Just profit, just profit.

DANIEL: So right. But what we do when we become business owners is we actually - we take on a whole position description, a whole new job description that is outside of what you have been trained for as a health professional. You do not get to trained in the requirements in the position of how to be a business owner. And so often what happens is we do the best we can as a health professional and we do what we know. We fulfill the requirements of being a health professional and that job description. And unfortunately, we do not fulfill the requirements effectively of being a good business owner.

And so where I was about time, was yes we had a good clinic, yes it was doing pretty well, yes we were seeing lots of clients and having great outcomes. But because the business was reliant on me, I did not realize that I had actually become the bottleneck. It would never go beyond what I could do physically.

JACK: Of course.

DANIEL: The time that I could invest. So when decisions had to come through me, when I had to sign off on things, when I had to make sure - when I was the one reaching out to all the referrers, when I was the one doing all the meetings, you know that, that meant that I became the bottleneck. And while I had other practitioners working there, they would kind of twiddling their thumbs and it is that common thing, you know. I have clients that I am seeing and I really want to be able to pass them on to other practitioners who are working for me but the clients would come back to me and say, "Hi Daniel, that was great. But is the not just the same as seeing you. You know, I would rather keep seeing you." And I think, " Oh that is wonderful. Thank you, but that does not really help me in the long run. I want to you to be able to do better."

And look, once I realized that I was the bottleneck, I had to put in place some system to be out to enable the business to work. Initially, while I was away for that three weeks after my child was born, and then from there onwards, it was an interesting time.

JACK: So where do you start when that, you know, nine, eight, seven-month deadline is pending, where do you start? As a business owner, what did you do?

DANIEL: Yeah. So for me, I had six months. And I thought, in this six months, what I need to do is that I need to make it so that the other practitioners - sorry - my clients will happily see the other practitioners instead of me. So that was my number one focus and the way I did that was I started to think of all these scripts, these spiels that I use when it comes to introducing treatment plans, when it comes to introducing various avenues of treatment with clients. So for example if I see a new client and most health professionals have a little script or a spiel that you use when you are introducing the treatment that you are about to give them. When it comes to foot

mobilization or orthotics or all the little things that we did in the clinic, I had kind of rehearsed script in my head that had been developed over ten or so years of being a practitioner.

And these scripts, I realized, are actually quite valuable. And if I could write them down and train my team to use those scripts, then effectively my clients will be talking like me when they go and see them. And so to be less of a difference between the care that they are providing, they might continue to see those practitioners. So I started off by identifying which scripts were going to be useful; a new patient's spiel, different treatment protocols, and just sort of pick the main ones and put them down on paper and workshop those with my team. That was the first thing.

JACK: That is interesting. And there will be a future podcast episode where we will dig into those individual scripts and also how to manage that change, and how to train your team, get your team on board to be able to implement these scripts without it feeling robotic or forced. So make sure you keep your ears peeled, listeners, for those future podcast episodes on those scripts and how to implement. Was there anything else that you did as well, Daniel?

DANIEL: Yes, the second thing. The first one was with the practitioners. The second one was with the admin team. And what I needed to do is make sure that everything that needed be done in a day was going to be done, without me having to check that they are being done, because I was kind of sick of putting out [inaudible] and I did not want to have to monitor and say, "Oh, was this sent out? Was this done?"

So basically what I did was I put on a post note, an individual post note for every single procedure in the clinic. And it filled my desk at home, which is quite a large desk and it went up the wall, and it went up the side wall and I had post-it notes everywhere with all these admin tasks that need to be done in the clinic.

Everything, from replacing the water in the flowers, to you know, following up on reports. So just, there are the important tasks, there are the administration tasks. I would like to talk about it in terms of, you have got a \$10 an hour work which are the things that anyone can really do like collecting the mail or like what I have said before replacing the water in the flowers. You have got the \$100 an hour work, which is your actual consulting work that you are doing and then \$1000 an hour work which is your strategic alliances. And there are harder ones to hand over to other people - a meeting with a local gym where you are creating that, uhm you know, strategic partnership with that as a future referral avenue but that is what we are doing.

And I had to actually try and work out a way to make this work and that is what we did with those systems. So we moved from just the post it notes to actually putting everything onto a task list. And we've talked in previous podcast episodes about using Asana for task list and making sure that we can actually - you will have those tasks in place. But from the practitioner's talking like me with the clients, to the admin team, making sure that everything was being done that was enough to get me through the three weeks. And Jack, on the back end of this three weeks that I was away, I came back to a team that were kind of motivated to a level where they

were keen to prove that the business was okay without my heavy involvement and I could actually let the team go and thing would still run smoothly. And I am grateful for them to be saying that.

JACK: Daniel it is fascinating. Yeah, and to do that within six months is absolutely brilliant. So the business did not implode. You were able to transition patients to see other therapists. You were able to empower your admin team to get everything done and be empowered to take control of the clinic. So then, what happens to Posture Podiatry after the birth of your child? What was the next step then for Posture Podiatry?

DANIEL: So the next step, we entered an era where we focused entirely on client experience. So what happened here was because we had our basic benchmark systems down and in place, and most things did not really slip through the cracks anymore, we had confidence in the services that we were delivering and so now was time to really start to bring on those elements of the client experience model.

