

Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 44

Ashley Humlicek

Don and Ebony: [00:00:00] And welcome to another exciting edition of the WCBA part of course by Evergy.

First Thank you for listening and don't forget to like us, love us, share us, we truly appreciate you checking us out today. We are excited to have, Humlicek Family Dental in the house. E we have Dr. Ashley Humlicek in the house.

Ashley Humlicek: Hey, thanks for having me

Don and Ebony: Absolutely. So glad you decided to join us. And our listeners are I'm sure as equally thrilled. So tell us a little bit about who you are. and your business.



Ashley Humlicek: So I grew up in Fargo, North Dakota, and I just keep making my way south. So I went to both college and dental school in Nebraska swam for the University of Nebraska. And then I met my husband there. So that's where we went to, or I went to dental school. And then when I was looking for a business opportunity, two different dentist actually told me, you should check out this guy, Marvin Edgington.

I think he's getting ready to retire. Just took a leap of faith and contacted him and all of our morals and values aligned. And so that's why we made the move down here about two and a half years ago.

Don and Ebony: Wow. That is a great story. So you are now a Wichitan

Ashley Humlicek: Yes. And I love it.

Don and Ebony: I knew That you would love it. That is great. So you swam for a while competitive. and, you know,

I too am an athlete, turned around to look at Don, but we're not going to go down that road today.

We're going to talk a little bit about your practice. So two years, in Wichita, I'm, I'm curious since you've been here the two years, did the, you keep the same team or did you have to start fresh in a new,

Ashley Humlicek: So we pretty much kept everybody on that wanted to stay on. There was one member that she was ready to retire at the same time, but besides that, we've pretty much maintained the same staff. and so, and we've grown. So we've actually added a couple additional team members, but we pretty much have the same people.

and I've loved it because they have given me a different view. and together we can all pull our experts. And make it for a really great experience for our patients. So I'm grateful for them that they wanted to stay on with me and give me a try as well.

Don and Ebony: Yeah, that is that's really special. because I can just imagine, you know, I've been through a couple of acquisitions, myself and different companies that I've worked for, and it is, you know, an adjustment trying to understand about the culture. So talk to us a little bit about the culture that you've set for your organization.

Ashley Humlicek: Yeah. So that's a big one. leadership is, is kind of my sweet spot. I've been in a lot of leadership roles. So culture is one of the most important things for me as a business owner. I think we talk about it every single day in our team meeting and just holding each other accountable and treating people the right way. my whole business philosophy is basically treat people right. And the money will come. of course, as a business owner, you have to look at the numbers. and that has to be something in the back of your mind all the time, but I'm very faith driven as well. and so for me, I just know if you treat people right, the, the money will come.

So culture is huge. we hold people accountable. We treat people right.

Don and Ebony: I like that a lot. So, you know, as you talk about your employees and the culture that you sat there, what about for the people who are coming in to visit, how has the experience at your, dental office different from others?

Ashley Humlicek: So that is something that I'm super passionate about because I want the dental experience to be different. Most people absolutely dread going to the dentist. even for their normal cleanings when they know they're not getting work done. And so for me, everything in our practice from like the sights, the sounds, I want everything to be pleasant.

So we have noise canceling headphones. We have. like smell diffusers throughout our practice little transition from this is my ideal [00:05:00] practice in the future is to actually incorporate a few spa-like features where you could actually like have a cold infused eucalyptus towel on you if you wanted and things like that.

So we're definitely trying to change the way people think about dentistry. And then I think also me being a woman has added a little bit more of that tender side. and so I, I'm hoping that our patients feel that warmth and, and become a little bit more relaxed in the process.

Don and Ebony: I like that. So you put a, a towel on them, have some soothing sounds and they say, okay, now I'm going to drill.

Ashley Humlicek: Yes, but we don't use that word. That's a trigger word.

Don and Ebony: That's pretty awesome though. I like it. You set the mood, you set the mood.

Help me understand.

Of course, I've been around long time.

