



# How to Thrive (Not Just Survive) in the Next 5 Years

Follow these 10 traits of winners.

BY REM JACKSON

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many times you fail. Each time only makes you better, stronger, smarter, and you only have to be right once. Just once. Then everyone calls you an overnight success and you feel lucky. I still feel that way.”

multuous times and those who are just surviving or even failing. That difference has nothing to do with geography or demographics. There are no bad places to practice in the country. That difference has nothing to

**O**wning and operating a business is never easy. It can be rewarding and deeply fulfilling, but it is never easy. A podiatry practice is by definition a business that must be profitable so that it can continue to serve its patients and those who own and operate it. Every business has its unique set of challenges, though from the outside, it often appears to be easier than it actually is. Mark Cuban, the billionaire owner of the Dallas Mavericks, puts it this way: “It doesn’t matter how

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Podiatry is no different. It has its unique set of challenges and rewards just like every profession or vocation. Additionally, we are all living in a time of rapidly accelerating change that, while often very positive, can be extremely stressful.

There is a difference between doctors who are thriving in these tu-

do with the unique set of challenges that podiatrists are facing today. That difference is entirely dependent on the mindset of the doctor, the staff they hire and train, and the people with whom the doctor associates. This last point, whom we associate with, is best explained by Jim Rohn

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who said, “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”

To be clear everyone loses his or her MOJO from time to time. It’s a universal fact of life no one can avoid, but it quickly passes if your mindset and actions are focused on success and abundance instead of your limitations and problems.

## **The Difference**

There is a difference between people who are truly “home run” successful and those who are struggling or even failing. Here now are the 10 things home run hitters do every day that make the difference for them.

**1. The Winners Can See It.** They take the time to examine what they really want. Then they take abstract goals and boil them down to their essence and paint a crystal clear mental picture for themselves of what it will be like (or actually what it IS LIKE) to be living that picture. They don’t wait. They do it NOW in the PRESENT.

Winners can see it and continue to see it no matter what. It’s not easy to do this; in fact it is very difficult, and that is an important reason why more people (and more doctors) struggle than don’t.

*The Difference: Winners INSIST ON and fight for being able to “SEE IT.”*

**Action Item:** Resolve to uncover the goals that will give you a burning desire and a passion to achieve them and stay focused on those goals. Do it now rather than later.

**2. Winners Adopt a Plan.** In life and in your podiatry practice, amateurs “wing it” and professional script it. You need to have a plan that enables you to achieve your goals and that plan has to make good sense to you. Very few podiatrists have any business training that would assist them in developing a good common sense plan, but there are many companies and consultants who are able to guide you and your staff and help you build a plan that works for you.

It can be difficult to make good

choices about whom to use to help you be successful in your business. Luckily, it’s easier now than ever to get the information you need to help you make good choices because of the Internet. Forums like PM News are excellent resources to ask your colleagues what their experience has been with any product, service, or consultant. And just as you need great online reviews to help patients decide to use your services, these companies need to use them too. Do the research, ask your trusted colleagues, and make good decisions about who can help you.

ulates a philosophy that is simple and extremely powerful. “Transformative change occurs over time through a seemingly simple yet relentless plan.”

You simply can’t keep high intensity up for long periods of time. People who go on extreme diets and eat, for example, only kale or watermelon, cannot sustain that plan for long and usually suffer weight increases when they stop the ridiculous plan. Weight Watchers is so successful because it is an excellent plan that does not require extreme behavior. Those on Weight Watchers lose weight slowly and often can keep it off once they achieve

## **Planning in twelve-week periods is very helpful in maintaining your “Slight Edge” approach.**

It can be stressful to adopt solid business plans, and that causes many doctors to make no decisions. But be aware, not deciding, IS a decision. It is a decision to maintain the status quo (or worse). Simply ask yourself this question: “Can I keep this up for the next 10–20 years?” If the answer is no, get the help you need. On the business side of your practice you need plans for:

- Marketing
- Management Systems
- Employee Management (recruiting, hiring, and training)
- Finances and financial controls, including budgeting

There is no reason to suffer trying to learn business practices that others have perfected over years. Leverage their knowledge and skills and collapse your time-frames and move forward to greater profitability and less stress.

*The Difference: Winners adopt a plan and see it to fruition and then adopt new and more ambitious plans.*

**Action Item:** Do the research and get the help and support you need to build the practice that makes all of your personal and professional goals possible.

