

Dr. Edward Koutnik - A Dentist Story

To Go or Not to Go – One Dentist’s Big Decision Had Big Payoffs.

The year is 1987. Ronald Reagan is in the White House, U2 and Michael Jackson are topping the charts, *Wall Street* hits theaters and the economy is going through a downswing. Meanwhile, in the heartland of America (Wisconsin to be precise), a young dentist stands in front of a dental practice deciding whether or not to make one of the biggest decisions of his life. This is his story.

Dr. Edward Koutnik, a Wisconsin native, had always loved the sciences. He finished his undergraduate studies at Marquette University with a degree in Biology. But he also had a penchant for working with his hands, which showed in his hobby of woodworking. After thinking it over for a while, he came to the conclusion that a career in dentistry would allow him to employ both of his passions. So he applied to dental school.

In 1985, Dr. Koutnik proudly graduated from the Marquette School of Dentistry with his dental degree. Eager to get his career started, he began by heading back to his hometown of Manitowoc, Wisconsin. “My father was a long-time lawyer in town,” said Dr. Koutnik. “He had always been an inspiration to me, and he told me he thought I could do very well there.” Dr. Koutnik took him at his word and joined a local practice. But deep down, he had always envisioned himself settling down and raising a family in the beautiful, outdoorsman paradise of Door County, Wisconsin. But moving to a new town and finding a new job was no easy decision to make, and he hesitated.

He continued practicing in Manitowoc, all the while knowing it’s not what he really wanted. It was certainly a major life decision, but Dr. Koutnik began to worry that if he didn’t pursue his dream soon, he might never do it. In 1987, he decided to go for it. Dr. Koutnik packed up and headed north to a town in Door County called Sturgeon Bay.

His timing was perfect, as another dentist in town had recently retired and put his practice up for sale. At the time, it seemed like too good an opportunity to pass up, so Dr. Koutnik bought the practice. And he thoroughly enjoyed his work. “I’ve always been a people person,” said Dr. Koutnik. “I think you have to be when you’re a dentist, and I built a lot of great relationships with my patients.” But the practice itself left much to be desired. The building also housed practices for an ophthalmologist and an osteopath, and they all shared one waiting room. On top of that, the building itself was old and in desperate need of renovation, but nobody could or even wanted to buy it and fix it up.

After four years there, Dr. Koutnik decided it was time to find something better. He bought another practice down the road, which was in a repurposed house. It was a small practice, but it was in good condition and he didn't have to share it with anyone else. He figured this would be the place where he would spend the rest of his career. But then something else happened that he didn't expect.

He became too busy. "In the 80's, dental marketing mostly consisted of word of mouth referrals, especially in a smaller town like Sturgeon Bay," said Dr. Koutnik. "I guess I must have been doing something right, because I was quickly outgrowing my second practice." He ended up having no choice but to build a brand new practice to accommodate his rapidly growing patient base.

Dr. Koutnik started seeing patients out of this newest practice in 1995. He even brought on an associate to help with the workload. "All this was a big step for me," said Dr. Koutnik. "I had never built my own practice from scratch before, and I had also never hired an associate. But I guess that meant things were going well, so I embraced it."

Then, three years later, his associate decided to move back to his hometown, leaving Dr. Koutnik solely responsible for this big new practice and all those patients. But he was hesitant to go the associate route again, so he pushed forward the best he could. Despite his best efforts though, after a few years Dr. Koutnik started to feel burnt out from all the work and knew he had to find another solution. Luckily, one presented itself before long.

Dr. Koutnik was introduced to Midwest Dental and began considering partnering his practice with them. After pondering the option for about six months, he came to realize just how perfect this opportunity was. "For starters Midwest Dental already had a practice in Sturgeon Bay," said Dr. Koutnik. "That meant I could see my patients there and share the work with another dentist, while at the same time look for a buyer for my old practice."

Dr. Koutnik partnered with Midwest Dental and could not be happier with the result. His workload is much more manageable and he is able to continue treating all his old patients, as well as many new ones. "I'm amazed at how many new patients we see on such a regular basis," said a delighted Dr. Koutnik. "It reminds me of the good old days of the boom during my early years as a dentist, but now I have the support and resources to welcome all these patients with no problems. So things are in fact even better than they were before."

Since the transition with Midwest Dental, Dr. Koutnik admits that life feels improved by 100-fold. "I am less stressed, more content, and there is so much less paperwork to do," he said. "I get to focus on dentistry and it's amazing. I also feel I have more time to fully enjoy everything I love about my home in Door County, which is very refreshing."

And what's next for Dr. Koutnik? His love for the outdoors is what lured him to Sturgeon Bay in the first place and he plans to continue pursuing that passion after he eventually retires. "I have a daughter out west in Washington State and my hope is to eventually end up out there," expressed Dr. Koutnik. "I can think of few places better than Washington for an outdoor enthusiast, so I think I'll be very happy there."

All this because Dr. Koutnik took a leap of faith and pursued his dream. That's what you call a good decision!



3500 American Blvd W, Suite 130

Bloomington, MN 55431

Doug Ringeisen | 715.953.2069

midwestdentaljobs.com/transitions

© Midwest Dental, Inc. All rights reserved.