

# HIT THE MARK - MANAGING YOUR PRACTICE EFFECTIVELY STARTS WITH SMART GOAL-SETTING

By Amy Morgan, CEO, Pride Institute



Many practices that do follow statistics go only as far as comparing their numbers with last year, expert range norms or what they heard their colleagues have accomplished. This is managing by hindsight only and leads to reactive decisions that do not ensure continued growth and progress. If an orthodontist and team are going to monitor progress through statistical analysis, a key ingredient must be SMART goal setting. This is the only way proactive foresight can be applied to future success. SMART goal setting is an acronym that, when applied, leads to goals that are desirable, realistic and most important—inspiring. Let's break the word down.

## (S)PECIFIC

First and foremost, for goal setting to be effective, any goals that are forecasted for the practice must be specific. That means generalities will never do when setting goals. Goals such as “we want to be more productive,” “collect more” or “we should attract more new patients” will get you nowhere. With a general goal, there is no way of knowing when to praise progress, no way to score the game. If you want to be more productive, how is that represented in production per hour, per day, per month and year to date? For a strategy to be sound, specific goals must be set for production, cash flow, marketing, case presentation, and expenses at the minimum.

## (M)EASURABLE

Goals must also be measurable. That seems rather obvious, but there are a lot of qualitative goals that are much more difficult to benchmark than how many new patients we want to join the practice on a monthly basis. Staff morale, life balance and customer satisfaction are all examples of qualitative/passive goals that require some thought as to how to monitor progress.

## (A)TTAINABLE

Never forget that even though you want goals to stretch the orthodontist and team, they must also be attainable and realistic. It is vital to look at your historic data and establish baselines to goal set to. Just because there was one month (back in 2003) when you had 50 case starts and produced \$250,000, that doesn't mean you can do that monthly in 2011 (especially if you have been averaging \$118,000 per month for the past year). There is a delicate balance between daring to dream and goal setting for continued mediocrity. In order to determine if your goals are attainable, ask yourself what systems and staff processes would need to be addressed and upgraded to achieve these new finish lines? If the answers are not clear, the goals may not be achievable.

## (R)ELEVANT

Your goals must also be relevant to your vision, values and strategies. Your friend down the block may have 110% collections this year, but if you are a contracted insurance provider or are offering flexible financial arrangements, that may not be your goal. If you are focusing on new services such as clear aligners, it is important to create customized goals that match your integration strategies.

## (T)RACKABLE

Finally, any goals set must be trackable and easy to monitor. Most practice management software has enough tools and reports to keep the number crunchers at the Federal Treasury Department happy. We know these reports are minimally used. An orthodontic team cannot be held accountable and respect set goals if the orthodontist does not clearly state his expectations. If the statistics are going up, analyze the success points so the team can build on its success. If the statistics are going down, it's wise to do things differently to get different results. SMART goal setting is the only way to create real benchmarks that put the orthodontist and team in control of the future. It is the smart way to run a practice.



AMY MORGAN

Dental Consultant  
CEO of Pride Institute



*Amy Morgan is a top dental consultant and CEO of Pride Institute, a nationally acclaimed, results-oriented practice management consulting company. Amy has revitalized thousands of dental and specialty practices using time-proven management systems, so they become more secure, efficient and profitable. Pride Institute is the premier consulting organization for dentists/specialists and their teams who want to acquire the skills necessary for running a successful practice. Pride Institute offers a nationally acclaimed, results-oriented management program, accredited continuing education management and marketing workshops, on-site training and telephone consultation support.*