

Introduction: Welcome to the Enchanting Lawyer Podcast, the show that walks you step by step to improving strategies you can use today to grow your business. We show you how being kind, useful, and, of course, enchanting will bring you more clients and build a thriving community.

Now here's your host from sunny San Diego, Jacob Sapochnick.

Jacob: Hello everybody, this is Jacob Sapochnick with the Enchanting Lawyer podcast. This is a show where we interview the most inspiring entrepreneurs from all over the world who share their stories with us, help us become more successful, and inspire us to be better at what we do.

And today I have -- Well, I think the guest that we have today is somebody very, very special in many ways. The work that he does, the person he became, and the people that he inspires and changed their life. I have Dr. Bill Dorfman here with me.

Dr. Bill Dorfman is -- past 30 years he's been one of the most successful dentist in Los Angeles area. He's been featured in the TV show Extreme Makeover." He's worked with many, many, many celebrities improving their smiles and he is the founder of LEAP Foundation, changing the lives of youths all over the world here in Los Angeles in this unique program here. I'm honored to have Dr. Dorfman here in the show.

Thank you for coming and sharing your time with us.

William: Thanks for having me, Jacob.

Jacob: Like I told you before we started, we got connected by a very special person as well who's been a rising young man helping other people to become better at what we do. The more I was reading about you I realize that one of the things that made you successful is the fact that you've been giving and sharing your knowledge, your passion, and helping others for the past 30 years.

Before we dive in to the show and talk about what you do and some of the things that I would like my audience to know, why don't you share with us a bit about how you started, why did you become a dentist, and kind of, in a nutshell, where you are today.

William: Well, why I started LEAP or why I started dentistry?

Jacob: I want to know first about your professional life. Why you wanted to become a dentist. Because I know that you come from humble beginnings. Just a regular guy [unclear 00:02:29].

William: I do.

Jacob: Yeah.

William: I guess it was my fate. I was two-and-a-half years old, I fell down, I hit my baby teeth so hard that instead of knocking them out, I actually pushed them up into the gums and had multiple surgeries in order to ensure that my permanent teeth were growing normally and all that.

And we just had a really great family dentist. Most kids would probably be afraid. I wasn't. I was actually intrigued by the whole process. Throughout the years I had to have multiple procedures and I thought, you know, this is a really cool profession. It could really help people.

I don't know. It just stuck. When most five-year old little boys wanted to be a fireman or army guy, I wanted to fix their teeth. It just never wavered. I mean my whole life I've always wanted to be a dentist. Which actually made growing up kind of easy because I just figured out what path I needed to take and took it.

Jacob: And so you became a dentist. I read somewhere that it wasn't easy for you to go to school because it was expensive so you were able to get some sort of a scholarship from UCLA and eventually you were able to complete your studies.

William: I did. I was very fortunate I got a scholarship to UCLA which paid for my education. And then I got accepted into dental school. I went to, what I consider to be the best dental school in the world, University of the Pacific. It's now called the Dugoni School of Dentistry. And I'm very good friends with the Dean, Art Dugoni. It's the dean of the dental school. They just actually moved the dental school to its new location so that was really fun. I went up there for the inauguration.

I had a great time in dental school. I graduated dental school and then I did a two-year residency in Switzerland. I think that that was the point in my life where I really started to learn what it took to be successful. I'll give you a short little anecdotal story about that.

There were 400 applicants for this position in Switzerland, they only took one person. There was no reason in the world why they should hire me. I didn't speak French. I had zero experience. I'm coming straight out of school. But I really wanted the job.

So I had every doctor that I ever worked with in dental school write a letter of recommendation. On top of that, I started calling the director of the clinic on a weekly basis, asking him how it was going and how the selection process work.

About a month before I graduated dental school I realized there was, like, a snowball's chance in, you know where, that I'd get this job. So I called them up

and say, "Can I take you to lunch?" He said, "Lunch? You're in San Francisco." I said, "I know but I'll fly out."

Now, the fact that I said I'd even fly out was kind of crazy because I had no money. So I literally took out a loan, I flew out to Switzerland, and I met this guy for lunch. I think the fact that I was the only person that did that kind of motivated him to hire me. But he still doesn't trust me.