And they used to say back in my day that folks, physicians, dentists, whatever, they're not good business people. I mean, cause they're, they're trying to focus on how to be great at their profession. How did you learn to be a, an entrepreneur? I mean, did they teach that in dental school or. How did that work? How did you get there?

Ashley Humlicek: That's a really great question because most dental schools actually don't have any piece of that element in it. and I want to give all the props to Nebraska because we had years worth of business, explaining how to do insurance claims, how to make a profit. So truly I'm very blessed with the foundation I had.

Yes. Yep at, I went to university of Nebraska medical center and so we had a great foundation. So I pretty much had a blueprint of everything I needed to do. If I was going to acquire a practice or start a practice on my own and the exact steps I needed to take.

So I had a great foundation going head. And of course, having that as a passion of mine and being a business owner, I have also done research and, I belong to different dental networks that talk about that.

And so the one I'm heavily involved as is dental success Institute. And so it's just a bunch of different practice owners from around the country.

And the really cool part about them is they're focused on not just the practice, but being a human too, and being the best version of yourself and in the practice.

So I love that it is all encompassing because you really can't be the best if you're lacking in one area of your life.

Don and Ebony: Wow. That's excellent. So back to Nebraska, is that the norm or? Okay.

Ashley Humlicek: Yeah, I don't, honestly, I don't think any other, and I don't know this for a fact, but I don't think any other school has that many hours built into their curriculum because a lot of people that would come in and talk to us about these things, like we'd have bankers financial planners, they'd all say.

We were national speakers. We've never been to another dental school. So with that in mind, I I'm very blessed that I went there cause I had a couple of different opportunities of where I got in. And ultimately I chose Nebraska because that's where I had spent the last few years. So it was an, a natural transition for me, but.

Don and Ebony: Wow. That's excellent. You got that. I mean, it's kind of like professional players when they, they focus on their craft and then okay. They have no clue about business, you know, and, but this is, this is awesome.

I'm hopefully that will become the norm, not the exception. When did you know that you wanted to be a dentist? I mean, what, what was the aha?

Ashley Humlicek: Do you want the long version? Okay, well, so I was always on a pre-med path and I was double majoring in college biology and Spanish and being a D one athlete.

You're just, you're honestly just trying to get to the next day, because you're just so busy. our school and our, our program was big on giving back to the community.

So between outreach school swimming, there wasn't a whole lot of time to self reflect. So for me, it came a little bit later. I'd declared pre-med. I thought I was going to go traditional med school route took the MCAT, which is the entrance exam. I had all my letters of recommendation. Everything was ready.

I just need to press send on my application and I ended up not doing it. I just had this moment. This is finally when I had finished my senior year swimming and I just kind of started reflecting. Is this really what I'm supposed to do?[00:10:00] and for me then, of course, I'm going through, wow. I just wasted four years of my life.

What am I going to do? And it just hit me that wow. I've always had this little inkling that if I didn't go to med school, maybe I would try dental school. Why? I don't know. I honestly don't, but I decided I would shadow a dentist, in Nebraska. And for me, it just, I walked into the building and again, professing my faith.

I, they were playing Christian music and for me, I had an out of body experience. I knew I supposed to be a dentist. Ended up that dentist. She was a pediatric dentist. She was an athlete from the university of Nebraska. She was a huge Christian and she was an amazing dentist. Like she did so much outreach, both in the community globally.

And so for me, who I inspire to be. I want to be a dentist, but of course you can't just go totally flip sides, say, oh yeah, I've been on this pre-med path for four years now. I want to be a dentist. No admissions committee is going to believe you, no matter how much you speak to them in the face. so for me then it's like, okay, hit the ground running.

How am I going to do this? So I ended up.

That lady was amazing. She's like, if, if you're serious, I'll help you get the connections you need. So talk to them in, admissions committee and they basically said, you know, this is what you should do. So I actually went and worked at a private practice, during that year and a half.

And I also worked at the dental school. So I could kind of start building those connections, but working at the private practice, it was a group practice.

So, and they, they had me, I was a float basically. So whoever was missing that day, that's where I helped out whether it was insurance assisting chairside.

