



ORTHO2

Finding New Growth in a Desert Setting

by **Carol Eaton**

The desert has never been one of my vacation destinations, and yet many people proclaim that its beauty is unmatched. As we plan to gather for the 2009 Ortho2 Users Group Meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona, I figured it was a good time to explore this desert setting and see what valuable lessons can be learned from it and applied to the daily process in an orthodontic practice.

When I think of the desert, I visualize brown, dusty flat land spotted with statues of grayish-green, thorny, cactus—a parched and dry environment in need of a mirage with water fountains, swaying palm trees, bright-colored flowers, and tall cool drinks to refresh and rejuvenate a person back to life.

After three busy months of summer production in an orthodontic office, by September you can feel like your energy and excitement have been left in the dry and dusty desert. You might be searching for a mirage yourself and wondering how to regain some energy and motivation to finish out the year as well as make plans for the New Year full of new goals.

Although they are the reason we come to work each day, there are ironically times when you feel patients and parents get in the way of being the best team, the most efficient doctor, manager, clinical assistant, lab tech, scheduling coordinator, records tech, financial coordinator, treatment coordinator, or any one of your specific roles.

So what might your mirage look like when you are feeling like this? What do you and your team need to avoid feeling parched and dried up? How can you make the mirage a reality with obtainable goals?

Goals to Consider

- Keep production at an even keel throughout the year, avoiding significant drops during slower production periods.
- Plan to meet with your team to discuss topics such as “What worked well this past summer?” or “What did

we learn this summer that we would do differently next year?” and “What tools, training, or additional team members will we need to better prepare for next summer?”

- Share the fruits of your hard labor with your team by scheduling a year-end celebration of goals that were met as well as networking for new goals.
- Review your schedule and make any necessary adjustments needed for school schedules, school holidays, and early-release days throughout the year.
- Create a stronger protocol for connecting with pre-treatment patients and monitoring starts to balance out potential slower production months.
- Educate your patients/parents and referral sources about pre-planning for flex/cafeteria plans (using all monies set aside for the current year and submitting fees for the new year).
- Run thorough reports to make sure all of your Phase I and Interim patients have scheduled Phase II evaluation appointments.
- Evaluate your marketing calendar and events as you prepare the new calendar, marketing events, and a marketing budget.
- Coordinate efforts with your referral offices for scheduled “Lunch and Learn” programs, appreciation seminars, and private events for their teams.
- Invite all siblings of existing patients (especially those age 7 or older) and parents of patients to visit your office for a complimentary evaluation including diagnostic records if they are ready to begin treatment.

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About the Author



Carol Eaton has been actively involved with the dental and orthodontic community for over 35 years in her varied roles as Practice Management Consultant and Treatment Coordinator, and as a Registered Dental Assistant with hands-on experience in general dentistry and orthodontics.

An accomplished speaker, she is best known for her expertise in training treatment coordinators and streamlining the new patient process, she also focuses on enhanced communications, internal and external marketing, team building, and presenting your practice message in a fun and professional format.

Carol can be contacted through her website: www.eatonconsulting.ws. She will present the keynote session and an additional class on team communication at the 2009 Ortho2! Users Group Meeting.

- Research insurance benefits for all of your patients and check to see if there is also adult coverage that you can pass on to the parents as well as the HR departments of area companies/businesses.
- Invest in continuing education for your team members to enhance their skills in computer entry, digital imaging, fine-tuning your schedule, running/reading Ortho2 reports, new clinical tips/techniques, inter-personal relationships, selling/promotional skills, patient/parent education, and customer-service skills.

Mark your calendar for February 2009 and plan to bring your entire team to the desert to work on creating your vision (your mirage) and learning new shared "tools of the trade" from the Ortho2 team along with a variety of management consultants and trainers in the field.

Invest the time, training, and energy in the team that supports you throughout the year. Find out how to make your mirage a reality: reaching the goals and objectives you have as individuals as well as collectively as a powerful work team.

As author Jim Collins states in *From Good to Great*, "Good is the Enemy of Great"; it is imperative that we establish standards in our individual practices that elevate us to a higher level of clinical delivery, customer service, and perceived value. ◊