So we started implementing herbal tea, mineral salt foot bars with essential oils. We started implementing, you know, instead of just a normal glass of water, the chilled sparkling water instead with a rolled out towel and a bit of hand cream served on a silver tray. It is the little things like that that makes a difference and the responses we started to get was "Wow! If you are willing to serve this quality tea, you must be a really good podiatrist!" And so this whole element around the service we were offering on top of the outcomes we were getting from our clients then lead to people becoming wowed by the experience and engaging more and becoming raving fans of the business.

That then lead to us being nominated for the Telstra Business Awards and we were very fortunate and very proud to have the top business in SA. We won the Telstra Business Awards for South Australia in our category here and that is something that has really driven us to continue trying to create these wonderful client experiences and deliver outstanding care outcomes for our clients.

JACK: Fascinating. And still well-known, well-regarded for that client experience and the results you get. I think couple of important points of note through that Daniel, before you took some leave, you had a couple of practitioners but just how much work were you doing in terms of maybe percentage of billables or client seeing - it is not as if you were on the way out already is that right?

DANIEL: Yeah that is right. Over this period of developing our client experience model, I actually went through process of coming off the tools completely. It took me twelve months, I should have done it in six months but coming off the tools means no longer practicing as a practitioner or as a podiatrist in my clinic.

So when this began I was sort of responsible for about 80% of the income for the business. I was doing ridiculous hours, although I felt like it was under control, but you know, it is amazing what we tell ourselves when we are really busy, isn't it? But 80% of the income for the business, the business heavily relied on me. Over that twelve months, I reduced so that my income-producing amount in terms of the day-to-day income was zero so from eighty percent to zero in twelve months. But it was interesting watching the numbers as I start focusing more in that \$1000 an hour work that I have mentioned before. It really did turn into a \$1000 an hour work. The business had not only replaced my income in that time but also had grown by 20%. Now, here I was earning the same income as I was as a practicing practitioner while not practicing at all, and the business had grown 20% in that time period. So I put that down to the fact that we were getting things right in terms of the client experience and when you deliver great client experiences and you deliver them consistently, the business does well as a result.

And it is not always for everyone having a million dollar business or being successful on money sort of thing. The thing that makes me feel good here is that we are actually making a bigger difference for the clients that we are seeing. We are able to help more people. We are able to do it in a great way. And after winning the award and getting a few phone calls from other health professionals saying, "Hey, can you help us?" "Can you help me?" "What did you do?" "What systems did you put in place?" so on and so forth. It has kind of lead to the birth of Clinic Mastery as we see it now. And so I am forever grateful for that process that I went through to do that.

It is not for everything - everyone though, Jack. Not everyone needs to come off the tools. I think just being able to have the choice of being able to choose whether you want that freedom in your business or not, that is the key element. If you want to consult or not consult, you should be free to make that choice. If you want to go on holidays, I mean, I have just been on a two-month holiday with my family, traveling in a caravan up in the East Coast of Australia. It has been wonderful time, but certainly would not have been able to do that had I not gone through the process of systemizing things and letting the business run on autopilot.

JACK: Wow. It is a fascinating discussion, isn't it? I am sure there'll be future episodes around your role shifting from being the senior or the primary practitioner in a clinic to leading your team, and I guess, you know, you might have been able to help 40, 60, 80 and maybe a 100 clients per week as a primary practitioner then going to lead a team that is able to deliver, you know, hundreds of consults per week and being able to help hundreds of people per week as a shifting role. But I have found such a rewarding [inaudible]. Likewise I have just come back from a snowboarding trip in Japan because I am no longer bound by the diary of having to see clients directly but able to lead and empower my team to make a difference in people's lives and create amazing experiences. It is a fascinating place to be, right?

DANIEL: Absolutely! And it speaks to my core purpose as well of being able to help people. I can only help so many people one-on-one, but if I can empower my team to be out to help more people or if I can empower other business owners to be able to help more people. It is just so in

alignment with what I love doing and my core purpose, speaking on a selfish level here. It is just so much more fulfilling and rewarding.

JACK: Yeah that is fantastic. Look Daniel, we might look towards wrapping it up there but that has been a fantastic insight into a practitioner who is seeing heaps of clients to having six months to get off the tools, now creating an amazing clinic that delivers these mind-blowing experiences for your clients and that success now has multiplied across the countless clinic owners we were able to help through Clinic Mastery.

If you have been listening to this episode and you would love to grab the show notes. You can get to our website at clinicmastery.com/podcast. This is [Episode 004](#). You can find all the notes there.

If you would like to learn more about Clinic Mastery and how we help other clinic owners develop thriving clinics by creating amazing client experiences, you can find all that out over at clinicmastery.com/growmyclinic.

If you found this episode interesting, useful, helpful, maybe insightful, a little bit different today, we would really appreciate your honest review and rating in iTunes, Stitcher or wherever else you listen. They really help us to be able to help more people, so an honest review and rating would be fantastic for that. Make sure you check out show notes and how we can help you further at Clinic Mastery. Daniel, thank you for your time today.

DANIEL: It has been a pleasure. Thank you guys.

JACK: And we will be with you again soon on another episode of the Grow My Clinic podcast from Clinic Mastery.

This is the Grow My Clinic Podcast by Clinic Mastery where we help you deliver amazing client experiences to grow your clinic.

[OUTRO MUSIC]