

BENCHMARKING AND THE POWER OF NO

Focus, not multitasking, is needed.

BY SEAN ROCHELLE



Although we are all in relatively the same line of work, we differ distinctly in who we are, the teams we have built, and the nuances of culture and process that permeate our respective practices. With that in mind, instead of specifically discussing benchmarking by the numbers and providing you with information on appropriate

ranges to achieve relative to net collections, new patient ratio, full-time-equivalent staff per full-time-equivalent provider, and so on, this article addresses the concept of benchmarking and challenges you to view it from a different perspective.

FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

Many resources are available that can guide you on the specifics of what your peers in the industry are doing and to what metrics and ranges you should aspire internally. Few address the importance of identifying metrics/goals/benchmarks that are important to your team at a given moment in time. Setting benchmark goals should certainly differ for those of you who are just beginning in practice versus those of you who have established a presence in the community through branding, superior patient care, and longevity. A sure way to disillusionment and possibly to failure is to choose benchmarks and goals that are unattainable for your practice. This is not to say that your practice will not review numerous benchmarks and track where you are relative to your own organization as well as national norms. Rather, I am advising that you focus on relatively few at a time, develop protocols and processes that fundamentally support achievement, and then articulate to your team why these benchmarks and goals are important and how you, as a team, will go about reaching them.

Every team or organization wants to be great at everything or at least gives lip service to that effect. Those that achieve that lofty goal do not do so overnight; they start by excelling at a few things on which they chose to focus initially. Having too many goals too soon can dilute energy and lead

you down the path of mediocrity. It takes discipline, focus, and an ability to communicate a vision to your team for you to reach goals through tracking benchmarks and mastering processes. Starting strong is relatively easy, but setting too many high-level benchmarks will create a sense of futility and frustration among those held accountable for achieving them.

SPORTS ANALOGIES

The ubiquity of athletics and my experience in that world lead me to use sports analogies. Think about a team you were a part of or of which you have been a fan over the years. It can be at any level—from junior high volleyball to professional football—because virtually every team shares some fundamental principles of success that apply to ophthalmic practices as well:

- Daily discipline
- Clearly established processes
- Defined identity
- Effective communication to foster trust
- Focus on what the team has determined is important





AT A GLANCE

- If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority. Setting too many high-level benchmarks will create a sense of futility and frustration among those held accountable for achieving them.
- Identify a few appropriate benchmarks that align with your organization's current priorities, and then focus on the processes it will take to achieve those standards.
- Allow nothing to distract you until your practice has attained these benchmarks and is able to connect this achievement to the processes that were required.

- Clearly articulated vision/goals/benchmarks
- Activity aligned with goals/benchmarks
- Continual review and assessment of performance

Teams or organizations that are not successful often fail at one or more of the aforementioned principles. For those of you in leadership positions within ophthalmology, the challenge is the same as if you were a head coach or general manager of a sports team: step back and objectively identify appropriate benchmarks that align with your organization's current priorities, and then focus on the processes it will take to achieve those standards.

MULTITASKING IS THE ENEMY

In today's world, it has become a sort of badge of honor to say you are an incredible multitasker. I would argue that too much multitasking is a recipe for mediocrity and an excuse for failure. Figure out what your practice's core priorities are at this moment, and choose benchmarks that directly align with these priorities. Allow nothing to distract you until your practice has attained these few benchmarks and is able to connect this achievement to the processes that were required. At that point, you and your team can choose new benchmarks that align with your vision and evolving priorities.

This advice is easy to write but extremely difficult to execute. Few of us have the discipline not to spend time on things outside the priorities we set. Saying yes to our priorities requires us to say no to something else. Good luck on moving the needle while staying out of the weeds! ■

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