He said, "We don't have a position for two months." I said that's fine because I just graduated school. I thought it would be a great time to travel through Europe. Then he would test me and say, "Next week call me Wednesday at 3:00," and then a week later Thursday. That was before cell phone so it wasn't easy. I had to go to the post office. But I did it, and he hired me, and it was great.

I stayed there for two years. I learned how to speak French. I learned how to ski. I learned how to do better dentistry. And then I came back and I set up an office right where I'm sitting here, actually, in Century City. I'm in the LEAP office here but I have my dental offices upstairs and I've been here 30 years almost.

Jacob: As I'm listening to your story, I'm thinking I just spent a few days with John Assaraf who was featured in the movie *The Secret*. He was sharing a story saying that when he started he was only 19 years old. He spent the last savings to work with a mentor. He actually paid time to spend with this guy who gave him the foundation for his success.

The fact that he borrowed money that he had, none, to be taught by somebody who was very successful at this age, gave him the foundation to become who he is today. That just kind of tells me you had the vision already from a young age.

You came back to the US and you started your practice, what were some of the things that you've done to make yourself different from all these other dentists? There's hundreds of dentists in Los Angeles in the area.

William: Well, mentors are the key and in fact that's a very good part of LEAP. Our program culminates on Friday at the end of a week. I'll talk about LEAP a little bit later on.

Jacob: Of course.

William: It basically culminates in a mentor workshop where I get a hundred different professionals from all walks of life. They sit at the table and students have the opportunity to talk to doctors and lawyers and every kind of profession that we could find.

But what I did was I looked for the most successful dentist in LA. And I called them up and I asked them if I could watch them, if I could chat with them. They became my mentors.

I was very fortunate. I opened up an office. I worked with a man named Stanley Vogel, who passed away, who was the first dentist to the stars and a man named Howard or [Bud 00:08:04] Hoffman who was also a great cosmetic dentist.

But, you know, I looked at every single successful dental office in LA and then I took what I could. I tried to take the best parts of each of them and make, like, one super office. That was my goal.

I was going to buy [Bud 00:08:27] Hoffman's office and I had been with him two years. One day he came in and said, "You don't need to buy my office." He said, "You have more patients than I do. So your practice is growing faster than mine. Open your own." So I did.

I'll never forget. My first month in practice, I made \$18,000. I thought that was amazing. I grew up in a very, very humble household. My dad didn't even make that much money the whole year I applied to college. So I was excited, you know? From there it just kind of exploded.

And then right around 1990 I was very fortunate. I met a guy who became my best friend, Robert Hayman, and another good friend of mine Dave [Doster 00:09:15] and we formed Discus Dental. Discus Dental became the largest tooth whitening company in the world. We created NiteWhite and Daywhite and Zoom and then we acquired BriteSmile and brought that into that product line.

But that company, in its first year in sales, we did \$2 million in sales. Then next year we did \$4 million, then \$8 million, then \$16 million. It just kept growing and growing and growing. And at that point I realized I needed to go back to school.

Kids come to LEAP and they say "Dr. Bill, what made you successful? I say, "There's two things. If you can take these two things home with you, at the end of the day, I'll feel I did my job." Number one, don't wait for opportunities. Make them.

People sit around waiting and waiting and waiting for things that never happen in their lives. I don't. The best opportunities I've ever had in my life were once that I made, I went after, and I found.

Number two, when you get an opportunity, don't take it, excel in it; master it. Because, you know, here I am in this company. I see how viable this company is. I have a great dental background. I didn't know how to read a spreadsheet. I sat in board meetings feeling like an idiot.

So I went back to UCLA and I took business classes at night and it wasn't easy, you know? I had a wife, I had kids, I worked a full day. It wasn't easy. But I knew it was important and I knew at the end of the day, when I wanted to retire, I wasn't going to be able to live the kind of life I wanted to live just as a dentist. So this was an opportunity for me to do more, you know?

We go along, and Discus is growing, and we're at \$14 million, \$18 million. We kind of plateaued in about \$76 million in sales and we couldn't break that. There were all these competitive products out there, good products, but over-the-counter products, take home products, other whitening products.

In 2003 I had a great opportunity. One day I was sitting in my office and I got a phone call from ABC and they asked me if I would be on a show called Extreme Makeover. Now, reality TV hadn't really started yet and I didn't know if they were going to exploit these patients, if this is a good thing or a bad thing. It was kind of a risk.