And in Nebraska, you don't need, to be a certified assistant, you can be taught on, on the job. And so they just threw me in. And so I got a really great business exposure there too. So I knew, through all of those things, I wanted to be a dentist. Obviously, then you have to do your shadow hours and everything.

That's my long version of the story,

Don and Ebony: But it's your story. That was, that was great. One more question.

how do you define success as an entrepreneur? I mean, are you a dentist? Are you a business person? Apparently you're both. How, how, how do you juggle what's success, I guess in each one? Maybe? I don't know.

Ashley Humlicek: So I, that's a really great question. I think there's two sides of it. I think the outward appearance. How at least for, in my, my realm, how does the patient feel after seeing you are they inspired? And if, if that's the case, if they're inspired, if they feel important, I want everyone to walk in and be wearing a sticker saying, make me feel important.

If they feel important after they have left us, then I think that's how I define sex success in the outward expression. But inwardly, obviously, culture,

Making sure you have a good team. that's actually there for you highs and lows. and then profitability, you have to have a profit if you're going to be a business person.

So of course, looking at numbers, making sure you have that profit so you can give back and can have the experience that you want your patients to have.

Don and Ebony: So when that come to your dentist office? Well, I still get my complimentary toothpaste and toothbrush and floss because that's important. I need to know.

Ashley Humlicek: I know some people are starting to go away with that. I don't get it. Yeah. Yeah. You'll definitely get that. And a free t-shirt.

Don and Ebony: Okay. And a t-shirt.

oh, I'm in sign the shirt. Wow. That's an upgrade. That is what does the t-shirts say?

Ashley Humlicek: It says our practice Humlicek Family Dental, but then it has the Wichita skyline on it. so our icon or logo, is actually the part of the Wichita flag. the happy symbol, but we've replaced it with a tooth. And so, yeah,

Don and Ebony: Huh.

Ashley Humlicek: So that'll be on the t-shirt.

Don and Ebony: I like that. I like that. I'll be by to pick one up

Ashley Humlicek: Perfect.

Don and Ebony: After she's in the chair. Well, no, I mean, before

Dr. Ashley. You, I see that you have this belief in the value of total body health starts with the mouth. Can you talk to us a little bit about that?

Ashley Humlicek: Yes. so basically there's so much research coming out saying all these different. Systemize illnesses can start in the mouth, whether you have a clean mouth, you haven't been in for a while and you lack a little bit of care.

Basically, all those things can start in the mouth or vice versa. You could have a heart problem that shows up in the mouth. And so for me, we look at a lot of things. we, we can't technically diagnose sleep apnea, things like that, but we can. Hint at things and say, I think you should go see your primary care physician because there's indications.

You [00:15:00] may have this. obviously I'm not a general physician, so I can't diagnose that, but we can pretty much see a lot of things in the mouth that, I don't think general physicians are always looking for. and so for us, it's really nice that we can see some of those

Don and Ebony: So you can see potentially sleep apnea in the mouth.

Ashley Humlicek: Yeah. And of course, if you're not getting a good night's sleep, how can you function during the day?

And everything starts breaking down. So, yeah, dentistry, there are so many possibilities with dentistry and I, I love that about it.

Don and Ebony: And I've heard that too. That's cool. Well, if Don has heard it.

As a woman entrepreneur, what challenges do you face?

Ashley Humlicek: Well, my, I love my husband and he comes and helps me out a lot of our marketing events. But the first thing they do is they think he's the dentist. the other thing is they always think I'm a hygienist, which is absolutely nothing wrong with being a hygienist. They're very educated. They're, they're great people, very smart, but nobody thinks that the woman is going to be the dentist.

So I have experienced a little bit with people are trying to. Feel me out power-wise and they may try and kind of push me to what they want, or they may talk down to our staff. And so I've had some really difficult conversations that I've let patients go, because if they're not going to respect me or the team, then that's not the type of people we want at our practice.

Don and Ebony: Who would, who would do that? Come in there and disrespect a team. And she got a drill or even that tongue press mirror that thing right there. Oh yeah. Yeah,

Ashley Humlicek: So it's definitely not the standard. Still women are becoming more apparent in healthcare, but it's definitely not the standard, especially in dentistry. It's a good old boys club, so yeah.

