Dr. Hardy’s referral marketing creates record number of starts

By Kevin Johnson & Emily Ely

Dr. Brian Hardy has much to be happy about — he recently set a record for the most starts ever in a single month since he opened his practice nearly three years ago. Production is up 35 percent for the calendar year and was up 65 percent for the summer months. All of the practice’s efforts are paying off with impressive dividends.

The first Total Ortho Success Practice Makeover winner and his team are delighted with this breakthrough success. One key reason for the jump in numbers is the result of implementing Levin Group’s Science of Referral Marketing.

One team member makes all the difference

Even before Dr. Hardy began his consulting programs with us, he knew his marketing efforts had not generated the results he wanted. As it turned out, Hardy Orthodontics needed to add one critical team member to its practice — a professional relations coordinator (PRC) — to realize its referral-marketing goals.

Shortly after beginning his practice makeover, Levin Group counseled Dr. Hardy to create a PRC position, and his referral-marketing efforts finally took off.

The PRC is crucial to making referral marketing successful. Most orthodontists do not have the time, knowledge or interest to implement or maintain a comprehensive referral-marketing program.

With a PRC, Dr. Hardy has a dedicated team member whose job is to focus on marketing, build the practice and dramatically increase referrals, allowing Dr. Hardy more time to concentrate on providing optimal orthodontic care.

The PRC runs 95 percent or more of the entire marketing program. Her responsibilities include creating the referral-marketing strategies, designating timelines to carry them out, implementing the strategies, tracking results and adding new strategies.

This individual’s job is to continually find ways to increase referrals from patients and referring doctors using Levin Group’s systematic method.

Referral marketing is an advanced science that will deliver a predictable result if it is implemented and carried out consistently using the appropriate systems. The PRC should be thought of as a professional who will need to learn the Science of Referral Marketing. With the right training and guidance, a PRC can help generate hundreds of new patient referrals every year.

Understanding referral marketing

The key to an excellent referral-marketing program is consistency. Levin Group recommended to Dr. Hardy that his practice design a multi-year marketing plan that consists of multiple ongoing strategies designed to boost referrals. He focused on:

• Maintaining his relationship with top-level referers.
• Turning mid-level referers into top-level referers.
• Determining which low-level referers are prospects for greater referrals and which are not.

Developing referral sources from non-referring dentists who have the potential to begin referring.

Practices should carefully devise a marketing plan that will roll out over the course of a year. An ortho marketing plan, such as Dr. Hardy’s, will likely include the following:

• Doctor lunches
• Shared hobbies (golf, sailing, etc.)
• Full-day seminars
• Other personal contacts
• Doctor visits/phone contacts
• Lunch-and-learns
• Community activities
• PRC visits/lunch for referring doctors
• Evening seminars
• Correspondence
• Fact sheets
• Food deliveries

To be completely successful, each of these contact opportunities must include well-produced support materials, including training scripts for the PRC and staff and professionally printed materials.

As strategies are implemented, orthodontists need to keep in mind that their competitors are aggressively marketing their ortho practices as well. Consequently, referral marketing needs to be consistent and of the highest quality to ensure the greatest return on investment.

In the competitive world of orthodontic practices where comparison shopping abounds, it’s necessary to solidify the practice’s referral base and expand it continuously. Referral marketing is the cornerstone of maintaining a steady flow of referrals.

The state of the practice

At Hardy Orthodontics, the practice is enjoying its new direction. The PRC’s referral-marketing efforts have yielded the following impressive results:

• Converted two “B” offices (steady referrers) to “A” offices (top referrers);
• Converted four “C” offices (occasional referrers) to “B” offices (steady referrers).
• Ensured 15 new clinicians to send patients.
• Staged a patient picnic — the most well-attended marketing event in the practice’s history.

As these results show, a strong referral-marketing program is a necessity, not an option. Orthodontic practices that consistently and effectively engage in referral marketing will become the production and profitability leaders in their area.

As Dr. Hardy and his staff moves into the final phase of their Total Ortho Success Management and Marketing Year 1 programs, they are:

• Brainstorming future referral events.
• Completing a new patient orientation packet designed to increase starts.
• Creating a new practice brochure that reflects the current practice mission and goals.

Join us in our next installment when we detail some of Dr. Hardy’s end-of-year results and recap Hardy Orthodontics’ year of consulting with Levin Group.

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About the authors

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With many years of marketing experience, Levin Group Consultant Emily Ely joined Levin Group in 2005. Ely uses her unique knowledge and experience to provide marketing solutions for orthodontic practices. She earned her degree in business from Towson University.

Both Ely and Johnson are members of the Ortho Expert Team, a specialized group of consultants who are trained in the needs of orthodontic practices.

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