



ORTHO2

Dental Referrals...

Three Keys to Thriving Referral Relations

by **Nancy Hyman**

With multiple options for mining patient referral sources, a professional relations program may lose its priority status in your practice. The General Practitioner (GP) continues to be a large percentage of referrals, with many practices reporting 50-60% of all referrals attributed to this segment. A three-tiered plan emphasizing a planned message, educational promotions providing value to you and your GP base, and building camaraderie will enhance your current marketing plan.

Before jumping into a marketing plan be very clear about your current referral statistics. The front office team will ask each new caller how he/she heard about you and note the specific source. Common responses include the caller's GP, a friend, family member, an Internet search, or the result of a specific promotion. Less typical responses include walk by traffic and insurance listings.

Nina Grant, VP, Agency Managing Director at Practice Builders notes, "I cannot overstate the importance of tracking the source of each and every phone call. Just as orthodontics is a science, so too is marketing. Adding to a phone script is truly simple. 'Who may we thank for your referral today?' will elicit the source of that referral, whether a current patient, website, print ad, etc. Team members will then provide a monthly summary to enable sound business and marketing decisions moving forward; which source of awareness produced the most leads, which produced leads that converted to patients? Knowing your practice's statistics is the first step in making sound marketing decisions."

Plan Your Message: Meet with your team and brainstorm a minimum of 15-20 attributes of your practice. Think in terms of features that benefit the parent and patient, such as complimentary orthodontic records, before and after school/work hours, board-certified care, multiple locations, and oral hygiene rewards. Explain why the parent and patient will appreciate your service. If you have an insurance biller frame it as "on-site insurance biller

will file claims for you." Multiple locations will translate to "multiple locations to serve you" or "multiple locations for your convenience."

Hand deliver a "Why Us" benefits list to referring GPs. Place on practice letterhead and laminate for an attractive presentation. Mirror the benefits in the GP referral card and practice brochure. The Practice Representative (PR) will divide the benefits list into categories and create a message for each GP visit. Suggested categories include doctor and team qualifications, insurance participation, patient hours and days, or patient rewards. Keep your message simple and don't overwhelm the recipient with too many facts! The PR will have ample time to deliver a pleasing picture of your practice by consistently educating the GP team with brief and well-planned messages.

Provide Value: Offer a continuing education program to GPs and team members. Select a program required by your state in order to maintain doctor and dental assistant licensing. Another option may be a doctor only evening event at the practice with the orthodontist presenting a program or contracting with a speaker. At the office of Dr. William Hyman we offer an OSHA program bi-annually and alternate with a continuing education event of interest to the GP audience. General interest presentations may be sponsored by an orthodontic vendor for continuing education credit. A dated event showcases the benefits of referring to your practice, and offers an excellent opportunity for PR contact via a save the date card and a hand-delivered invitation. Mail invitations as well, and resend invitation to non-respondents. Bring your smiling team and place gregarious team members as captains at tables, insuring lively conversation during breaks and lunch.

Reprinted from

The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2

April 2014 - Volume 32 Issue 2

Build Camaraderie: It is simple, but true: people do business with people they like. Develop a relationship with the GP and his/her team and create an atmosphere where it is a pleasure to work with you. Organize a minimum of one social event per year. Many practices select an annual event: ladies spring tea, Thanksgiving feast, crawfish party, Cinco de Mayo, etc. and repeat the event each year if interest is maintained. Consider refreshing the event after 3-4 successful attendance years. If an event is well attended, keep it and add a new twist each year. At our annual tamale party during the first week in December we have alternated a raffle every 15 minutes, parting gifts for all attendees, instant photos, a professional photographer for seated portraits and other amenities, offering one activity per party. In 2013 we transitioned to a grilled cheese food truck during the same time period and have noted that previously non-responding offices are attending. If an event loses participants and ceases to be a meaningful strategy consider alternatives that include a change in theme, time of year, day of week, and time of day.

Plan your 12-month marketing calendar with ample, accurate referral statistics. Appeal to your full GP target list with a planned message for each PR visit and opportunities for educational and entertaining activities, thus fulfilling your professional referrals' need for value and camaraderie. Create an impression of excellence in all aspects of your practice growth plan watch professional relationships and referrals thrive! ♡

About the Author



Nancy Hyman shares her practice growth program as founder of Ortho Referral Systems. She has helped many orthodontic practices jump-start patient referrals, increase case acceptance, and improve implementation of practice growth systems.