Don and Ebony: Oh, that's unfortunate. Thank you for your work and you know, the spanning that and, Wow. That's, that's crazy. Well, So talk to us a little bit, about maybe the advantage. of being a woman you'd mentioned earlier that, you know, you have that, Tender touch and you're able to infuse some of those personal things, in, in the space.

are there more things.

Ashley Humlicek: Those are the biggest ones. I think that that tender touch is huge because I think. No guy wants to admit this, but guys have just as much fear as women coming to the dentist. And I think sometimes when it's, a man Dennis, the male in the chair wants to live up to that. And so me being a woman, they can almost, they make a joke of it, of course.

but I think it's easier for them to show their emotion to me because they know I'm not going to necessarily judge them.

Don and Ebony: Right.

Ashley Humlicek: So I love that part of it. just being able to say, Hey, it's okay to feel uncomfortable. There's ways that we can help you. We may have nitrous, or we could prescribe some kind of sedative.

We have stress ball. I mean, we have bunch of things that we can do, but just being open about it and telling them, Hey, we recognize in it and okay. I think instantly just allows them to relax. I also just love that I'm breaking barriers. I love showing that.

A lot of times, I think if women are in a higher position, sometimes they come off a little too intense and then it rubs people the wrong way. And so I'm, I'm definitely trying to do a balance of that because I think sometimes as women, we try and overcompensate and then we can be looked at differently. I want to be a woman. I want to show that I have that feminine side to myself too, and that tender side. So I love it at the same time. There's ups and downs, but overall, I love being a woman in the dentistry field.

Don and Ebony: That's awesome. That is super. But before we go to the break, you know, you said being intense. I mean, you're an athlete as well. So does that come out sometimes, like, as you're challenging your staff for the month, like, are you Super competitive. and how does that look?

maybe sometimes, but it's more, I'm just trying to hype them up. I'm pretty good at reading people. So that's something that we do too. We do, personality tests, rank finder tests. So I tap into how they are motivated.

Don and Ebony: Gotcha. So you're not making them do like line drills or going to the pool and making them threatened. None of that's happening.

Ashley Humlicek: No.

Don and Ebony: I love it. That you think you coming in there and you're going to disrespect or staff you got?

No, she's not, she's not having it. Yeah.

I love that. Standing up for your people. Well, friends, we're going to take a short break and hear a couple of words from our sponsors, and we'll be back to hear more from Dr. Ashley.[00:20:00]

Welcome back friends. We have Dr. Ashley in the house, and we're hearing a little bit of her entrepreneurial story and her journey here in Wichita as a small business owner. So talk to us a little bit about, your relationship with the chamber, you, From what I understand. we're at the business expo. Yes. So how can you talk to us a little bit about how a dental practice? can find value in such a.

Ashley Humlicek: Yes. So I love the connections that I have with other business entrepreneurs, because we have the same mindset we want to help. So for me, it was so valuable to be there both to gain new clients, but also for our potential growth.

And so I loved being there. We've done a few expos and for me, I thought the Chamber's Expo was one of the most valuable for the both sides of, of the picture. we've done a bridal expo. We've done a women's fair. and so I think a lot of, of healthcare people in general are so bogged down with their daily life.

and unfortunately dentists, a lot of times work in isolation. There's a lot of times only one dentist in the practice, so it can be very lonely. And so I think sometimes we're so focused in, on our practice that at the end of the day, we don't want to do one more thing.

Ashley Humlicek: And that's the reality for most people, but just as how I'm trying to change how dentistry is in our practice.

I want to think outside the box too, with, with my relationship in the city. And so one building those connections with other business people, we can help each other, but then too, I can feel more plugged into this city that I now call home. And for me just having those connections. And when we're out in and say, we're working on some project to better our city, I can feel more connected because I know them through the chambers relationship, or I know them because of that expo, where I met them to help me grow my practice and just feel more connected.

and I think Wichita does a really good job at that.

Don and Ebony: You've been here two and a half years. Right. I would love your take on Wichita far as the business ecosystem.

