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Defining Success as a Team

by **Jill Allen**

As an orthodontic consultant, I have had the opportunity to work with several different orthodontic practices throughout the country. While I worked with different teams throughout the years I began to notice a common theme that separated successful, happy practices and teams, from others, which were stuck, sitting just at or below that line of the status quo.

When I begin to work with new practices I evaluate not only the successfulness of the practice in regards to money, systems, and growth, but I also evaluate the cohesiveness of the team. After working with so many teams I noticed a common theme began to present itself. What I found was that the teams that possessed a clear understanding of their doctor's vision and long-term goals for the practice were generally part of the practices that were most successful. As you can imagine, this has been an important observation that has really resonated with me over the years!

In our orthodontic industry, as like in many others, we assemble a group of people that we assume can work together to accomplish a common goal. We spend time selecting the perfect employees, in hopes that with the right training and a little bit of luck, they will assimilate nicely into the body of the practice and become a team. We hire people who, we hope, will help to move us forward in our ever-changing quest for what we imagine to be success. The idea here is great; pick the right people for your team and they should fit together well just like the pieces of a puzzle. Unfortunately, the reality, as I am sure many of you have experienced at some point in your career, is it is not always so cut and dry. If we are going to expect our employees to unify and work as a team toward the common goal of the overall practice success, we first need to clearly define what that success is.

Although success seems to be the common theme in regards to the long-term goals of any practice, its literal definition is astoundingly vague. Success, as defined

in the dictionary, is the accomplishment of an aim or a purpose. The aim or purpose as to what you are seeking to accomplish within your practice is not only vast, but it is also completely unique. This uniqueness then makes it incredibly hard for a team to work toward a common goal that has not been defined because each person within that team has their own definition for success.

So how do we do this? How do you define success for yourself, the practice, and for your team? One of the areas I focus on with my clients and their teams is defining what makes them unique and different from their competition; in essence what is your "Dr. Smile Maker Way?" of doing things. At face value this seems like an easy task, but when I have a team and their doctor do exercises to define what this is, I find that everyone in the practice usually has a different idea as to what that "Dr. Smile Maker Way" is. We need to identify what the core values of the doctor are, his or her vision for the practice, and ways in which the team can be a reflection of the values. We need team members that represent the essence of the "Dr. Smile Maker Way" in everything they do and say as well as how they react and interact.

Once an office has defined the "Dr. Smile Maker Way" for the practice, review the "way" often and make sure that everyone in the office understands that success will be achieved by following the "Dr. Smile Maker Way." In my eyes, a practice is successful when the entire team has bought into the doctor's vision, and they are working diligently together to achieve specific goals in order to make the practice's dreams a reality!

Want more team building nuggets? Be sure to come see my lecture titled Teamwork...Can it Really Make the Dream Work? at the Ortho2 Users Group Meeting. [⓪](#)

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About the Author



Jill Allen is the owner of Jill Allen & Associates, a full service orthodontic practice management consulting firm with a special focus on new practice start-ups and doctors who have been in business eight years or less. She is speaking at the 2017 Users Group Meeting.