So I went over there and I met with them. I could tell that these people had their heart in the right place. Then they asked me to do a screen test. I'm like "Screen test? I'm not an actor, I'm a dentist," you know?

Jacob: Right.

William: But I had been on other TV shows. So I kind of had like a demo tape so I sent that to them and they took me on. It was really, really fortunate.

That year, between 2003 and 2004, our sales went from \$76 million to \$101 million. Then the next year to \$135 million, and then at our peak in 2007, we did over \$176 million in sales. At that point, we felt it was a good time to sell the company. A few things happened along the way and we actually ended up selling it in 2010.

One of the things I love about the fact that we sold it in 2010 is we sold it on 10-10-10. October 10 at 10am in the morning. One of the things we do with LEAP with the kids is we always talk about being a 10. Hanging out with people that are 10's; trying to be a 10 in your life.

So that next year, in 2011, when I did my kind of annual [unclear 00:13:02], I had a huge 10 up on the board. I said, "You guys want to hear the perfect 10?" I told them about the whole story of the sale of my company.

Jacob: Wow! That's a great story. I was going to ask you how you came on that show but that's a great example of how you did it.

Before I ask you about the other things, let's talk about LEAP. You became a successful doctor, you started the company. Why did you decide to start LEAP and where the idea came from?

William: Well, I've been involved in philanthropy throughout my life. One of the dental organizations that I'm very, very involved in and love, it's called The Crown Council. The Crown Council has an annual meeting and they're committed to teams, building teams, working your office, helping you become a better you, and kind of everything except actual clinical dentistry. They do mission trips throughout the world and I've been on several of them.

The reason I became involved with The Crown Council is because about 18 years ago they called us up and they told us they want to do a campaign called Smiles for Life. The idea with Smiles for Life was patients would come in and whiten their teeth and instead of writing a check to the dentist, they would write it to Smiles for Life. So they needed a whitening product.

So they asked if they could buy our whitening product at our cost. But when we heard what they were doing we said, "You know what, you don't need to buy it. We'll give it to you." So we donated all the whitening product for Smiles for Life and we've raised over \$35 million with them.

But Smiles for Life and Dental Boot Camp are kind of all connected. The Crown Council does this thing called Dental Boot Camp. It's basically where you take your dental team and they teach you not just how to be a better dental office but how to be a better person, how to be more organized, how to be successful in life.

That became so popular that a lot of the dentists said, "I wish there was something like this for my kids." So Eagle University was born. I was asked to come and speak as the mentor at Eagle University and kind of tell the story of my success and the story of Discus and kind of how I got to be where I got to be.

Of all the philanthropic things I'd done, that one kind of touch my heart the most. Because I got to see these kids grow, I got to see these kids really become amazing kids, you know? The things that we taught them, to watch them implement that, and go from good to great and great to amazing was so exciting for me.

Unfortunately, about 10 years ago, the founder of The Crown Council and also Eagle University, passed away. He was in his mid 80s and Walter Hailey passed away and Eagle University's kind of disappear. I called his business partner, Steven Anderson, he was doing that with him, and said we need to bring it back.

We revamped it. We named it LEAP. We made it a non-profit. Our first year we had 100 kids, our second year we had 200 kids. Every year we had 100 more kids. We kind of plateaued at 500; didn't want more because the rooms that we use at UCLA can't hold it. But ever since then, we've been holding LEAP every summer. This next summer it's going to be July 12 to the 18th.

The students come from all over the world. They live in the dorms at UCLA. We got 50 kids from Australia. We got kids from China. We got kids from Israel, from Egypt. I mean you name it. It's like a mini UN. They spend a week there, kids 15 to 24. We run two programs at the same time. We'll have a high school program and a college program. 90% of the time they're all in the same room but a lot of times we separate them.

Our goal is to teach them skills that they need to be successful in life that they don't learn in school: time management, money management. We teach them public speaking, how to fill out a job application, how to write a resume. We teach them gratitude, we teach them etiquette. You don't learn this stuff in school but you need it in life.