What would you like to change that you think we need to do something about keep in mind I've been here two and a half years so I, I really want to hear this.

Ashley Humlicek: So I'll start with the positive

Don and Ebony: Okay.

Ashley Humlicek: Because I have never been, so I've lived in North Dakota and Nebraska and now Kansas. Okay. So of course I haven't lived everywhere, but I'm coming from other Midwest states.

So keep that in mind. And I feel like the Midwest in general is very welcoming.

We want to all help each other. We have that good neighbor approach, but I've never been in a city that has been so willing to help other people, which I'm just shocked by that because at least in the dental realm, I have worked in the Nebraska dental realm and it's so much more cutthroat and there isn't as much business to business interaction.

it's almost like everyone's just fighting against each other instead of elevating the care. So another shout out to the dentists here in Wichita, which has a community of dentists. I mean, the care is so much more elevated here than I think in Nebraska because people. We are collaborative. I'm involved in study groups and part of the Wichita, district dental society.

Ashley Humlicek: And we're all together trying to better the care of Wichita. And when I have an issue, some of my colleagues I'll call that same day and say, Hey, I have this person in my chair. what are your thoughts on this? or would you do something different business wise? It goes both ways where we want each other to succeed.

So I love that. I don't think that's very common. and when we moved here, of course we didn't know anybody. We had no connection. [00:25:00] So people would just open up their, their whole profile. Here's a bank I used here's this I use. And I really don't think that that's as common as people think it is. So I love that part of it.

Ecosystem wise, I think that we need a better hub of small business. So I know dentistry, we know we're not really considered a small business. People don't think of that. so I'm going to exclude healthcare and dentistry, but different cities I've been in there seems like there's more of a small business space.

So they'll have like small business Saturdays and all the small businesses are, are right around each other. And so it's almost, a celebration of, of each other. And so what I've found, I love shopping local, small business boutiques, but I'm finding that I have to go way over here for this one. I have to go across town for this one.

And instead of just having a central hub, it feels a little disconnected. The other thing is, I think there's a, a challenge right now with Delaney and downtown, because I think they're competing against each other. I don't think they're as connected. Delano is skyrocketing right now. And I love that scene, but downtown, it's like holding onto this, this almost like older part, and there's a competition.

I know. There's talk about, redoing the riverfront and things like that. I think that could be a good start to the segway because it's right in the middle, of course. but I think that might help. And then the last thing is I think. Having a D one program here is huge, but I don't think we, we capitalize on that nearly as enough enough.

we have an amazing basketball program and I mean, baseball is great. There's so many different sports that are great. Why are we not capitalizing capitalizing on that? We should have like an outdoor area where there's bars and restaurants that we can go and celebrate before game days yet we don't really have any of that.

Don and Ebony: Yeah. So you're describing Aggieville. You've been saying

and I

Ashley Humlicek: love

Don and Ebony: you've been talking about Nebraska this entire time. I've said nothing, but I have to come in with that. Sorry. I knew it was coming. One more question. What's next on your frontier?

Ashley Humlicek: So I'm a dreamer, I'm a goal seeker. So in the next five years, we will be in a new space. And why I say that is we, this is a blessing and a curse. And I count my blessings every day, but we have totally maxed out our space in our practice. there's only four chairs and so I work on it too, and I have two hygienists.

And so. I spoke on this a little bit earlier, but I don't want to be a single dentist forever. I would love to have a partner. I think there's so much you can gain from that one. Every time I'm away each weekend, if I'm away, I have to call somebody to be on call for me. One of my colleagues and it's. It's not great for your longtime patient care, if they have to go to another office for, for an emergency.

so that's, and then one, you just elevate your care within your practice. So I would like to have a partner. And so for us, it's finding that space to grow into, we are, at Western second and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. We're just a little west of Delaney, but just the law that we're in just doesn't allow us to grow to where we want.

Ashley Humlicek: And so. We've already started meeting with a commercial realtor and kind of scoping out land. And so it's coming of course, price of land and materials right now is a horrible, it's a horrible time to be looking for that. But that's like my journey. I brought the practice in six months later, COVID happened now.

