

Digital disruption in the trans-Tasman dental industry



Taking the 'pain' out of dental care with the Lumino Dental Plan

Abano Healthcare Group's vision is to be a leader in oral healthcare in Australasia, through its two dental networks – Lumino The Dentists in New Zealand and Maven Dental Group in Australia. Technology is playing a key role in helping Abano achieve this goal, aiding revenue growth and cost reduction and improving customer loyalty.

Abano partnered with Intergen to revolutionise dental care with a forward-thinking and unique solution: the Lumino Dental Plan (LDP), created using Microsoft technologies. The solution is creating digital disruption in the trans-Tasman dental industry. The initial release of the Dental Plan is just the beginning, with new and innovative products and services soon to be delivered using this digital platform.

Abano's Chief Information Officer, Peter Radich, has led the technology-enabled transformation and here we take a closer look at the journey.

The situation

NZX-listed Abano Healthcare owns and operates one of the largest private dental groups in Australasia, with a network of more than 2,300 people working across 235+ practices in New Zealand and Australia.

Having grown through the amalgamation of hundreds of private practices across the two countries, Abano has emerged from a world where disconnected systems, manual processes and a disjointed view of the customer was the norm.

New Zealanders have some of the worst oral dental health in the developed world, with very little insurance or government support for adult dental healthcare. Often people leave issues too long and are not proactive in managing their oral health due to cost concerns. As a leader in the industry, Abano is continually looking for ways to improve access to quality dental care for all patients.

Abano saw an opportunity to do something positive to change this trend, while at the same time creating a revolutionary, integrated solution to help drive business growth, greater visibility and better customer engagement for the group.



The opportunity

With the customer in mind, the team at Abano conceived the Lumino Dental Plan, a 'dentistry as a service' concept providing a much more proactive and affordable offering. The company's fail-fast philosophy for innovation projects enabled them to pilot the idea with a small group of practices.

In 2016, for less than a \$1 a day, they started to offer patients a comprehensive dental consultation, including an exam, x-rays, two hygiene visits and 10% off any additional treatments, payable as a monthly subscription, or annually with discount of up to 30% off RRP.

The proof of concept proved to be hugely successful, with over 8,000 patients signing up for the LDP over a two-year period. Not only this, further analysis showed that customers once signed up to the plan were typically accepting further treatments, outside of the initial plan, having built up trust and an understanding of the benefit of treatment versus perception of high cost.

Abano validated the concept, proving much greater customer engagement and improved business benefits and forecasting. However, as the numbers grew the manual system was not scalable and there was no automated back-end financial systems integration to allow for the Dental Plan solution to be rolled out to all of its dental practices.

Wanting to expand the solution to Lumino's 123 New Zealand practices and thousands of patients nationwide, Intergen was selected and engaged to create a scalable, integrated digital solution unique to Lumino.

The result

The solution delivers a rich customer experience: a patient can see all their details, including last visit, treatments already performed, treatments available and treatments done, as well as any financial transactions. Patients can also select and book treatments through their portal. Other features now available to the company include mass personalisation, simple sign-on and multi-device/channel access and integrated billing.

In due course, an AI-driven engine will recommend dental services appropriate to individual patients, such as straightening or whitening.

Patient feedback is very positive, citing the LDP as the vehicle that got them back into regular dental maintenance after a long period of absence from the dentist, and helping to buck the trend of New Zealand's poor dental health.

CIO Peter Radich says InterGen has created a solution which uses best practice development lifecycle management, with automated deployment of software updates across the various environments. Utilising Microsoft tools for DevOps has two major benefits, enabling both rapid extension of the LDP solution to new dental practices and, when updates are made to the solution (including the future introductions of new subscriptions for additional products and services), it is a straightforward process.

InterGen has engineered the system with diagnostic capabilities and trained Lumino's team on the Enterprise Service Bus to self-solve issues. Radich simply calls it 'The Magic Bus'. Since the solution started its phased go-live in October 2018, a further 3,200 patients have signed up to the LDP, by word of mouth alone.

The future

Currently in its first iteration, the LDP platform is designed and built with extensibility in mind. Not only is it expected to be introduced into Abano's Australian operations, but the LDP will make a significant contribution to the long-term growth of the Abano business, helping the company carve out a unique position in the delivery of quality oral care with real benefits for every patient.

The dental plan has been designed to be flexible so Lumino can offer additional products to LDP patients, for example, teeth whitening, corporate plans and other dental products, which can be made available as subscription purchases in the future. Immediate results have proven excellent, even before the commencement of any marketing or advertising initiatives. Technology has played a central role in achieving an outstandingly successful digital transformation.

The technology behind the solution

The solution was a clean slate .NET development by InterGen using agile development methodology and the latest technology. Abano moved to Microsoft Azure in 2017/18 and therefore this solution was designed to leverage as much Software as a Service (SaaS) as possible. Deployment in Microsoft's Azure cloud infrastructure is based on a state of the art serverless architecture.

For more information contact us today:

Empired: contact@empired.com

InterGen: enquiry@intergen.co.nz

"This is the biggest investment we've ever made outside of dental practices themselves. We don't develop software but buy and customise it. In this case, it would not be possible to create LDP without InterGen and Microsoft technology, which now enables us to scale this solution across 123 sites in New Zealand, and into Australia in the future."

Peter Radich

CIO, Abano.

SNAPSHOT

CHALLENGES:

- Create online commerce solution to grow revenue and patient forecasting
- Deliver world class digital customer experience to enhance customer engagement and loyalty
- Streamline, automate and connect process for cost and operational efficiencies
- Deliver online patient portals to provide complete dental history and upcoming care

RESULTS:

- Enabled e-commerce, mass personalisation, simple sign-on and multi-device/channel access
- Accelerated time to market for cross selling, upselling bundled offerings
- Reduced manual processes, increased sign up rates and introduced integrated billing
- Increased customer satisfaction and digital sales across target markets