

# A matter of **trust**

By Danny Chan

## The only ASX-listed dental group in Australia, 1300 SMILES, chooses 'trust' over 'transaction' for their equipment supply.

One of the least pronounced tenets of running a successful practice is to maintain a secure and trusted supplier relationship. Yet businesses that consistently expand and scale their operations are often able to do so because a reliable supplier has given them the freedom to better focus on their services and customers.

It is not surprising that the practices that thrive are usually the same ones that move their supplier relationships from a simple purchase function to one that's built on mutual trust, honesty and integrity.

Such is the complementary relationship that 1300SMILES and their long-serving equipment supplier, Ampac Dental, have cultivated. The element of 'trust' even played a definitive role in how the two organisations met – through the recommendation of a common friend and mutually trusted technician, Rolf Mann.

### The go-between

Ampac's founding director, Mo credits Mann's thoroughness in stripping down and investigating the dental units during their tour of the Swident factory in Bologna, Italy, as the pivotal reason for the NSW-based supplier taking up the European chair dealership.

Dr Daryl Holmes, Founder Managing Director of 1300SMILES Ltd, who got to know Mann as he began a private practice in North Queensland in 1992, considered the veteran technician a valued colleague, friend and mentor.

When Rolf Mann passed away in 2015 at the age of 74, both men eulogised him in an obituary they placed in the Australasian Magazine.

Rolf's trusted endorsement of Ampac Dental's services has been duly reciprocated in an enduring supplier relationship that has seen 1300SMILES through more than a decade of immense growth.

### Built to last

Over the last 17 years, Ampac has been equipping 1300SMILES with treatment units like the Swident Friend-Easy and Swident Partner as well as Trident Rix DC 70 x-ray machines.

In particular, the Friend-Easy model has become the perennial choice for many 1300SMILES surgeries. The group practice has 29 locations spread across Queensland and four in New South Wales.

Natalie Rawlings, the Procurement and Compliance Manager at 1300SMILES, says the repeat ordering of the Swident dental units – averaging 4-5 units per location – boils down to three reasons: "Great price, great support and easy to maintain".

"Ampac is very competitive on price," says Rawlings, "The equipment is very durable and cost effective to maintain."

The Procurement Manager, who was already working in 1300SMILES when Ampac first came on board, has nothing but praise for the supplier.



"I would highly recommend their services," she says, "they are wonderful to work with.

"An approachable and solutions-orientated team, they will always go above and beyond to help and support our needs."

In terms of back-end support, Rawlings says 1300SMILES has absolute confidence in Ampac's "very thorough" staff training programs that has produced reliable technicians in the field, that are well-drilled in every aspect of their product lines including repairs, maintenance and installation.

"Due to our geographically dispersed locations," she adds, "Ampac has been able to train and deploy qualified technicians to ensure the best and quickest service is available to us."

### SMILES for Miles

After beginning private dental practice in Ayr and Home Hill, North Queensland, in 1991, whilst still in the RAAF, Dr Holmes has gone on to acquire and set up dental surgeries at breakneck speed – in



the Burdekin region, Townsville, Cairns and now throughout all of Queensland's major centres.

More recently, 1300SMILES expanded nationally by acquiring large, established, multi-dentist Practices in Adelaide's CBD, central Sydney. In May 2014, 1300SMILES acquired BOH Dental, an iconic 38 year old, seven-partner (10+ practitioners in total) practice in Brisbane's CBD.

Perhaps indicative of Ampac's consistent support, 1300SMILES has been able to expand its footprint steadily over the years – never missing a beat on the equipment side.

One of Ampac Dental's strengths,

says Elizabeth Bozinovska, is the nimble quality of being a mid-sized supplier.

"There are no bureaucratic procedures to overcome at Ampac," she says.

"Both Mo and I have always been the ones meeting customers and looking after their needs, and this hasn't changed for the last 14 years since I joined the team. Mo has been around this block much longer than I have!"

"Our customers feel a sense of continuity dealing with us, instead of having to deal with a revolving door of sales agents that is common with bigger companies."

The lack of hierarchical channels means that quick decisions can be made, leading to speedy turnarounds and shorter client response time. Due to its fast-moving inventory, Ampac is able to maintain a healthy level of stock in their warehouse.

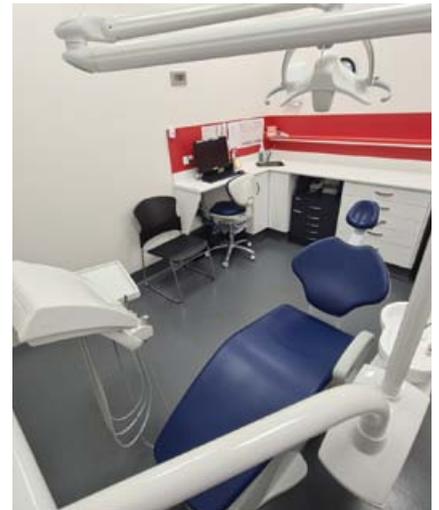
It's not uncommon for the supplier to deliver a dental unit within a few days of the order being placed – sometimes even within 24 hours.

"They have a very quick turnaround for equipment supplies," Rawlings concurs, "which is very useful to ensure zero to minimal downtime in a practice."

#### Shared values

As Ampac Dental turns 30 next year, Elizabeth says that her company would take the opportunity to celebrate the many milestones and achievements over the years – including the clientele relationships that they have painstakingly cultivated.

Needless to say, 1300SMILES would



rank pretty high up on their thank-you list. As with any genuine, long-lasting collaborations the feelings would be mutual.

Asked what has sustained their great working relationship, Natalie's response shows what successful B2B partnerships are made of – a great work ethic that underlines a strong alignment of organisational values.

"The honesty and support we get from Ampac, and their willingness to consistently work towards a quick, effective solution is what has kept our relationship going for so many years," Natalie summarises.

"Ampac Dental's values are very much aligned with those of 1300SMILES – honesty and integrity are the first to come to mind." ♦

  
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