**3. Winners Use the Slight Edge.** Jeff Olson wrote an excellent book entitled *The Slight Edge*. In it, he artic-

their goal (if they do the maintenance plan). This is the very definition of “The Slight Edge.” Seemingly insignificant behaviors done over time can achieve large results if you don’t stop doing them.

Most of us do stop at the first roadblock or challenge. This is very common human behavior. But maintaining your plan, even when something happens (an employee or three employees quit on the same day for instance), is possibly the “secret” to success.

The Slight Edge takes reality into consideration. You must accept and work within your budget, time constraints, staffing, and other real considerations. Planning in twelve-week periods is very helpful in maintaining your “Slight Edge” approach. We can all stay focused and committed for 12 weeks. Annual plans can debilitate you because the deadline is so far in the future that you don’t begin and continue immediately so you can truly lose your momentum. As you build your plan, make sure very few tasks require you specifically (as opposed to others) to accomplish them. Use your staff and business partners to help you. If you try to do this yourself, you will fail.

**4. Winners Don’t Mind Hiring a Team (Local and Virtual).** This applies to almost everything you must do in your practice. You are an ex-

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pert in only two things: Podiatry and “Being You.”

Obviously there are many tasks that require you and your license. You need to hire and train the people on your team (or a virtual team) to do everything else. Doctors can-

ing in your practice. You must have the courage to hire people before you believe you can afford them, because they will make you so much more efficient, profitable, and relaxed if you take that leap of faith. Seek out successful colleagues and ask them about their staffing levels. And then follow their advice. Do

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## Doctors cannot hit home runs in their practice if they do it all themselves; no one can.

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This is complicated by the fact that we believe we don't have the money we need to hire the people we need. This is something every business faces, not just your podiatry practice. This is also possibly the key limiting factor you are fac-

not seek out struggling colleagues to confirm your belief to keep staffing levels very low. One rule of thumb is to have one more staff member than you actually need because, in very short order, you are going to need them. People come and people go; this is true in all businesses. Prepare for turnover and keep building an A-Team staff.

*The Difference: Winners invest in their people and that is what makes them home run hitters.*

**Action Item:** Resolve to hire the best people you can, equip and train them, and let them give you your nights and weekends back.

**5. Winners Are Reported to Regularly.** Home run hitters never wonder how things are going; they get regular detailed reports from their team and they read them. The number of doctors who look at their financials only once a year when it's tax time is shockingly high. Would you get in a plane flown by a pilot who only checks when it is in the air without knowing if there was enough fuel to get to the destination?

Home run hitters know their numbers. They know (at a minimum):

- What they are billing each month and what they are collecting.

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- How their collections compare to last year's collections.
- Their PVC (per visit charges) and their PVR (per visit revenue) for the last 12 months, and if it is up or down.
- Their accounts receivable by month and the percentages (this can be "the canary in the coal mine" for money troubles that might not become obvious for months, but can be devastating when they do emerge.
- Their marketing numbers and where their new patients are coming from.
- The key metrics in each of their departments in their practice.
- And they know more.

The home run hitters have their people report these numbers either daily, weekly, or monthly. They insist on it and they never have to run around trying to find information.

When they get really good at this, they know these numbers off the top of their head because they have gotten very good at monitoring them.

*The Difference: Winners receive and review their numbers every week.*

cy, and these meetings need to be scheduled during regular business hours.

You need to do this:

- To receive and discuss your reports and make decisions as a team about the actions you'll take to correct

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**Action Item:** Resolve to learn how to understand and use your numbers to control your practice's success.

**6. Winners Have a Commitment to Meetings and Training.** Every successful practice has regular meetings with their staff. Weekly is the optimal minimum frequen-

or enhance what you are learning.

- To conduct training to continuously improve the teams' performance. This can often include training on skills well known to the staff so that the performance doesn't degrade over time.

- To learn what is and is not working in the practice, and then

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“manage” by working with your team to keep the practice focused and successful.

In addition, morning “huddles” to discuss the coming day (10-minute or less stand-up meetings) are helpful, as are individual (as needed) meetings with staff members.

*The Difference: Winners meet with their people regularly and don't stop these meetings no matter what happens.*

**Action Item:** Resolve to begin meeting with your staff in a sustainable and productive plan.

**7. Winners Block Their Time.** There is one strategy that every business book author, consultant, and expert can agree is essential to your success: Time Blocking. Time blocking is a simple and powerful concept. You simply block time during your week in your schedule to work on your business, and you protect that time. This includes blocking time for meetings and it includes, at a min-

weekend, you will be disappointing your family and ultimately yourself.

