

Success Without Drama: Stay Focused on Your Key Measurable Outcomes

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Practice management by statistics has been around since the first chiropractor compared the number of patients he saw one day with the number he saw the previous day. Most chiropractors who have had some training in practice management, from a mentor, colleague or professional coach, monitor their practices by measuring some set of practice statistics. These stats typically include the number of new patients, number of office visits, services rendered, and income collected. Some practitioners monitor patient visit average, the number of missed appointments, number of rescheduled appointments and a whole array of other metrics.

While all of these areas are important to the success of your practice, managing your practice by statistics is like driving your car while looking only through your rear view mirror. Practice statistics tell you little about where your practice is headed and give you little information about what changes you need to make now in order to change the direction of your practice in the future.

What Are Your Priorities?

Focusing on too many statistics at one time can impede the success of your practice. According to management guru Steven Covey, monitoring more than three priorities for your practice will result in less-than-excellent performance in one or more of the areas you are focusing on. If you focus on three or less priorities, the chance of accomplishing all with excellence is close to 100%. If you focus on four priorities, two will get done with excellence and two will fall short of your goal. Focus on five or more priorities and, Covey says, you'll accomplish one with excellence and fall short in all of the other areas. In the case of statistics, less is indeed more!

With this concept in mind, what can you measure, in advance of success versus failure, so that you and your practice team know that you are approaching success or are about to get blindsided? Don't work on too many things at the same time. When you are confronted with a buffet, it can be hard to pick just one item! Don't measure everything that moves. Measure only what you want to move. [Focus your metrics on your key performance indicators \(KPI\)](#). These are the two to three measurable outcomes that let your team know what is expected of them and if they are on the right track.

Get Focused With Key Performance Indicators

How do you determine the key performance indicators for your practice? Review the practice statistics that you currently measure. If you don't measure practice statistics, this process is a great place to begin. Ask yourself, "What are the top two to three areas of my practice that keep me up worrying at night?" What is your "gut" telling you is "on fire" and needs attention? Listen to your gut, determine what is important to you, and then measure it.

Drama is the silent killer of excellence and growth. Without monitoring statistics that you have control over, your focus of attention constantly shifts from putting out one fire to the next one as it inevitably flares up. Your energy and confidence rises and falls with how well you handled the most recent crisis. Save the drama for your mama! You and your team need measurable numbers that let you know if the action you are taking is succeeding or not. Have objective "success criteria" so that you don't have to lead by your feelings.

Success criteria let you know how well you are doing relative to your goal. Success criteria tell you if you are up or down in a particular area. Set success criteria specific to your practice. I recommend using a "rolling" average of three months to set your success criteria. This means your success criteria is the average of your level of performance in the indicator you are measuring over the previous three months. In this way your success criteria are always kept up to date with your current performance.

Create a Dashboard of Success Criteria

You can make the subjective objective by creating a "dashboard" of the success criteria for your KPI metrics. Just like the gauges on the dashboard of your car track its performance, creating a dashboard of your performance indicators in a visual format can help you track the performance of your practice. Your dashboard is used to measure action against your success criteria. You can use the colors of a traffic light to create your dashboard. Red indicates failure, yellow indicates an area that needs improvement, and green is your goal. Add "super green" to indicate performance that surpasses your goal. For example, if your goal for new patients is 30 for the month, 30 would be your green and above that would be super green. Provide an "accelerator bonus" when your team hits super green!

Your practice is a small business, which means that everyone has a "day job." You are not Fortune 500 executives who can delegate special projects to a host of employees. Your success depends upon each member of your team taking action to improve your KPIs. Post your dashboard in an area where every member of your team has ready access to it. Each week review your dashboard, monitor the color of your indicators, and make decisions on how to direct your energies to make this week count.

Have your team members review the status of your dashboard before you meet. This will allow you to spend the majority of your time solving problems, not reporting on the status of your dashboard. Have meetings that focus on who, what and by when. Don't have the "second meeting" where you talk about the "first meeting" and what didn't get done. Standout practices meet weekly to problem solve for solutions and determine what activities they need to focus on to improve their results.

Start Right Now - Ask, "What Can I Do?"

A practice isn't human, the team members who work there are. It requires personal accountability from each member of your practice team to move the key performance indicators on your dashboard. Write down an action step that each team member promises to focus their efforts on that week in order to advance your KPIs. Get specific by getting personal. If your performance indicator is new patients, a personal objective would be: "I commit to asking a minimum of two patients each day for a referral." When it comes down to accountability, you must know who promises to do what and by when they commit to doing it.

Focusing on your priority key performance indicators pulls your team in the same direction. Remember, unless it's written down, it won't get done. Make the commitment to your team to write down their personal accountabilities and watch your practice soar into super green!

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