And so that's what we do at LEAP. We teach them these skills and they're with us for a whole week but that's not all. Because when we finish, we stay in touch with them for a whole year after LEAP. So, kids will come to the program, we put them in a group of 10 with the coach and the coaches are people that have gone through the program and have excelled in the program and excelled in life.

Because if our coaches graduate and then we interview them, they haven't really done anything but, like, work at Starbucks for a year, they're not going to come back [unclear 00:18:13]. They need to go out and do the things they said they were going to do. We hold them accountable. We put the kids in a group and then that coach will stay in touch with them throughout the year.

Jacob: What I was reading about LEAP, one of the things that I found very interesting -- and I want you to tell me more about this -- is in addition to teaching them all these principles, you also mentioned one very important thing and it says "Be aware of who you surround yourself with. Make sure you surround yourself people that will elevate you as oppose to take you down." Because a lot of these kids, they have friends that are no good, they get involved in activity that is not helpful.

William: Right.

Jacob: How do you make them, first of all, find those people, identify who they are, and make sure they continue to do that?

William: So, one of the things we do at LEAP is we strive to teach the kids to act like a 10, to walk like a 10, and then surround themselves with people that are 10's. Because if you surround yourself with people that are 2's -- we call them turkeys. If you surround yourself with turkeys, you become a turkey. We want them to be eagles. We want them to soar with eagles.

And so we literally have them sit down and write out the people's names who are bad influences in their life, and we encourage them to get those people out of their life. To try and surround themselves with their new friends that they're meeting at LEAP and people that are going to help elevate them. That's why we expose them to mentors as well, you know.

I'm just going to tell you. As a parent, if you want to know what kind of kid you're raising, look at their friends because birds of a feather do flock together. So if your kids are hanging out with a bunch of dropouts and druggies and all that, you need to do something to change that environment because that's toxic for a kid.

Jacob: Absolutely. Another thing that you do, you bring those celebrities, lawyers, doctors, successful people, and the kids can ask them, for 30 minutes, any question. What are the most common question they get asked, those celebrities, those high achievers?

William: Well, what we do with the celebrities is a little bit different. Basically at LEAP we have speakers come all the time. And so I ask a lot of my patients that are committed to helping kids to come. And they're amazing. I've had Usher, I've had Eva Longoria, I've had Paula Abdul, Kevin Nealon, Seth Green, Mary Murphy; we even had our mayor, Eric Garcetti. And we've had the mayor of Perth, Lisa Scaffidi, and she brings almost 50 kids with her every year. But we take these leaders because, you know, kids think Kelly Osbourne has had a charm life. She hasn't had a charm life.

Jacob: Absolutely.

William: She had a really hard life. They think that celebrities have it so easy, they don't. So I like to have celebrities come up and talk about the things they did that made them successful.

But I think the most common question that kids will ask mentors when they're sitting at the mentor workshop is what made you successful? I mean I asked Donald Trump when I interviewed him, he said, "Love what you do." That's important. But everybody has a little bit different take on it.

And then specifically, if there's a kid sitting with a mentor who is actually doing the job they want to do, they'll ask some questions like what do you love about your work? What don't you love about your work?

But I think the best thing is to let these young students sit and watch the mentors outward. To go and shadow them in their offices and really spend time with them before they make a commitment to become a lawyer, become a dentist, become whatever they want to become, they should really spend some time seeing what it's like.

Jacob: Right. I know you have a program part of this LEAP that is called How to Be a Gentleman. I found it to be very interesting because nobody really pays attention to this and it's very important part of a young person's life. Because if you don't teach somebody how to be a gentleman in early age, how do you expect them to become a productive, respectful adult. What do you do in that program? I'm curious.

William: We started the program and we do this mentor workshop that I told you about. We have them all wear business clothes. Well, the first year we did it, I realize that 90% of the young men there couldn't tie a tie. And then when you go a little bit deeper and you realize that 60% of the kids that come to LEAP come on scholarship. A lot of them don't have father figures in their house. They don't have male figures in their house. They don't know how to be a gentleman. They never learned it. So we talk about that.

We talk about business [audio cuts]. There's a lot of things that young men need a father figure or a male figure in their life to help them with and a lot of them don't have it. So we presented that to LEAP and it's always been a hit every year.

