

# Orthodontic Business Supplement

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# “Do what you say and say what you do”.

## - Our journey towards becoming the first UK specialist orthodontic practice to achieve ISO 9001:2008 Certification

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**S**even years ago when my practice opened, we contacted Investors in People and took on the daunting task of trying to achieve the standard within our first year. We worked with our local Business Link team who awarded us some grant money and lots of advice which would have normally cost us thousands of pounds in consulting fees.

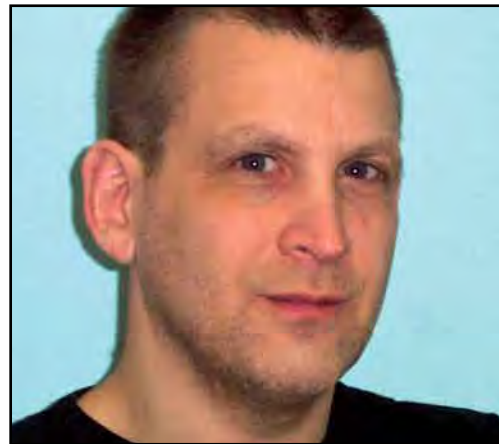
We honed our human resources procedures, built a practice culture centered on a strong, proactive and highly qualified team and employed several of the suggestions put forward to maintain a very communicative working environment. Our practice achieved Investor in People in March 2004, exactly a year and a day after first opening our doors, which made good copy in the dental and local press.

Our next undertaking was to complement our Investor in People commitment with certification on the clinical governance front. Building on our newly polished discipline of adhering to the multitude of requirements involved in achieving the Investor in People award, we transferred that skill set to our application for BDA Good Practice certification which we achieved months later in September 2004.

Since that time, our practice, along with others, has endured enormous change in the form of the new NHS contract and GDC registration of the entire dental team. Orthodontic practice management is set to become even more complicated

once HTM01-05, GDC revalidation and ISA and CQC registration are introduced. Our team was pleased with the overall handling of our practice administration but decided that more discipline could only be a good thing. I sought out a framework which would help monitor our performance and improve our compliance with the ever increasing burden of regulations and thereby lower the chance of something ‘falling through the cracks’. In September 2008 I proposed to the staff that achieving ISO 9001 seemed to be the logical next step. Our research also showed that if successful, we would be the first orthodontic practice in the UK to achieve the standard. ISO 9001 is the world’s most established quality framework which sets the standard not only for quality management systems, but management systems in general. It is being used by almost 900,000 organisations in 170 countries worldwide. It also shares many of the same principles established at our practice through Investor in People and the BDA Good Practice Scheme.

The essence of ISO 9001 is “do what you say and say what you do”. It can help bring out the best in your practice by enabling you to formally articulate the procedures that you already employ for delivering your service



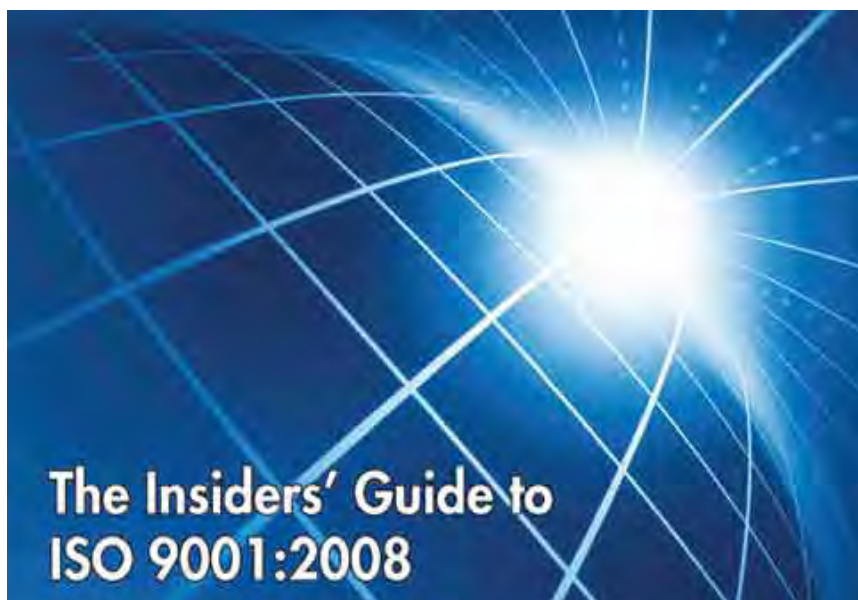
to your patients, but in a highly structured and disciplined format. Every last detail is encapsulated in a binder called the Quality Management System (‘The QMS’).

Delivering the QMS required a dedicated Quality Manager who was committed to the project and who could work alongside our Practice Manager to make this a reality. The Quality Manager had to be IT literate; extremely organized; have terrific attention to detail; be familiar with all aspects of how the practice operates and be willing to serve in this role. In December 2008 one of our senior team members accepted the position. She was assigned dedicated work space and a laptop - and our journey began.



As a first step, we would need to choose from a number of UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) accredited companies that provide ISO certification. We chose to work with BSI (British Standard Institution) who is the founder of the first quality management system. We bought a copy of the standard from BSI which included a complimentary Gap Analysis where a BSI auditor visits and advises on one's readiness to apply for a formal assessment. Formal assessments are usually conducted over two separate visits each lasting a day, spaced several weeks apart. The Gap Analysis allows you to be much more prepared for the first formal assessment as any areas of weakness are identified so that they can be corrected.

There is no shortage of courses and training workshops on offer from BSI, and others, for preparing your organization for ISO. We took the unusual decision to train ourselves in-house and bought all kinds of books and materials to help us through the maze. Our Quality Manager was fantastic and delved into the task with enthusiasm and commitment. After our Gap Analysis in March 2009, we took on board one particular suggestion regarding our internal auditing process and sent our Quality Manager on a course to become successfully certified as an auditor. Over the course of the ensuing months, we tweaked and fleshed



out various areas of our QMS in preparation for the first part of our formal assessment in December 2009. It was a nerve racking and draining day where all of our hard work culminated in an exhaustive inspection of our QMS as well as staff interviews by the assessor. While sometimes the second assessment can take place as quickly as one month later, we agreed to let some of our newer systems mature for a bit and allow time for some auditing of QMS procedures. We scheduled the second part of the assessment for March 2010. Our successful culmination of the eighteen month process was immensely gratifying and merited a wonderful bottle of champagne shared by all! ISO 9001 requires a real investment

of time, money and energy. Our nurse who took on the project remains our Quality Manager. During the past eighteen months she had to commit approximately half of her time to this project and her role as Quality Manager will continue to demand resource but at a significantly reduced level. We will have our next assessment in six months time and then annually thereafter.

We have realised invaluable benefits from going through this process, maintaining and updating the QMS, and now taking part in the ongoing accreditation process. Benefits include improved business performance as practice objectives are constantly fed into the review process; tremendous team and morale building; higher standards for measuring and managing risk; regular identifying of efficiencies which help save money and streamline operations and boosting our reputation in the marketplace. The 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' structure of ISO 9001 also helps ensure that the needs of the patient, as our customer, are being considered and met at all times. A substantive result has been significantly higher than average levels of patient satisfaction as evidenced by our NHS Vital Signs data. We are relieved that the journey to ISO 9001 has been successful and have positively embraced the QMS as our practice administration framework.

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