



# THE SECRET TO MARKETING SUCCESS MAY BE YOUR SCHEDULE

For more than 30 years I have crisscrossed North America and Europe consulting almost exclusively with orthodontic practices on almost every management system. The old Millenium Society had developed many of the foundational systems of the treatment coordinator, doctor time scheduling, patient cooperation, customer service, and financial monitors that are still in use in many of the successful practices to this day. If there was one thing that surprised me by the systems I inherited, it was how often clients doubled and tripled in size, not from additional marketing, but by implementing doctor time scheduling. Ineffective scheduling is often the brakes that holds a practice back from its potential growth.

Now my son Ryan is doing much of the traveling to a new generation of orthodontists in a world where it seems everyone wants to do marketing and yet many of his clients are finding the same explosive results. What is it about a finely-tuned schedule that unleashes growth?

The obvious answer is that on-time scheduling creates far greater customer satisfaction. There is a certain admiration that can be heard in the voice of a mom as she exclaims, "When I saw the doctor running to seven chairs and all the parents sitting in the reception area, I thought this place was too busy for me. But you're always on time!" Being on time is at the top of the priority list for patients who regularly visit you and only a close second to your team's caring and competence. After all, how competent can we look if we can't stay on time?

Perhaps an even greater secret is how your scheduling system can be set up to capture growth during the peak months. Yesterday a doctor exclaimed to me on the phone, "I can't stand seeing the new patient exams and starts scheduled out six weeks in mid-August, as I know we are losing patients who call us to other offices."

"You bet you are," I responded, "and that is why your scheduling template must be adjusted to allow you to start as many patients as possible in the summer." It's not just

*by Ken Alexander*

a template issue – as everything should be set up to be a welcoming practice in the summer time, January, and other months with your greatest growth potential.

We suggest a number of ideas to handle your growth months effectively, and one of the most important is to cross off a minimum of two mornings a month to just do patient exams and starts. Clients say this is a very enjoyable growth day when you can do \$40,000+ production in one morning. By doing this you can capture the growth without having to significantly change your daily templates that you use all year long. Another idea is to stagger your observation recall system so that you do not have as many recalls coming in the summer to help spread out your starts into slower months.

Perhaps the most overlooked secret to an on-time doctor time scheduling system is the doctor and staff satisfaction that comes from not having to fight over the doctor being needed at multiple chairs and the TC room all at the same time. Ryan and I have probably designed more than 2,000 templates in our careers and almost universally the response we get is, "This is so much easier and we are seeing even more patients each day!" When a schedule flows like it should it makes the day enjoyable for the doctor and team, and when it does not, it can be stressful and unnerving. A career can be extended by many years when the job is enjoyable, but as for marketing success, your patients and parents will see and feel the tension in a practice that cannot stay on time.

A "hurry up and wait" scheduling system is what we see when we visit many of our clients for the first time. Assistants are racing to get their work done on time just

**Reprinted from  
The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2  
January 2019 - Volume 37 Issue 1**

to sit for 5, 10, sometimes 15 minutes looking longingly for the doctor after having covered about every subject they can think of to talk about with the teen in their chair. Some scurry off to do sterilization or grab another patient who is going nowhere until the practice gets back on time. Many things begin to fall apart in our competence and service when we fall behind, including shorting some patients by not doing all their planned work as we try to catch up.

If you want to grow your practice and you have already grown to at least 40-50 patients per day, don't be so fast to jump on the next marketing idea until you first get your doctor time scheduling system humming. Both Ortho2 Edge Cloud and ViewPoint have outstanding scheduling capabilities, but you must first design appropriate templates that will be most effective to both stay on time and capture your growth. Then you need to get your team to the Users Group Meeting in Fort Worth to learn how to best utilize the scheduling software to input the templates and adjust them as necessary to be most effective.

Great scheduling can never happen by chance, and it requires everyone understanding a multitude of basic scheduling

principles that you must live by in the practice. If solo doctors can stay within five minutes of on time when seeing more than 100 patients per day, you certainly can do it in your practice and continue to grow. After all, you don't want your patients and referral sources to think you have reached your max potential and stop referring because you can't competently handle what you have already. I hope to see you at the UGM in Fort Worth February 28-March 2, 2019 where we can explore together with a terrific group of consultants many areas of caring, competence, and consistency as your practice seeks to be the best it can be. ☺

## About the Author

---



Ken Alexander is the Director of Alexander & Sons, and is one of the top transitions consultants in orthodontics, often working with both buyer and seller to ensure a fair transaction and a smooth transition. He is presenting at the 2019 UGM in Fort Worth, Texas.

**Contact Info:** 760.603.9251 • [ken@alexanderandsons.consulting](mailto:ken@alexanderandsons.consulting)