Practice Matters

Proven strategies for ortho growth

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

Declines in ortho production are still a reality for many orthodontists across the country. Research from a first quarter ADA 2010 survey shows 44 percent of orthodontists reporting lower net income, 37 percent reporting lower gross billings and 41 percent with lower numbers of new patients. These results should come as no surprise to orthodontists.

From the patients’ perspective, orthodontics is increasingly viewed as a commodity. Competition increases every day. Recent advances, such as Invisalign®, have increased competition even more. There is no evidence to suggest this scenario will change anytime soon.

Yet, despite all of these potential obstacles, Levin Group ortho practices continue to grow by:
• Encouraging patient referrals through superior customer service,
• Turning occasional referring dentists into frequent referring dentists.

What is superior customer service?
The ortho practice needs to make certain it provides truly excellent customer service to ensure patients or parents would find it odd to even consider going elsewhere when another family member needs ortho treatment.

“WOWing” your patients requires having the right systems in place. To do so, you should follow these steps:
• Establish operating procedures for customer service that every patient will experience.
• Survey your patients regularly to determine their satisfaction levels.
• Ask your referring dentists how they view customer service in your practice.
• Develop a system to handle any patient/parent concerns or complaints quickly and in a manner that achieves total patient satisfaction.

How do occasional referrers become frequent referrers?

Every ortho practice has one or two top referrers who contribute the bulk of referrals. However, if you lose one of these referring dentists, an extraordinary amount of revenue — possibly hundreds of thousands of dollars over time — could be lost.

Diversifying your referral sources begins by:
• Determining who refers
• Analyzing how many patients each of them refers
• Customizing marketing strategies to effectively get GPs to refer more patients
• Subsequently tracking each strategy for effectiveness and then making adjustments as needed

An effective referral marketing program will foster better relationships, generate more referrals and subsequently reduce or reverse the noticeable declines many orthodontists have experienced.

Conclusion

Now is not the time to adopt diminished expectations. Remember that ortho practices have incredible potential. By upgrading your customer service and referral marketing systems, ortho practices can grow exponentially.

To jumpstart practice growth, experience Dr. Roger Levin’s next Total Ortho Success™ Seminar from Oct. 28–29 in Orlando. Ortho Tribune readers are entitled to receive a 20 percent courtesy. To receive this, call (888) 973-0000 and mention “Ortho Tribune” or e-mail customerservice@levingroup.com.

Dr. Roger P. Levin is chairman and chief executive officer of Levin Group, the leading orthodontic practice management firm. Levin Group provides Total Ortho Success™, the premier comprehensive consulting solution for lifetime success to orthodontists in the United States and around the world. Levin Group may be reached at (888) 973-0000 and customerservice@levingroup.com.

About the author

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