

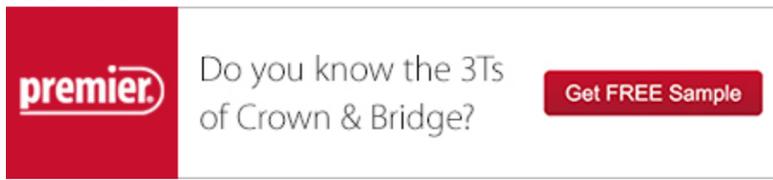


5 ways to be SMART about your goals

By Jay Geier, DrBicuspid.com contributing writer

February 1, 2017 -- There are 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week, and 365 days in a year.

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Jay Geier is the president and founder of the Scheduling Institute.

We all have the same amount of time, and although you can't change time, you can change what you choose to do with it. So I challenge you to carve out some time this week to revisit and reprioritize your goals. Do some goals that made sense even a month ago seem less important or relevant than before? Now is the perfect time to assess that.

In *The 80/20 Principle*, Richard Koch describes highly effective goals as "thoroughly planned, written, stated in the present tense, stated positively, time-bound, challenging and reasonable, consistent with your personal mission statement and specific and measurable." As a private practice owner, I'm sure you know that goals are what drive all successful businesses and people, but you may not have considered setting them with quite as much thought.

As a guideline, we like to counsel that goals should be SMART. By which I mean they should be the following:

- Specific
Measureable
- Attainable
 - Realistic
 - Time-bound

And when it comes to goal-setting, it's important to remember that it is not as simple as throwing out a number that seems reasonable. In fact, if it seems reasonable, it is probably too low. I've witnessed countless doctors set goals low, so they can be sure they will reach them. But goals should be something that you strive for, without the guarantee.

We encourage our clients to set stretch goals -- the ones that seem crazy at the time, but with some creative planning and a lot of effort, they can be met. Goals are not a guarantee or even a number you think you can get without much effort. They require work and persistence to achieve, so it's important to stop and celebrate the milestones. Accomplishing 80% of your goal, believe it or not, should be celebrated! That means you will definitely hit it the next time if you put forth the effort.

5 strategies

Often it takes some ingenuity and creativity to hit the goals we've set. And since you're still in the first quarter, you have plenty of time to implement some strategies that can help boost your efforts toward your year-end goals. Here are some of my tried-and-true strategies.

1. Ramp up your customer service

I've written about this in the past, but it bears repeating. You need to think like a retailer and treat your patients like valued customers. Customer service impacts word-of-mouth perception, patient reviews, repeat visits, patients for life, referrals, and so many other integral variables that impact your practice.

2. Set public goals

Seems obvious, but if we asked your team members what your practice's new-patient goal is, what would they say? Set a goal and make sure that everyone on your team is aware of it -- write it down and post it for all to see. Goals help your team stay focused on a result, which will help you stay on track month after month.

3. Invest in your practice

And I don't mean in fancy, high-end equipment that will go unused (that's a big mistake). I mean invest in your people. By training them to be better professionally and personally, you leverage your practice's greatest asset. This will give you a more engaged team better suited to help you reach your goals.

4. Give back

We have found that most employees prefer to associate with businesses that give back. And having the team on board allows you to stay focused year-round. The more you make, the more you can give back. Come together as a team to determine how you want to give back this year.

5. Use hours to your advantage

Again, you're needing to think like a retailer. Don't forget that people have more time to come in for appointments while they have time off (think weekends and holidays) or in the evenings or early mornings. Something as little as adding a few hours to your week, could put you ahead of the competition and on your way to a new-patient goal.

So sit down, take a minute, and think about what goals you should have in place for the remainder of the quarter and beyond. It is time to re-evaluate, reset, and prioritize your goals so that you can be sure to stay on track. Make sure that everyone involved in the goal is focused on it and that you are tracking the results daily, weekly, and monthly. The more you track your goals, the better your results will be.

Jay Geier is the founder and owner of the *Scheduling Institute*, a dental training and practice consulting company. For more information on practice building success strategies, visit [here](#).

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