Weighing Your **Options**

**Orthodontists’ Key to Certainty and Achieving Desired Results**

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**Thicket!**

Going forward involves a constant stream of decisions. Major decisions for orthodontists like practice transition planning or even day-to-day practice staff issues require effective resolution. Certain tools can help and this material provides an introduction to predictive indicators and probability factors. A perspective on recent global scale economic and political events can put orthodontic practice travails in perspective. But the important point is that looking at your future and assuming it will go forward, like some very large companies and even countries did before and during the economic crisis, is fraught with uncertainty and to be avoided.

1. **Put Yourself In This Doctor’s ...And Daughter’s ... and Associate’s Shoes**

   Owner orthodontist is 66, good health, sees no reason to stop practicing, wife works in the practice and provides most of the practice administration. Their daughter will join the practice in 15 months as a newly minted orthodontist. She has not looked at any other practices to join because she and her parents have always planned for her to be in the practice. The practice has had an associate for the last two years who has been “ramping up”. Owner likes the associate very much, saying he is “high caliber” and a “go getter”. Both owner doctor and wife would like to put in “less time”. Long time staff wants a raise and views the daughter in the context of her growing up years. Note: there is not sufficient space for even two doctors to practice comfortably full-time with adequate staff. Everyone is counting on the practice owner to make ”it” happen.

2. **A Look (Generally and Specifically) At Predictive Indicators**

   Primary Repeating Areas. Decisions that trip up owners most often have indicators that tie to doctor age, practice age, location and demographics. Space is certainly among the top three areas causing the greatest personal, practice and financial concerns for practice owners, prospective owners and those entering practice. Regarding staff, the often overlooked predictive indicators include aspects of depth of experience and training tied to compensation vs. loyalty and longevity tied to compensation. On timing aspects, the range of practice initiatives that require advance planning grows ever longer the more complex the practice. On secondary factors, each practice and doctor has issue specific areas that require attention in the planning and execution stages.
3. Probability Assessment

Classic decision tree analysis. Consider the worst outcome. For example, with a prospective associate he/she does not integrate, does not build the practice, you have paid compensation and there is little return, and he/she leaves. Consider the best outcome. The best is basically the opposite of the previous, you make a return on the associate and the practice investment, and you end up with a partner. The next step is to assign a probability to each outcome. Once you have a solid feel for the probability for each path you can approach making a decision. If you can see a 40-50% chance of the worst outcome I generally do not suggest proceeding. If you can see 70% or greater probability for the best outcome, then I generally suggest proceeding.

The above are two important areas for you to review and apply when approaching significant practice development and transition questions. Use your subjective judgment and intuition below.

![Approach to Decision Making](image)

- **Think**: My dilemma relating to a decision I need to make is:
- **Reflect**: My options are:
- **GO**: Answer these:
  - #1 What are the two most obvious alternatives from the list of options?
  - #2 What are the outcomes for each alternative and an estimate of probability?
Further Reading ▪ Online Resources

For USA Perspective on Financial Crisis
http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-FCIC/content-detail.html

US Treasury Policy Response and Charts
http://www.treasury.gov/connect/blog/Pages/The-Financial-Crisis-Five-Years-Later.aspx

International Monetary Fund Crisis of Confidence

‘It’s A Sony!” So What?
http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB1000142445270230668409457936721204873836

Further Reading ▪ Books

On Reality, Decision Making and Probability Theory

*Thinking, Fast and Slow*, by Daniel Kahneman Nobel Prize winning psychologist

“Humans are incorrigibly inconsistent in making summary judgments of complex information”


*Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions*, by Dan Ariely

Amazon Order Link: [Http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0061353248/bernaffiinc-20](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0061353248/bernaffiinc-20)

On Making Better Decisions

*Decisive*, by Chip and Dan Heath

Coauthors also authored *Swith* and *Made to Stick*. A very complete review of research relating to how we make decisions and a step by step process for making better decisions.


On Issues Relating to Women

particularly as to expectations that adds to the discussion started by Sheryl Sandberg in *Lean In*

*Wonder Women*, by Debora Spar

Amazon Order Link: [Http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0374298750/bernaffiinc-20](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0374298750/bernaffiinc-20)