It's fun to watch these kids just soak this up. Teach them -- If you go to a business dinner and you don't know which fork to use, which knife. I mean these kids, they don't know, and so we try and prepare them.

It's even as easy as when you come and stay at somebody's house, you bring a gift, you know? You bring flowers or you bring a dessert or you bring something. If you stay overnight in somebody's house, you leave the room immaculate. It's not a hotel. You don't leave towels on the floor. Even though they're probably going to wash the sheets, I always tell them, make the bed, make the room, look like it looked when you left. But, you know, they'll do it if they know it. A lot of them don't do it because nobody ever told them to do that.

Jacob: Right. And nobody cared enough to do that.

William: Exactly.

Jacob: What we're going to do is we'll have links to the LEAP website and any other ways to find the organization.

If you had a message to the audience that are listening to the show, what can we do to help or what message would you like to pass through LEAP?

William: Well, I would say if you're a parent or you're close to any kids between the age of 15 and 24, please send them to our program. If you run a company and you have two, three, 400 employees, I think it'd be amazing.

We have a lot of companies where the founder of the company will pay for ten students to attend LEAP. They actually have their employees fill out applications and it's kind of a contest and they give this reward to these kids, you know. Or if you're just somebody who wants to help a kid really change their life, you can sponsor a kid or two kids.

I'll tell you something. We teach appreciation. We have something called an "I appreciate note" and it's a blank pad and it says, "I appreciate ..." now put your name, "Dr. Bill for" and then they'll tell you. At the end of the week, if we have 500 kids at LEAP, I'll probably get close to 400 I appreciate notes. And I'll tell you, 90% of those will say something like, "You've changed my life. This changed my life." I know we did. I mean I know we did.

I know parents will come up to me and say, "I don't know what you did in one week that made my kid like that but that's amazing." I said, "You know what it is, I'm not their parent." It's a little bit different source. When it comes from somebody else, it has a little bit more impact.

Jacob: Absolutely.

William: In all these cards and all these things that I get from these kids, there'll probably two or three every year that will say, "You saved my life," and I know we did. Kids coming to this program and a lot of them are going through a really tough time, and they need a good support group, they need friends.

They need somebody to say "Hey, you're a 10," you know? That's the first thing that we do with them. We say, "You're a 10. Act like a 10, walk like a 10, talk like a 10, surround yourself with people that are 10's." And I have seen kids that come into this program that look like they're literally afraid of their shadow, turnaround in a week and get on stage and sing.

Jacob: Right.

William: I mean it's unbelievable. It's unbelievable. I mean if you just go on the website, you'll get a taste of it. But if you really want to get a taste of it, just come to the

program. We always invite anybody who wants to come and watch certain parts of the program.

Jacob: And I'll make sure we have links in our show notes and we're going to be able to share on Twitter in our large social network as well.

William: That'd be great. Thank you.

Jacob: A lot of the things that you said now, Bill, I'm thinking to myself, even adults can apply these to themselves. If people who are behind say, "You know what, I'm not confident enough, I'm not -- people surrounding me are taking me down. I need to change this." Of course it helps the youth but a lot of things you talk about can be applicable to anybody who is in a low moment.

In fact you said something, "He who does the giving receives the greatest gift." I think this kind of what drives this whole thing in your success because you can't just keep everything to yourself. It has to be shared with the world so they can all be elevated together.

William: Well, you know, when kids leave LEAP, I give them this card. Can you guys get me one? I'm going to read it, the LEAP card. And, you know, my feeling is if you leave this world without having left at a better place, what was the sense of living? That's why I'm so dedicated to philanthropic work.

And so we give the kids these cards when they go to the program and on the back of it there's something I wrote. I ask them to keep this in their wallet with them and take this everywhere. I feel if they actually live by this, we did our job.

Jacob: You can read it.

William: It says, "I will remember what is important and that my goal should be to make the world a better place for me having been here. I will show love, compassion, and patience for those I contact, including myself. Each day I will be thankful for all my blessings. I will be addicted to helping others. I will maintain a sense of humor and wonder. I will share my heart, my time, and my material possessions. And remember that no thing is more important than people. I will maintain a sense of fun and adventure and I will constantly strive to improve myself in all facets of my life and learn and grow each day."

Jacob: Wow, this is beautiful.

