



## New Players ON THE BLOCK

Even though many laboratory owners plan to retire within the next 10 years, new laboratories of every size continue to sprout. In this ongoing series, LMT profiles the new generation of startups—many that begin very much like the startups of yesteryear eager to make their mark on our field's new and enticing landscape.

# YES! Dental Lab's Can-Do Attitude Pays Off

KELLY FESSEL CARR / EDITOR

The key to good teamwork is knowing your team members' strengths, and that's been fundamental to YES! Dental Laboratory's growth since opening its doors in Tarrytown, New York in July 2008. Having worked together at various laboratories—most recently Americus Dental Lab of New York—since the early 1990s, partners Evan Krouse, Wil-

liam "CK" Kim, Lawrence Johnson, and Jeff and Robin Michaels each have distinct yet complementary talents that blend to form a cohesive management team.

Krouse handles all the sales and marketing; Kim supervises the all-ceramic department, day-to-day operations and training; Johnson is responsible for supervising the implant and C&B cases; their long-

time mentor, Jeff Michaels is CEO and oversees long-term planning and acquisitions; and his wife, Robin Michaels, manages the financial aspects of the laboratory. Kim and Johnson also work at the bench. "We're taking a true team approach to managing the lab. Having worked together for so long, we intuitively have a feel for each of our strengths and what each of us needs to do to

run the business," says Krouse.

The lab's name has a dual meaning: YES! stands for Your Esthetic Solution and also reflects the partners' outlook and upbeat philosophy. "YES!" is catchy and memorable. It's the opposite of no. We designed our logo in bright yellow and red to reflect our positive attitude," explains Krouse.

And they've maintained their positive attitude even while starting a laboratory in one of the toughest economic times in recent history. The full service laboratory has grown from the initial 10 employees to 34, and through door-to-door sales, direct mail and sponsoring continuing education, now services 190 clients on a regular basis, including private practices, dental clinics and hospitals. This diversity of clients has helped insulate the lab from the effects of the recession.

Much of the co-owners' mindset is a sharp contrast to their prior large laboratory experience and they relish being able to turn on a dime to offer personalized service. "In a corporate lab environment, we had to spend time analyzing the cost-benefit of a rush case. Now, we're able to do whatever it takes to satisfy our clients. We've even put a staff member on a plane to Baltimore to deliver a rush case," says Krouse.

By taking numerous clinical courses throughout their years in the industry, Krouse, Kim and Johnson have gathered a wealth of knowledge they can share with their clients. "Because of our educational backgrounds, we can help dentists with treatment planning and offer useful tips to help them in their practices," says Johnson, vice president. "For instance, we had a client who was having trouble with his impressions so we recommended he switch to a different tray, a technique we learned about from Dr. Robert Lowe. The dentist was thrilled with our suggestion and experienced a dramatic reduction in remakes and improvement in his results."

Looking toward the future, expansion and acquisition will be part of YES!'s business model. It's interested in purchasing labs with annual sales from one to three million dollars, comparable fee structures and healthy finances and internal operations. "At a lot of small- and medium-size labs, owners are nearing retirement age," explains Kim, vice president of esthetics and general manager. "We may be able to provide an exit strategy for people who want to retire or who don't want to run their own businesses anymore. It can be a win-win situation for both of us." **LMT**



About three patients a day visit the lab for custom shade taking. It also offers while-you-wait denture repairs for patients who come in with a dentist's prescription.



Housed in a 6,000-sq-ft, sun-drenched facility, YES! Dental Laboratory has grown to 34 staff members in less than two years. Poised for growth, the current facility can easily accommodate 41 technicians and the lab has the option to expand into the 4,000 square feet of space next door. Insets: the logo and the bright, cheerful entrance to the laboratory feature the lab's dominant colors: red and yellow.



The ceramic department. The entire laboratory features new Dental Arte benches.



From l to r: YES! Dental Laboratory, Inc. co-owners Lawrence Johnson, vice president of implants; William "CK" Kim, vice president of esthetics and general manager; and Evan Krouse, vice president of sales and marketing.