

Business

The plan for 2019

Geoff Long gives some timely advice on re-negotiating your GDS contract

Dentists in general practice often describe themselves as isolated, may feel out of touch with their colleagues, be rather secretive by nature and always curious about how they are doing in comparison with others. Against this background is the fear that no one must know business is anything less than really good.

As I visit dentists across the length and breadth of the country there is a new paranoia: 2019. Dentists are becoming increasingly concerned about the new contract announcement in 2019. Will ring-fencing disappear? Will dentists have to renegotiate UDA values? To make matters worse this is at a time when there is a £7 billion annual shortfall in the NHS budget.

To deal successfully with the new contract the dentist will need a game plan. This will include your desired outcome and a strategy for achieving it. Dentists will need to prepare thoroughly for the new world. With that in mind, I have prepared a general list of do's and don'ts to follow when putting together a plan.

Do's and don'ts

- Do listen carefully to the NHS representative
- Don't make the opposition look foolish
- Do leave enough room for manoeuvre in your proposals
- Don't forget to make conditional offers such as 'if you

do this, we'll do that'

- Do probe the attitudes of the NHS: what would be your feelings if...?
- Don't answer questions directly with a simple 'yes' or 'no'
- Do write down all your objectives, then put them in order of priority
- Don't forget to hide short tempers and frustration when negotiating and never walk out in a rage
- Do start by visualising possible gains not losses
- Don't forget to offer the smallest concessions first – you may not need to go any further
- Do remember a deal is made, not won. The NHS should be persuaded that the deal will benefit everyone
- Don't forget to bear in mind that it is almost impossible for a dentist to do too much preparation
- Do identify issues that are open to compromise and those that are not
- Don't forget to learn tactics from the biographies of famous negotiators
- Do seat your hard liner away from your NHS hard liner
- Don't forget to emphasise the common ground you have found during a meeting
- Do be assertive but not aggressive when you are closing a deal. **D**



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