William: And do that forever.

My favorite all time quote by any celebrity, Anthony Hopkins. He said, "Doc, when I grow up, all I want to be is a little boy."

Jacob: Wow! I'll make sure we have it as a tweetable quote so people can tweet it. Wow! That's great.

So, Bill, if you permit, I want to ask you a couple of quick questions that I'm interested to know. I personally was wondering, coming back to your practice, you built this beautiful practice, how did you get to your first celebrity client?

William: Well, I was working with a mentor and I remember the very first day I was in his office. Now, this was in 1986.

Jacob: Okay.

William: I saw Flip Wilson, Senator [unclear 00:29:33], and Linda Evans who was on the hottest show in the world, Dynasty.

Jacob: Absolutely.

William: So it was like that every day in his office. It just started growing. But when I opened up my own office, my very first big, big, big celebrity patient was with me until she passed away and she passed away last year, and that was Esther Williams. Most young people don't know who she is but she was the biggest star MGM ever had. She did all of the movies for, I think, for about maybe 15 years. MGM built her her own set with a pool and everything. She was amazing.

But, you know, I think just the way that my practice grew and that so many celebrities came in is that when I first started, I was dating a woman who worked at Triad Artists which is now William Morris. She was in the mail room and she kind of grew in the company and became an agent. All those young people are still my friends and they're running all the biggest agencies in the world now. So, I think, that really helped the most.

Jacob: And what is the most important thing you learned from these people that have this particular kind of way for them to conduct themselves privacy wise.

William: I mean, look, celebrities are people too.

Jacob: Right.

William: We try to treat all my patients like celebrities. I do 110% on every patient that comes in my office. I don't care if they're a celebrity or not. The thing about celebrities though is they're a lot harder to schedule because a lot of times when they're working, their time is pretty demanding. But, you know, you take the CEO of a big company, it's just as challenging.

Jacob: Right.

William: When people come in to your office who make a living based on their appearance and you're doing cosmetic dentistry, yes, there's a lot more pressure added to the results.

Jacob: Right.

William: But the cool thing about dentistry versus, say, plastic surgery is what I do is totally predictable. I make a tooth, I show you the tooth, I try them the tooth. If you like the tooth, I cement it. If you don't, I make another one. It's not like we put you to sleep, we fix your nose, and then you don't like your nose. I have a real advantage there.

Jacob: Yeah. That's true. That's predictable.

I read somewhere that you still hold the World Guinness Book of Record for raising the highest amount of money in charity for shaving your head. Is that true?

William: Yeah. I actually have a Guinness World Book Record and then give me a second one.

Jacob: Okay.

William: The first one was for most money raised by shaving your head for charity. I raised \$121,000 for LEAP by shaving my head on the doctors on TV. The second Guinness World Book Record I think I'm going to get -- we're waiting to hear the final word -- is I made Katy Perry's grill for the Dark Horse video with a million dollars in gems. So it's a million dollar grill by Doctor Bill. 600 million views on YouTube.

Jacob: Wow! So that's going to be announced soon, if it's going to beat the record, right?

William: Yes. Yeah.

Jacob: Wow, I didn't know that. Beautiful.

As we come to the end of the show, Bill, I mean this was just a beautiful information that we shared and trying to get LEAP to -- for more people to know about it. If there is one piece of advice you'll give to somebody who's starting any business, whether it's a professional practice, a dentist, a lawyer, or a CPA. In today, 2015, we come in in there, what will be that advice?

William: Copy genius, don't invent mediocrity. There are people out there that are doing great things. Look at what they're doing and copy the good stuff, you know? We do that with LEAP. I always tell the kids, copy genius, don't invent mediocrity.

You don't have to reinvent the wheel. There is a wheel and the wheel works. Now you may make it flashier, or better, whatever it is, but see what's out there and see how you can make it better. And differentiate yourself by making improvements and standing out.

Jacob: Excellent. Very good.

Once again, Bill, thank you so much for joining us this afternoon. This is Jacob Sapochnick, enchantinglawyer.com. If you have any questions about this show, want to find Bill, we'll share it in our show notes and see you next time.

Closing: Thanks for listening. You can find even more resources, including the show notes for this episode, at enchantinglawyer.com. That's www.enchantinglawyer.com.