It's like we can do it. Yeah. So that's what I would like in, I would like to have that spa and family atmosphere combined, almost like, and I don't know if this is exactly how it's going to carry out, but say there's like two different wings. There's kind of a family wing and a spa wing mom comes with all of her kids, kids, you go get your cleanings over here.

Mom's going to come over here and get a little facial, have spa treatment while I'm getting my teeth clean. And so that's, that's the vision I have right now.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. Just a question though, I'm asking for having these sake is a will there'll be wine involved at the spa.

Ashley Humlicek: That would be amazing

Don and Ebony: Okay.

Thank you for

Ashley Humlicek: get it, I will.

Don and Ebony: Thank you, Don, for pretending to care about my needs. So as we are wrapping up, I'm curious who have been, I guess who's your inspiration?

Ashley Humlicek: My inspiration. I got to give credit to my parents. they both didn't have any formal [00:30:00] education after high school. I'm a first-generation college student. but they always instilled that. If did you try your best? If you tried your best and that's okay. Did you treat people right? If you didn't, you need to own up to it and you need to apologize.

So for me, they have inspired me throughout my whole life. they're the hardest workers. I know my dad's still. getting to be 63 and he still works 60 to 70 hours a week, but he does that for our family because he wants to provide, so for me, they've always inspired me. Of course, there's local people or that Dennis I mentioned, but truly my parents have been my biggest inspiration.

Don and Ebony: That's beautiful. What resources do you turn to for new ideas or to challenge your thinking?

Ashley Humlicek: Different the different communities I talked about. So dental success Institute, and then I think there's a lot of value. Speaking of different businesses. I love reading different entrepreneur stories within books, because even though dentistry is part of healthcare, how you treat someone is the same way as any other business that wants to see.

And so I read a lot. I mean, there's podcasts I listened to, so

Don and Ebony: As in the Wichita chamber business accelerator?

Ashley Humlicek: Yes

Don and Ebony: Just asking. That's awesome. and very last question. What's the best advice. that you've ever received and implemented?

Ashley Humlicek: Best advice ever?

Don and Ebony: Like ever.

Ashley Humlicek: I'd have to say it's if you tried your. best, then then you can sleep easy at night because your best is always going to change every day. You may not be at your best that day, but if you tried your best within that day, then you can still go to sleep at night. And so that goes with everything. If you were, if you treated people the best you could that day, if you did the best at your profession, anything so.

Don and Ebony: That's awesome. Don, you need to ask yourself that every night did I treat Ebony the best that I could have treated her? Everybody realized that it always come around. to I get it. I get it. I welcome to my world. Well, you've dealt with eMoney, so now we're just going to have some fun, some word association give you one word to give me one It's not wrong because it's your word.

Right, leader.

Ashley Humlicek: The first word I thought of is me. I don't, I don't want

Don and Ebony: That's it. I love this one college. say it. loud.

Ashley Humlicek: Nebraska

Don and Ebony: Oh yeah. failure,

Ashley Humlicek: necessary

Don and Ebony: entrepreneur,
relationships.

Don and Ebony: Nice.

Wichita

Ashley Humlicek: community.

Don and Ebony: Chamber.

Ashley Humlicek: Personal

Don and Ebony: family

Ashley Humlicek: love.

Don and Ebony: vacation.

Ashley Humlicek: Absolutely.

Don and Ebony: Yes. Hero.

my dad

Don and Ebony: beverage.

Ashley Humlicek: Mm margarita.

Don and Ebony: Okay, this is a grownup and last but not least fun.

Ashley Humlicek: Vacation.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. We truly appreciate you coming on.

Ashley Humlicek: Yes. Thanks for having me. This was fun.

Don and Ebony: I am so glad that we had an opportunity to meet you and have this wonderful conversation with you. You've been absolutely delightful. Well friends we've come to the end of our segment with Dr.

Ashley Humlicek from Humlicek Family Dental. So make certain that you like the segment that you share it. And please leave a comment on who you would like to hear from next till next time.