



ORTHO2

# Turn Your Resolutions into Routine

by **LeeAnn Peniche**

**R**esolutions. The ultimate in New Year's folklore... we hear about them, we may even make them, but few actually keep them. They are shrouded in both mystery (why can't we follow through with these personal and seemingly simple goals?) and hope (THIS year, we will stick with it and lose that weight, pursue that career, think more positively...) But like most things, resolutions are easier said than done. Why? Because they lose priority in the day-to-day routine of life. We fall back into familiar patterns, roles, and mindsets until the next January 1st, when we begin the charade all over again.

But it does not have to be that way. **If we truly prioritize what seems so important to us every New Year, we can follow through and turn our resolutions into our routine.** But what exactly does that mean for the orthodontic practice? Unfortunately, for the mediocre office, it means nothing. But for the exceptional practice, it means striving as always to excel, despite the day, the workload, the difficult patient, or anything else that stands in the way of excellence.

In simple terms, the superior practice resolves on a daily basis to provide the highest level of service and care possible to each and every patient (not just the easy ones). The phenomenal orthodontic office sets manageable goals, embraces realistic ways of measuring progress, and offers team members support, encouragement, and practical help in order to make the daily routine one of stability and success.

**So what are your practice goals?** Are they tangible, attainable, and exciting? They should be. Stop putting off that planning meeting, sit down together, and take some time as a cohesive group to think about your mission and ascertain how each daily action fits into the big picture. During this time, it is imperative that you set real goals and provide yourselves with a plan of action and solutions to office challenges. For instance, if your desire is to increase case acceptance, exams, or starts, attach a firm number

to your goal and strategize a realistic plan to make it happen. If your goal is to grow your practice by 35% in the coming year, you should be giving patients good financial options, offering friends and family savings to increase referrals, providing new technologies, and promoting the fact that you offer them. If your goal is to increase word-of-mouth referrals, you should provide referral cards to every patient, hold fun events to which patients can invite family and friends, and be building relationships with referring doctors and staff. Many times, we set such goals, but we don't readily seek out the solutions to reach them or put a firm plan into action. This is where we lose momentum and fall short of our good intentions. **So make the goal, make a plan, and make it work for you!**

No matter what your ultimate goal, service should be your top priority. After all, the concept of superior patient service is what sets the successful practice apart from the stagnant one. Orthodontic staff must feel compelled to provide each patient service with a smile, making it more than a cliché, but rather a commitment to excellence. Just think how you could change the course of a patient's day with a kind word, gentle care, and a sincere smile. Then think how you could change your practice by making this a daily routine, along with offering effective treatments, flexible payment options, and ease of scheduling. Can your resolutions change the course of your practice's future? Most certainly, and now's the time to turn your goals into action and watch the magic happen!

So in the spirit of the New Year, and as part of our mission to offer the kind of service that elicits real smiles, resolve to make your practice's goals a priority. Set a time to hold an annual planning meeting and organize your thoughts for the coming year as a team, making sure to write them

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Reprinted from  
**The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2**  
January 2008 - Volume 26 Issue 1

down. This will help you to formulate a firm plan of action and give you the ability to hold each other accountable. Make your plan tangible, attainable, and manageable. Reward each other for meeting your goals and make this year's resolutions more than fleeting. Resolve to be flexible, focused, and fun and watch your practice get in shape, emanate excellence, and become the success it can be! ☺

## About the Author

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As president of Peniche & Associates, Ms. Peniche has more than 25 years of orthodontic experience in both clinical and management roles. For the past 18 years, she has worked with more than 1500 practices in case acceptance, scripting, marketing, systemization, and the business of orthodontics.

At the 2008 Users Group Meeting, she will present *Wow the New Patient: How to Create the Atmosphere and Communicate the Message*, and Peniche & Associates will be exhibiting.

For more information on Peniche & Associates, contact them at 503 666-8538 or visit their website at [www.leeannpenicheandassociates.com](http://www.leeannpenicheandassociates.com).