

# A bird in the hand

**Jade Richardson meets Julian Hodges of Handpiece Hotline:  
the professionals' professionals.**



Handpieces for repair.



Precision tooling avoids damage to componentry. Here a critical part of a low speed transmission shaft and gearbox is being disassembled for overhaul.

**W**HEN Director Julian Hodges first snapped focus on the state of handpiece maintenance in the dental industry in 2000, he did not see an opportunity. It was more like a vision.

"It's a complex business in a profession driven by excellence," he says, describing his incredible arc of success over these seven years, "that was always good for us.

"Surrounded by clients with high expectations and a demanding level of skill, we set out to achieve the same level ourselves and lift this game to match theirs. We started out being good at this, and now we're excellent."

The numbers seem to prove it. More than 600 dental handpieces pass through the hands of the technical team at Handpiece Hotline every month. Year-on growth in 2007 has so far shown increases between 30% and 45% over 2006 and this is the only independent repair specialist to have approval from the world's top four manufacturers. KaVo, NSK, Sirona and W&H.

Why? Simple. "Within the world of handpiece care there's nothing comparable to us," says Julian. "We know we're in a different area and we intend to keep on specialising there. We intend to be the elite at this in the world."

It's not just a matter of focus, dedication, skill and experience – those qualities go without saying – what makes the business interesting is not just its expertise in the niche, but the luxurious fulfillment of it.

***"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence therefore is not an act, it is a habit" – Aristotle***

Julian, who comes to this field with impressive credentials as a leading thermoforming expert with extensive experience in training, advising and coaching dentists, specialists, universities, the military and laboratory owners in Australia and overseas, puts it this way. "In the business of buying you ask, 'What does this thing do?' and 'How much?' But in the middle of the process of buying and using is a client's actual experience of the process. When we

lift that to new, unexpected levels, we create lasting bonds of trust, understanding and communication.

"The best brands in handpieces create and sell the products, they all provide service of course, but it's not their main aim in business. At Handpiece Hotline it's our absolute focus: to the advantage of the manufacturers, who use and supply us, and the dentists, who not only get a service as excellent as they provide, but save in real cash terms because of what we can do with their equipment."

Service at the Sydney-based centre does not just apply to the equipment. Julian's team are hand-picked professionals, experts in communication, high level management and problem solving. The management team are drawn from previous roles such as PA to the Chair of Qantas, and an ex-blue chip board member. The technicians are deliberately sheltered from the various paper tigers of their trade so they can do what they're best at – diagnose, repair, re-fit and engineer handpieces.

The process is seamless and specific whether a client is managing 100 surgeries, dealing with an emergency or counting the dollars lost in poorly operating handpieces that aren't lasting the distance.

At the tech-end of things, the Hotline team's online tracking tool and database, Hawkeye, via [www.handpiecehotline.com.au](http://www.handpiecehotline.com.au) not only provides instant access to the entire record and history of any single unit, but allows a client to access free live, specific details about any job in process from anywhere in the world. At the other end, skilled liaison staff will handle any crisis, error or emergency with nothing less than panache. They even provide express post satchels and couriers as a standard part of the job.

"Our doors don't shut at five," says Julian. "When things go wrong we're there. From the specific management of every detail of a job to the specifics of the quote, communication, expertise, service and getting lasting results."

But that's not the only time Handpiece Hotline can save your neck. Their website [www.handpiecehotline.com.au](http://www.handpiecehotline.com.au) is a virtual treasure trove of tips and information on handpieces, care and maintenance. If you dig around there Julian says there's enough information to save you a fortune in maintenance, and improve the performance of your handpieces every day.

Why would he give that information away? "We're all in the business of doing the best we can, the right thing, showing people we care and making a difference, right?" Julian says. "Our motives are excellence, and that's something we do together: the team here, and the dentists we're working with, all striving to get and give our absolute best." ♦