



As featured in  
*The CEO Magazine*  
For more info visit  
[theceomagazine.com.au](http://theceomagazine.com.au)

# Service with a SMILE

Pacific Smiles has been steadily growing its business with its mantra of prioritising patient care and customer service.

Images by Scott Ehler

In 2003, three dental centres in New South Wales decided to join forces in what would be the start of Australia's largest branded dental network. In just 12 years, those three centres have become 45 centres, spread across New South Wales, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, and Queensland.

CEO and Managing Director John Gibbs came on board early on as general manager. Pacific Smiles had only operated for a year when joined by John, who had previous extensive experience in the health industry. "Prior to Pacific Smiles, I was working in the private hospital industry," John says.

"I was working with Mayne Group here in Australia and also overseas. That involved developing and managing private hospitals for Mayne and their joint-venture partners in locations in Asia and the Pacific. Prior to that, I was involved in medical device importation and marketing in specialty medical areas. For most

of my working life, I've been in the medical industry."

Pacific Smiles has had rapid expansion since John joined. "The company was created by the coming together of three existing dental centres in the Hunter and Lake Macquarie region of New South Wales. When I joined, it was still the original three, but within a short period we acquired two nib Dental Care Centres, rolled out a new centre in Salamander Bay, and acquired an established centre in Forster. So we went from three to seven fairly quickly."

What John believes has set Pacific Smiles apart and has helped its growth and the trust in the brand is the company's focus on patients. "Our culture is based around patient care and customer service. Everything that we do and all the decisions that we make are in the context of whether it's good for patient care and customer service. And if the answer is yes, then that's obviously the right path. And we also work with our staff in that context."

To make sure this commitment to patient care is evident across all Pacific Smiles centres wherever their location, the company invests heavily in staff training to create a service culture. "We have a values statement that we call the Smiles Guide. The Smiles Guide effectively communicates the values that we hold dear, and they link back to the required service ethics and patient care.

"There have been many initiatives undertaken to keep this a priority at all times. It is a never-ending process; it's not something where you can tick the box and move on. The training and the cultural alignment are part of an ongoing, never-ending focus of our organisation."

Along with focusing on the values of Pacific Smiles, John believes it's important to give staff a good environment to work in and to ensure they are happy with their jobs. "We look to have great relationships with our staff right across our expanding network because, as a service business, >

"Our culture is based around patient care and customer service."

- John Gibbs





it's very difficult to have happy customers if you don't have happy staff.

"We spend a lot of time considering ways to enhance employee engagement and motivation, including rewards and recognition systems that link back to our values and to customer service and patient care. That's our reason for being, so obviously it is a key area of focus. Staff have responded very well."

This focus, along with the career opportunities that working for Pacific Smiles provides, means that the company is a sought-after employer. "We were quite unusual in the dental industry for a number of years, and to a large

"Typically, we work with fewer suppliers rather than more because we find by doing so we build up a better working relationship, a deeper level of trust, and improved commercial outcomes for all parties."

- John Gibbs

extent we still are, given that the dental industry is cottage style, characterised by a large number of smaller, independent operators. Dental assistants and receptionists enjoy the career advancement opportunities offered by a large employer like Pacific Smiles. Working for Pacific Smiles gives them the opportunity to develop their career, move into management, relocate to other parts of our network if they so wish. Typically, we try to promote from within as opportunities arise, and with us rolling out six to 10 new dental centres per year, there are plenty of opportunities to go around for motivated employees."

John believes in honesty with Pacific Smiles' staff, patients, dentists and suppliers. This is what, in his eyes, builds the trust needed for close and beneficial relationships. "We have a number of valued and trusted suppliers. Typically, we work with fewer suppliers rather than more

because we find by doing so we build up a better working relationship, a deeper level of trust, and improved commercial outcomes for all parties. We think it delivers best value overall to Pacific Smiles and its dentists. Having said that, from time to time we put supplier relationships to market to make sure that the value proposition is best in class."

Apart from the company's focus on patient care, one achievement that John is particularly proud of is the company's initial public offering in 2014. "The successful IPO last year exceeded our expectations. It was a very special moment because we had worked towards that goal for many years. Achieving a successful IPO was particularly satisfying because so many of the early-stage investors were people either in the business or associated with people in the business. They believed in our vision for this organisation, and we were proud to repay that trust."

For the future, Pacific Smiles will continue to work on rolling out new centres and providing the best service for customers of those centres. "We typically roll out new dental centres rather than acquire existing ones. We're not a roll-up; we're a roll-out. Our dental centres open six or seven days a week, and they are located in ultra-convenient locations with plenty of parking and easy access. This makes it easy for patients to attend scheduled appointments, and we also make time available for urgent appointments."

Ultimately, John believes, Pacific Smiles is not only operating as a successful business but is providing valuable services to the community. "Commitment to oral care can deliver a lifetime of great oral health. It's one aspect of our health that we can absolutely keep in check with a proper cleaning regime, good diet, and regular visits to the dentist. People can have good teeth for life." •



## Philips Sonicare FlexCare+

For complete gum care



To find out more visit: [www.philips.com.au/sonicare](http://www.philips.com.au/sonicare)



Philips Sonicare FlexCare+ is available at your local Pacific Smiles Dental Centre. Visit [www.pacificsmilesdental.com.au](http://www.pacificsmilesdental.com.au) to find your nearest centre.

**PHILIPS**  
sonicare



# SERVICE WITH A SMILE

When your practice depends on specialist imaging equipment, first-class service is more than a convenience – it's absolutely imperative.

Renowned for expert after sales service and technical support, Australian Imaging is a proud partner of Pacific Smiles Dental, providing total imaging solutions to over 40 locations throughout QLD, NSW, ACT and VIC.

Unit 54, 5 – 7 Inglewood Place, Norwest Business Park Baulkham Hills NSW 2153 Phone: 1300 60 28 58 Fax: 02 8814 6988 Email: [info@australianimaging.com.au](mailto:info@australianimaging.com.au)  
Website: [www.australianimaging.com.au](http://www.australianimaging.com.au)



Dental and Medical Surgery Design and Construction  
New Constructions/Refurbishments  
Full Project Management



(02) 9011 7744 [www.designersurgeries.com.au](http://www.designersurgeries.com.au)