



# Time to Write a New Mission Statement

by Rosemary Bray

The beginning of a new year often brings with it the need to take a look at your life, your successes, your goals, and your practice overall. It's a great time to revamp some systems, get those needed updates, redecorate a reception room, try that different bracket, hire a new team member, look into a better camera, etc.

So why not refresh an aged, outdated mission statement? Especially if it is one you bought years ago, copied from a classmate, found in some book, or "borrowed" off someone else's website!

The power to achieve the life of your dreams or the practice of your dreams is in your hands, and the first step toward activating it is identifying the specific goals that will make your dreams real. Success or failure as a human being is not a matter of luck, circumstances, fate, or any of the other tiresome old clichés. It's much easier to get what you want out of life when you know where you're going.

To quote a remarkably brilliant character in *Alice in Wonderland*, the Cheshire Cat is willing to help Alice find her way out of the dark, frightening forest. To better direct her, he asks her where she is headed. Of course, she has no clue and tells him she doesn't know! To that, he remarks, **"If you don't know where you're going, then any road will take you there!"** Hmmmm, is he talking to Alice, or to us?

A mission statement need only be a sentence to a paragraph long, but if it has specific, measurable purposes and a deadline for accomplishing the outcome, it truly can be the best way to start your journey to success. And it's easy for you to put one together in a simple, one team meeting process. Jim Rohn said, "You cannot change your destination overnight, but you can change your direction overnight." Creating an alive, *real* mission statement can help you change your direction. If you have no mission statement, then at the end of one team meeting, you could have made the shift from an ordinary existence to an

extraordinary existence.

What does your mission statement say and is it true about you? Do you read it daily and do you, as I like to say... Eat it, breathe it, live it, and be it?

A mission statement is having goals and perhaps a purpose of achieving them. I like when a statement indicates a *why* or purpose to your career, profession, or practice. This is opposed to the notion that a mission statement is just a bunch of flowery, general phrases like "I will be the best orthodontist I can be." It's no wonder that a lot of people have this type of mission statement sitting in their desk drawer! If it never makes it past the plaque on the wall, then it is a waste of walnut, printing, and time.

An excellent example of a public mission statement was made back in 1960, when John F. Kennedy said that we would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade—a clear goal with a specific timeline for its achievement. And despite enormous challenges, by mid-1969, Neil Armstrong had taken that "one giant step for mankind." He made himself accountable for it.

Anyone can easily create a mission statement—whether it's for your practice or personal life. Living it is entirely another thing. It also must be framed and posted in view for the world to hold you accountable for it. Do not allow it to be on page 14 of an office manual that is stored on a shelf. I ask ortho team members and doctors everywhere to recite their mission for me. Sadly, many cannot do it and far too many say they don't even have one.

1. **Why is it so important to have a personal mission statement?** The highest achievers in any field view themselves as self-employed. They have the attitude that they run their own business, even if they are

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affiliated with a major corporation, or an ortho practice! And so they develop a sense of “mission” about their career, taking a proactive approach to create the results they want. And their mission statement guides them. This is in contrast with “average” people, who view themselves as employees and react to the ups and downs of the economy. Top producers will take charge. They realize that they can’t wait until external factors, like the marketplace, get better... but that *they* must get better if they intend to achieve their goals.

Which group do you want to be in—the top 3% of achievers or the 97% of “average” people? Your personal mission statement, practice mission statement, and your clearly defined goals with timelines are going to help make the difference.

Practices that have a written philosophy of practice:

1981	1987	1993	1999	2007	2009
22.1%	34.2%	44.5%	48.5%	57.3%	59.8%

Case starts for practices that have a written practice philosophy:

Don't Have One	Do Have One
221.9	263.3

Source: JCO Practice Study, November 2009

Practices that do have a written practice philosophy perform at higher levels! Especially if they read it daily, know it and truly live its words.

**2. Are goals and mission statements connected?** Base your goals directly on your mission statement. If you’ve created your mission statement with “big” goals to achieve by one year from today, you’ll need to perhaps break them down into quarterly or monthly goals.

Stephen Covey has a great quote in his book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. He says, “If you don’t set your goals based upon your Mission Statement, you may be climbing the ladder of success only to realize, when you get to the top, you’re on the *wrong building*.” Amen!

**3. What to include in a great mission statement?** When writing a mission statement or renewing your existing one (which you should do periodically during your annual team retreat) draft a hand-written or typed paragraph, describe your best characteristics and how you express them, have specific, measurable outcomes, state a purpose, and since this is a team effort, incorporate words from each person on the team. Have everyone contribute a word, or a phrase that they feel is critical to your practice success. You can have everyone write their contribution on an index card, place them all on a table and then begin to shuffle them around trying to create a paragraph incorporating everyone’s dream, purpose, and reason for coming to work every day.

That is the easy part. The real work begins when you **Learn It... Eat It... Sleep It... Know It... Believe It... and... BECOME IT!** ☺

When I left my wonderful job in an ortho office, now 14 years ago, to begin a new full time career in speaking and consulting, I had *no* Mission Statement. I only knew I wanted one.

I attended a Zig Ziglar conference in San Diego to learn more about being successful and confident, and there I read one of Zig’s most famous quotes. I knew instantly—that is what I wanted to say!

So I bought one of his books and stood in the long, long line of other people who wanted their books autographed. When it finally became my turn to meet him, I

extended my hand and told him who I was, that I was considering leaving my full time occupation as someone else’s employee to start out on my own, and that I needed to have a mission statement. I recited his meaningful quote to him and asked very politely if I could use it as my own mission statement because it was already proving to be very true in my life. I also promised to always give him credit for having created the saying.

Mr. Ziglar got up from his chair, came around the table to me, engulfed me with his arms, and in his Alabama twang pretty much said, “You take it young lady and

good luck to you!” That moment I shall never forget though I am sure he has ☺.

The quote is framed in my office and appears in every e-mail I send. It has become my mantra, if you will, and every joy and success in my professional life is because of what it says and how much I believe in it. It has enabled me to see the world in the name of “work,” visiting such superb places as Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Africa, and 49 states. And it brings me to the Ortho2 Users Meeting once again in February to speak about the importance of communication in the practice.

**“You will get everything in life that you want, if you help enough other people get what they want.”**

Those are powerful words, and in my life, very true words.

# About the Author

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Rosemary Bray is an orthodontic consultant, trainer, and professional speaker with more than 30 years experience in the dental profession. She presented the keynote session at the 2011 Ortho2 Users Group Meeting in New Orleans.