There is a way to find an additional 10 hours in your week (40 hours in your month) if you are willing to do it; yes, an entire week every month to work on your practice. Plan to rise one hour earlier in the day

are expenses specifically incurred so that they will produce far more revenue than they cost over time. When you purchase a new machine, or software program, or marketing tool, and implement it correctly you can expect two things to happen:

- The tool will produce ever-in-

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and arrive to work one hour earlier than you do now. Use that time to work on your practice. This produces five hours additional time per week. Have your staff block one hour per day in your schedule when you won't see patients. They can do this if you work together to make this happen without seeing one patient less per day. This gives you another 20 hours a month. Add these together and it's an entire week of time

creasing revenues as more and more patients utilize the tool.

- The cost of the tool will either end because it has been paid for, or if it is a re-occurring cost, it will become a smaller percentage of the increasing revenue it contributes to generating.

Smart business owners understand that there is virtually no investment they have access to that can produce better returns to them than investments that grow their own business. They don't see costs, they see profit-producing tools.

*The Difference: Winners invest in the tools that equip them and their staff to serve their patients comprehensively and produce corresponding profits.*

**Action Item:** Do your homework and begin to invest in your marketing, your management tools, and your people so that you can be as profitable as possible in the limited time you have each week to see patients.

**9. Winners Have a Need to Be Around Other Winners.** Owning and operating a small business like a podiatry practice can be very lonely. No one who works for you understands what it is like to be responsible for everything. They just can't if they haven't experienced it themselves. Usually when running your practice, you are faced with a steady stream of problems, issues, challenges, and it can feel like all you are doing is

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**Plan to rise one hour earlier in the day and arrive to work one hour earlier than you do now.**

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imum, three hours of time blocked during working hours for non-patient, non-“catching up on charts” work.

You can't schedule this during your nights. You come home too tired and your family wants to see you. We mean well, but we never use this time. For those of you working for hours at night finishing up charts, you need to understand that you carve out that time because finishing charts is a self-preservation activity. The work that you need to do is planning, reviewing reports, reading, marketing, and more. This work needs your fresh perspective and creativity. You can't do this when you are tired and distracted. Additionally, you can't do this on the weekends either. Your family might allow it once in a while, but if you work all

you can use that doesn't affect your nights and weekends.

*The Difference: Winners actually do block their time.*

**Action Item:** Resolve to find a minimum of three hours per week that you can block out of your day to build your practice. Bonus: See if you can get back an entire week without stealing time from your family.

**8. Winners Make the Investments in Tools.** Costs are expenses that you incur as a part of operating a business. Those costs must be marked up an appropriate amount to produce profits so that the practice can continue and prosper. Costs typically rise slowly (hopefully) due to inflation and other market forces. Investments

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putting out fires. It is hard to maintain a positive attitude if you aren't associated with other people who understand your situation.

The problem is that most people are conditioned to see the negative in things. If you listen to cable news, talk radio, or most other people, you know the focus is on all the things that are wrong. There are very few people who have true positive mental attitudes, but they do exist. Seek them out. Attend the meetings where they are like the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management (AAPPM) meetings held twice a year. Positive podiatrists who are succeeding are sharing their best ideas at these meetings twice a year, and they are looking for new and better ways of being successful in private practice. The pages of this magazine are filled each month with outstanding

practice management advice. Engage and reach out to these home run hitters and you'll become one too.

*The Difference: Winners Flock to other winners—they have a need to continue to learn and share with other winners.*

**Action Item:** Seek out other successful podiatrists at meetings they attend and “mastermind” with them.

## 10. Home Run Hitters Take Time for Themselves and Enjoy It.

Winners take their vacations every year. They book time to date their spouses regularly. They have quality time with their children of all ages. They never work themselves to death. In fact, if you pay close attention, you will see that the most productive, successful, and happy colleagues you have take more time off than anyone else.

*The Difference: Winners know that we work to live, not live to work.*

**Action Item:** Enjoy your life now. Happiness is a choice. Having money doesn't make you happy, but being happy can make you a tremendous amount of money. **PM**



**Rem Jackson** is the President and CEO of Top Practices, LLC, and the leader of the Top Practices Master Mind Group. Top Practices is a company dedicated to helping podiatrists reach their professional and personal goals by marketing and managing their “perfect practice.” He is a Fellow of the AAPPM and an adjunct faculty member at The Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine in their practice management program. He is also the recipient of the AAPPM President's Award for 2012. Rem can be reached at [rem@TopPractices.com](mailto:rem@TopPractices.com).