



ORTHO2

# The Five Habits of Highly Successful Orthodontists

Often when people need help or inspiration, they look to others who have already achieved success in the area(s) where they are looking to excel. First published in 1989, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* became the bible for people looking to achieve success. It's sold more than 25 million copies in 40 languages worldwide, was listed by *Time* magazine as one of "The 25 Most Influential Business Management Books" in 2011, and remains one of the bestselling nonfiction business books in history. Throughout the last 34 years of consulting to orthodontic practices, I've observed a set of common habits held by highly successful orthodontists. These five habits may surprise you because they are more closely related to personal behavior and leadership skills than to clinical excellence, but they are clear indicators of success.

## Habits for Success

Successful people are where they are today because of their habits. In fact, it's been proven that habits determine 95% of a person's behavior. Everything that you are and that you'll ever accomplish is determined by the habits you form. Looking for your own success? Follow these five habits of highly successful orthodontists:

- 1. Build powerful practice cultures.** Practice culture is the overall environment, behavior, attitude, and approach for your practice's daily activities. It starts with the leader—the highly successful orthodontist. I recently worked with an orthodontist to help him implement a new culture based on the concept that "getting the people right" is more important than focusing on the dentistry. When you focus on getting the people right, everything else takes care of itself. We developed a 15-point culture that we referred to as the "Who Culture," which clearly defines the type of employee that works in this practice. Based on this culture, the practice increased revenues by 57% in a 12-month period of time. The orthodontist gives all of the credit to building a culture that motivates and

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inspires the team, and coaching the team to live the culture every day.

- 2. Continue their education.** You may think this refers simply to getting continuing education credits but it's much more than that. It refers to a continual learning process, including both clinical and non-clinical areas, that allows orthodontists to be challenged, seek out and learn new opportunities, and be prepared for change. Highly successful orthodontists spend over half their time reading all kinds of materials on topics including business, self-improvement, history, and economics. This allows them to continue to increase their knowledge, understand changes in the economy and dentistry, and become aware of opportunities that they may not have seen before.
- 3. Make decisions quickly and act quickly.** Successful orthodontists know that 98% of all decisions really don't matter. Even if they get the decision wrong it will not have a serious impact on their life. So what they're left with is the 2% of the decisions they make that can have a significant impact if they choose badly. Understanding that the stakes are so high, these orthodontists employ experts for these significant decisions, so that they can make and act on them quickly.
- 4. Make plans.** In observing highly successful orthodontists, I often note that they always have a plan and it's no secret that people who plan are typically more successful. When you have a plan you know where you're going and work steadily in that direction. Whether it's opening another office, adding team members, implementing a new service, or investing back into the practice, successful

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orthodontists typically have a set direction to follow. They are also good at recognizing when their plan is not going to work and when it's time to back off and cut their losses.

5. **Accept mistakes.** I mentioned above that highly successful orthodontists have a lower number of failures than others because they surround themselves with advisors. However, everyone makes mistakes. The difference is that when highly successful orthodontists make mistakes they accept it and move on. They recognize that sometimes things just don't work out. They may experience a financial loss or even some embarrassment, but they don't let it deter them and they keep moving forward. For them, failure is a necessary evil and the stepping stone to the next opportunity.

Highly successful orthodontists have a number of traits in common. The above five habits are typical of most highly successful orthodontists and anyone who can adopt them and truly live them will enjoy great success. ♡

## About the Author

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