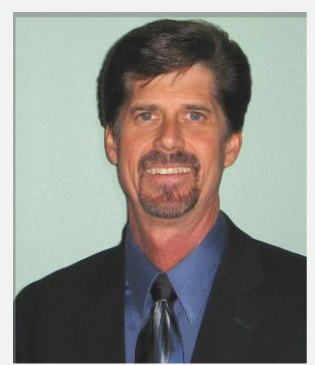


## Orthodontic Management Is Easy!

“That is so easy!” exclaimed my new associate. “This stuff is not so hard after you have learned it.” After 28 years of teaching orthodontic management and marketing to over four hundred offices I often feel that it is so simple and easy. Then I remember that everything is easy *after* someone has shown you how to do it, and impossible if I have never seen it before. Orthodontic management for many doctors seems so difficult, and yet if they will take the time to study and understand the basics of management and they are shown how to manage properly, they will quickly become excellent managers who produce better results and create a more enjoyable workplace.



Ken Alexander, Consultant

How a doctor manages his or her office usually determines the size, success and satisfaction of the office. The following are **ten key areas for orthodontic management** that are easy to learn if you have someone show you how to do them properly:

1. **Personnel management** is necessary to develop a strong team that works together to achieve common goals. Unfortunately, developing people takes time, so the manager must set aside time to work with his/her team.
  - Set aside one lunch and learn for clinical staff every month to train on a different procedure or type of visit. Work through each step of the Initial Bonding, Debonding and major procedures one at a time each month and at the end of the year ... perfecto! Assistant training will be a breeze.
  - Set aside another lunch each month to work with front offices staff and coach on scheduling and finances.
  - Hold team meetings once every six weeks to deal with global issues that affect the team as a whole.
  - Take a team member aside quickly to correct any errors or issues of performance the same day or by the next day. Just say what needs to be said and move on, allowing your personnel to trust that you do not hold anything against them. Fix problems, without blame or scolding, and no arguing about things. We all need to learn to accept constructive criticism as the only way we can get better at what we do.
  - Remember that your greatest tool for team building is praise and appreciation. Lavish deserved praise on individuals, not just the team, and keep negativity to a minimum.
2. **Scheduling** impacts every area of the practice from customer service to growth to satisfaction with the job. If you do not have a strong On-Time, Doctor Time Scheduling system with up to date Templates, contact Millenium immediately, as scheduling is the life blood of your practice!
3. **Patient Cooperation management** is vital to obtaining excellent results. Do you have a system for consistent rewards and corrections? Wooden nickels are only as good as the team that uses them effectively. Pass out a Report Card at every visit and be sure to train your assistants in step by step scripting for handling late and breakage patients. A loose or broken bracket and a late patient is not a disaster, but a common nuisance that must be overcome with great principles and procedures.

Always remember... **“No regularly scheduled patient should be kept waiting because of a poor cooperator!”**

4. **New Patient Enrollment management** is necessary to effectively sell your services. There is so much more to effective marketing than just getting patients started. You want your New Patient Visit to be such a big WOW that the New Patient is sending their friends next week to your practice. Millenium designed the Treatment Coordinator position 35 years ago and still has some of the very best step by step procedures and marketing tools available. Make your New Patient Visits a WOW and watch your practice double and triple in size, if your scheduling system can keep up!
5. **Financial management** must produce invoices, take in the money and pay for expenses. In most cases your computer program will do most of the organization of the work quite effectively, but you as a great manager must meet with your Financial Coordinator once a month and review the numbers, review the write-offs, and review who is in collections to decide what to do with them.

Also, Financial management must include looking at your P & L at least once a quarter and be sure that each major category of expense is coming within a normal target percentage, and if not, go hunting for the problem. Do not wait until the end of the year to discover that your profit margin is off by 5-10% in lost profits.

6. **Forms management** creates all the necessary forms and distributes them at the right time to patients. Just having the right forms and letters that are consistently handed out or mailed out can help organize a practice. There are only 8-10 major forms needed to run an orthodontic practice... do you know what they are and are they working effectively in your practice?
7. **Customer service** must be managed to create a place where patients enjoy their visits and are willing to refer their friends and family. Be creative and spend a little. Don't you think that a patient deserves to get back 1% of what they pay you in perks and rewards? Coffee service, Contests, DB celebrations and Wooden Nickels... please do not skimp on these vital Internal Marketing tools for running a successful practice.
8. **Dental referral management** must develop relationships with the area dentists and keep them informed and properly thanked for their referrals. Again, be creative and spend a little, not a lot. Try to do something that no one else has thought of to simply say, “thank you” to your referral sources on at least a quarterly basis. Remember, the best marketing to area dentists is your customer service and your quality of care. Be on target with these things and then your muffins and other gifts will become far more effective.
9. **Quality controls** are management tools that must be maintained to produce consistently excellent results. Can't seem to feel like you have a handle on consistent quality? Then fly a friend or two into your practice and have them take a look ... “as iron sharpens iron!” Don't stay in a rut but find out the solutions and make your cases consistently good to great! It is not the appliance that will save you, but knowledge is power!

**... and perhaps the most difficult management of them all is to...**

10. **Manage oneself** to be disciplined, to be on time, to be kind and considerate and to move forward to my goals and greater success. Management can be so difficult IF you are not able to first manage yourself and your own weaknesses. Have a consultant come in and beg him to tell you what you need to change to be a far more effective manager. Ask your trusted and valued team members to give you two things each month that you can change to make the practice far more successful. We all have things we will be working on all of our lives, and the more we invite constructive criticism and take it to heart, without letting it paralyze us, we grow and develop and become more joyful and successful in life. Be always learning and growing, knowing that you can do anything you set your mind to do. If you can become an orthodontist you can certainly train your mind to be a great person and a terrific manager who builds up people and makes them all strong around you.

Ken Alexander has been the director of **Millenium Management Services** for the past 25 years and is one of the most highly respected orthodontic consultants in the world. He lectures regularly throughout the USA and Europe and has been a consultant to well over 500 orthodontic practices. His areas of specialty include all areas of orthodontic practice management, especially Scheduling, New Patient Enrollment, Staff Management, Customer Service and Marketing. Ken also has a significant consulting practice in transitions work, helping orthodontic transitions with Buy, Sell, Valuations and Partnerships. You can find out more about Ken by visiting his Website at [www.KenAlexander.com](http://www.KenAlexander.com) or contact him directly at [KenAlexander2@aol.com](mailto:KenAlexander2@aol.com).