

The Bay Area Beacon

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What Makes Me Passionate About My Work

A Valentine's Day Special

This month is our one year anniversary of our newsletter! I appreciate all of you for reading, and thank you for helping us reach our target goal this last quarter. We just added two great dental practices to our customer list!

I've found that adding a limit of two new doctors per quarter works best. That's not because I want to leave anyone out! I take the quality of our work and your experience when working with us extremely seriously — too much work too fast can easily alter the quality of our work and the service we can provide to our customers.

And it has nothing to do with hard work. I've been in this field so long that I understand the limits to how far the workload of the equipment and the actual manual labor can be pushed. Hard work is a core part of how I understand everything involved with running a dental lab. I remember when I first got into the dental program, and school all of a sudden no longer felt like school. It was because I was moving toward my purpose of learning this industry and of owning and running a business someday.

When I first got hired here at Berkeley Dental Laboratory in 1992, during my last year of school, I was so excited to see all the different positions and stages to learn in a dental lab. Just like school, work did not feel like work. I knew after my first few months of working here that in order to advance in my career and to help us stand out from other labs, it

was going to take a lot more than just being great with my hands, which was what they mainly taught in school. Just as important as it was for our doctors to receive the best products from us, our doctors valued the relationship and trust we built together with them. I was so fortunate to have started at the entry level position and to do the daily pickups and deliveries. It was great to regularly see our doctors and their staff. It allowed me to understand their needs and play a big part with building our connections.

It energized me to work harder. I used to push myself to finish all my work early every day and then go to the owner to ask, "What can I learn next?"

I slowly began to take the workload off of all the other positions' work for each day. I remember coworkers asking me why I was working so fast, as if I were crazy for doing it.

Maybe it was tough for them to understand why I worked so hard. But I wanted to learn everything about this business as possible. I quickly realized from day one that my ambitions made me different than everyone else.

Through the years, I learned every stage, and eventually the owner trusted me to check to make sure that the quality of every case was up to our standards before they were allowed to be delivered to our dentists' office.

Every few months for years, I would ask the previous owner if he was ready to



Photo from 20 years ago (2001) of me working alongside the previous laboratory owner

sell the business to me. It all started as a casual joke, but then 16 years later in 2008, that day finally came when he was ready to step away and I was ready to take over.

This Valentine's Day, I've thought about what makes me so passionate about my work, and it's definitely many little things, but the big piece that's most important is this: I love owning a lab and having all our dentists and their staff as customers and friends that last a lifetime! I get to put all of my knowledge to use and ensure all of our products are of the highest quality available. I work every day to provide consistent quality products and to make sure you have a great personal customer experience with every case we work on together!

Thanks so much for reading this, and have a great February!

-Darrell Lee