Makeover update: gaining momentum

This is the fourth part in the Levin Group Total Ortho Success Practice Makeover series

By Jennifer Van Gramins & Cheri Bleyer

The month of August couldn’t have been better for Dr. Michelle Gonzalez, our 2010 Levin Group Total Ortho Success winner. In fact, it was the best month the San Rafael, Calif., orthodontic practice had ever achieved in terms of production, which was up 15 percent compared to 2009.

“It’s exciting to see our efforts paying off to make over the practice,” Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez and her team arrived at our Phoenix-based Levin Advanced Learning Institute for Phase II of their management-consulting program. During their two days at the institute, they received training by our expert orthodontic consultants on the following subjects:

- The importance of the treatment coordinator (TC)
- The TC’s role and responsibilities
- Superior case presentation
- “WOW” customer service
- New patient experience

Outside the office learning, whether participating in consulting or attending a seminar, often provides the orthodontist and team a new perspective of what is possible in their practice. As Levin Group CEO Dr. Roger P. Levin often says, “Stepping away from the practice allows orthodontists and teams to see the big picture.”

The consulting experience

Phase II focuses on what orthodontists and their teams can do to make their practices the No. 1 choice for orthodontic management consultant. Prior years working as a Levin Group orthodontic management and marketing consultant. As a senior consultant, Bleyer joined Levin Group in 2003 as a Levin Group orthodontist to spend more time on patient care. This is what they were trained to do and this is where they are most effective for patients and the practice.

A new schedule

After completing procedural time studies earlier in the year, Gonzalez and her team created a new scheduling template that more accurately reflects the time clinical staff need for a variety of appointments, including consultation, records, checks and emergencies.

The new schedule is based on Levin Group Power Cell Scheduling principles, such as:

- Schedule orthodontist and assistant time separately.
- Reserve longer and more productive procedures for the morning.
- Move shorter appointments near the end of the day.
- Schedule new patient consults within seven to 10 days after prospective patient calls or is referred.

The goal of Power Cell Scheduling is to maximize productivity and production through increased capacity and efficiency, while at the same time, create a more organized day and reduce stress. A practice with an inefficient schedule will never reach its full potential.

As part of the new schedule, Gonzalez will be adding early morning hours on one day and evening hours on another day.

“We are in a service business, and patient convenience is critical to practice success. We believe this small change in our schedule can be a big benefit to our patients,” Gonzalez said.

Consistent marketing

Since the spring when Practice Coordinator (or what Levin Group calls a professional relations coordinator) LeAnn came aboard, the practice has marketed steadily to its entire referral base, including dentists who had never referred or who had stopped referring.

The results have been outstanding: more referrals from current referrers, an expanded referral base and more new patients. The record production of August is a testament to the referral marketing program’s success.

“Building strong relationships with referring dentists requires consistent communication,” said Gonzalez. Before hiring LeAnn, Gonzalez had done most of the marketing, which was often haphazard due to her busy schedule treating patients. Delegating tasks to qualified team members is the best way to get the most out of an orthodontist’s limited time.

As Levin says, “Orthodontists should spend 98 percent of their time on patient care. This is what they were trained to do and this is where they are most effective for patients and the practice.”

Conclusion

Practice success is often about seemingly obvious things: making prospective patients feel welcome, communicating regularly with referring dentists and documenting systems in writing. But doing all these “minor” tasks using systems and targets often leads to huge gains in practice performance and productivity. Witness Gonzalez’s record production in August, up 15 percent from the previous year!

Breakthrough performance doesn’t happen overnight, but it does occur when the right systems are in place.

“My practice is now on a path to greater success,” Gonzalez said. “With continued focus and Levin Group’s help, we will get there.”

Orthodontists interested in getting their own Levin Group Total Ortho Success Practice Makeover can now apply online to win this life-changing opportunity at www.levingrouportho.com. Find Levin Group on Facebook and follow them on Twitter (@levin_group).

Dr. Michelle Gonzalez, center, with Levin Group senior consultants Cheri Bleyer and Jen Van Gramins. (Photo/Bruce Cook Photography, San Rafael, Calif.)

Cheri Bleyer, left, and Jen Van Gramins Clinic at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Ill.

Visit Levin Group on the Web at www.levingrouportho.com. Levin Group also can be reached at (888) 973-0000 and customerservice@levingroup.com.

About the authors

Cheri Bleyer, Levin Group senior consultant

Bleyer joined Levin Group in 2005 as a Levin Group orthodontic management and marketing consultant. As a senior consultant, Bleyer has played a key role in the development of Levin Group’s ever-expanding marketing program, and she regularly lectures at the Levin Advanced Learning Institute.

Jen Van Gramins, Levin Group senior consultant

Van Gramins has spent the last four years working as a Levin Group orthodontic management consultant. Prior to that, she managed medical and dental practices for 12 years. She served as practice manager for the Oral Health

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