



ORTHO2

# Speak Up Now Or Forever Lose Your Market Share!

The goal for a progressive orthodontic practice is to provide excellent care and a positive experience on a day to day basis.

The challenge for most practices is to consistently communicate this vision to the patient and community network.

Branding your practice as a specialist in this economy is one of the most important things you may do to keep and build your patient network. Speak up or forever lose your market share! Brand your orthodontic practice by communicating to new patients and existing patients why they should be loyal to your practice in the future. When the general dentist began to give two or three names at each referral, the marketing bar for the orthodontic team was raised! If only it were the end result that was the driving force for marketing your practice! The end result is just one of many systems that promote and build a successful practice.

Let's take a look at some of the other systems within your practice that build market share.

**1.** Promote that you are a specialist! Reinforce this in your written materials, on your Web site, and with posters or information presented in your office. Review with the team why the community should choose a specialist for their orthodontic care! Define and script these benefits for all team members to share. The AAO has done a terrific job in preparing materials to present to patients on this subject, and I encourage you use them!

**2.** Spend time training and scripting your initial phone call. Build your market by noting positive connections between the general dental referral and the existing patient connection to the new patient/parent making the call. Make sure your scheduling coordinator is using phrases like "Thank you for placing confidence in our team, our Doctor is a specialist and focused on your orthodontic needs." Do not forget to define the initial visit: "You will love it here. Our team is great, and our goal

is to provide the best experience for our patients with a positive end result."

**3.** Define excellence in your welcome package and introduction material, in other words, your press kit! This written information creates your identity and promises what experience patients may expect to be delivered during treatment with your practice. Branding is a promise made and a promise kept! Somewhere in your welcome letter or your brochure the statement that the parent or patient has made the right decision choosing you as a specialist must be written. I recommend even if the patient is completing information on-line, a welcome package be presented that describes your vision statement and the benefits of choosing your practice!

**4.** Your family care program or sibling program should be promoted from the initial phone call through the dismissal. If the practice is giving discounts to additional family members when they begin treatment, that benefit needs to be communicated by the team to the patient and the general dental network! This discount should be presented not in percentages but stated in dollars! If you are giving away \$200.00 to each additional family member then communicate that! It is much more effective to build your new patient base from the existing network than to wait for a referral to be made from a general dentist. With fewer new patient opportunities it is important you keep the families you have already served well in the practice.

During the initial phone call, ask if there are any additional family members who need to be seen at this time. Make

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**Branding is a promise made & a promise kept!**

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it easy for a parent to bring more than one child at a time to an exam appointment by setting up at least one exam time to accommodate more than one patient if needed. The family care program should be presented in all written materials, newsletters, and new patient packages, and be posted in the office as well as on the Web site. Use the medical history or patient information sheet to document siblings names, ages, and birthdates. Set up a kids club or birthday club to get a child involved in the process of becoming a future patient of the practice. Motivating additional family members to be an active part of your practice is an excellent way of branding your practice as a family oriented practice.

**5.** Gathering accurate referral information during the initial exam process is the key to acknowledging referrals. When the patient states their general dentist as a referrer, the question of whether they were given several names needs to be asked. If so, then the detective work begins! What was the true connection this patient had to your practice? The correct referral information will assist you in cultivating a network of raving fans. While asking these questions, the treatment coordinator or scheduling coordinator should explain that it is important to the practice to acknowledge the individual who made the referral as well as explaining how your referral program works!

Acknowledgement cards, gift certificates, stickers, or any other system the practice chooses should be used to thank the indirect referral source on a timely basis. Look at your referral percentages on the Referral Analysis Report: if you see higher numbers of patient referrals than dental referrals you are on the right track in cultivating new patients from the existing network. Keeping this system current will also allow the practice to determine the marketing structure for the general dental practice! Many times the general dentist noted as being a top referral by number may not be according to revenue generated.

**6.** In the treatment area, show the before and after pictures and remind the patient and parent of the positive changes throughout treatment. Many offices have the technology to promote the progress in the patient's treatment and their end results, yet they are too busy to do so! Progress reports and post consultations have become a procedure of the past. A progress review and a post consultation are great opportunities for your team to build the practice by communicating a progressive and positive end result!

**7.** The follow-up procedure for patients and families who do not choose to go through treatment is a very important system. In this economy many families may have to choose their mortgage payments and gasoline and food costs over the investment in orthodontic treatment. The practice should have protocols in place to invite patients back to the

practice when they are ready to make this commitment. The economy will get better and many families that are not choosing treatment at this time may be in a position to do so later. Use your recall program to follow up on these patients at a later date, and make sure your final letter invites them back when the time is right for their family.

**8.** The recall/observation program must be healthy! When evaluating this program make sure that these patients are being seen on a timely basis. Do you know how many patients are lost from this program on an annual basis? Are the recall/observation patients being contacted prior to being purged out of the recall/observation system? I recommend setting up a program that is specially designed for the recall/observation patients. Define this system by name! Maybe call it "our future graduates" or "smiles to come"! Create a bulletin board and post pictures of the patients! The recall/observation system will feed production goals in a slow economy.

Ortho2 provides all the tools to track the above systems mentioned. Learn to monitor and evaluate all systems that create market share! Many systems define and brand your practice to the consumer! Fewer new patients are not a problem if you are caring for the network you have already built. The tracking and follow through protocols must be defined to prevent the progressive practice from a decline in income and profitability! ♦

## About the Author



Char Eash, founder and CEO of Profit Marketing Systems South, Inc., is an orthodontic systems specialist located in Tampa, Florida. Char provides her clients with the protocols to enhance efficiency and profitability on a day to day basis. Char is a nationally recognized speaker and works with Ortho2 clients coast to coast. Char's training platform is a hands on approach that defines and drives practice growth. The results with each office she serves speak to her determination and methods. Char will present two classes at the 2009 Ortho2 Users Group Meeting.