



ORTHO2

Boost Your Marketing into the Stratosphere

Part 1

In 2010, orthodontists in every geographic and economic area report the same finding: Orthodontists are seeing a decline in referrals from general dentists.

Ingrid Snow, partner and senior marketing strategist at Concepts Healthcare Marketing, says, "It's no secret that today's unstable economy is causing a decrease in orthodontic practice revenue, but this also can be attributed to GPs nationwide doing more orthodontic treatment themselves."

Ms. Snow adds, "In order for orthodontists to increase their market share and their bottom line, they need to implement a marketing campaign or enhance the one they are currently using." According to Ms. Snow, many orthodontists are not taking advantage of a potentially huge source of new patients for their practices: their existing patients. "Patient referrals are great for orthodontists because they are the ones doing the marketing, and positive word-of-mouth plays a significant role in the decision making process."

In response to decreasing dental referrals and increased interest in internal marketing I have found the oral hygiene program established by many offices to be a happy marriage of marketing to patients and to the general dentist in one strategy.

Orthodontic practices often find growth strategies decline in their effectiveness over time. Inertia sets in, patients and professional referral sources lose interest, and the concept ceases to be impressive. This article focuses on boosting your oral hygiene rewards program for maximum effect.

Increase patient and professional referrers' involvement in your oral hygiene rewards

by **Nancy Hyman**

program by following a protocol that guarantees all parties are fully aware of your efforts to promote patients' oral hygiene.

Promotion to Patients

1. Prepare an explanation letter for patients/parents and an oral hygiene card to be signed by the patient and hygiene professional.
2. E-mail blast all patients/parents with letter and sample card. (Consider offering a printable oral hygiene card available on your website for easy patient access).
3. The clinical team will hand each patient/parent a letter and card for 8 weeks to create awareness of the promotion for your active patients.
4. The treatment coordinator will distribute the letter and card to each new exam and recall patient/parent.
5. After the 8 week period each patient/parent is asked at check out if s/he is getting their teeth cleaned in the next 8 weeks. If "yes" give the patient/parent a card with a brief reminder of the promotion.
6. Each month a patient and the corresponding hygiene professional will win a \$50 gift card.
7. Optional: Award points redeemable for prizes to each patient returning a signed card.

Promotion to Referring Dentists

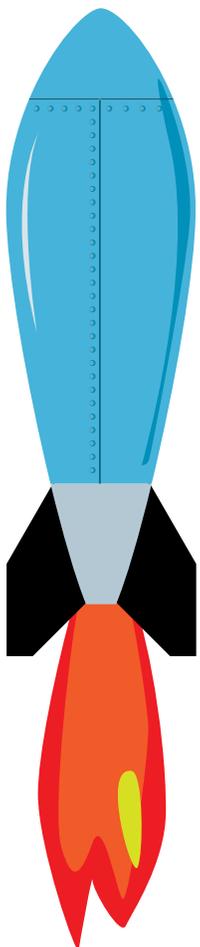
(Outreach to all offices on your "hit-list")

Prepare and hand deliver a packet to each staff member and doctor. At our office we included a cover sheet with the introduction shown on the next page.

Samples of the five items are included in the packet.

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About the Author

Dr. William Hyman and his team are committed to your patients' oral hygiene.

I have enclosed the following information outlining our strategies for patient compliance in your office:

- 1) Progress report to doctor, mailed every two months.
- 2) Progress report to patient, hand delivered to patient/parent every 6 months.
- 3) Oral hygiene rewards card to be signed by the hygiene professional.
- 4) Oral hygiene rewards explanation letter.
- 5) Patient rewards points card indicating that patient may earn rewards for hygiene appointments.

Thank you for being our partner in our mutual patients' oral health.



Nancy Hyman, founder of Ortho Referral Systems, is dedicated to maximizing patient referrals and case acceptance with innovative, cost-effective solutions. She will present a two part marketing strategies course at the 2011 Users Group Meeting.

Your Practice Representative may hand deliver individual packets to referring office doctors and staff members. Other options for distribution include:

1. Offer a lunch and learn event at referring offices to explain the oral hygiene program.
2. Explain the oral hygiene program and have packets available at CEU events.
3. Deliver the oral hygiene gift card to the winning hygiene professional.

Take your oral hygiene program to a new level with a well crafted campaign that engages the imagination of your patients and professional referrers. The thorough implementation of your marketing strategies is the difference between a thriving practice and commonplace results. ◊

Part 2 (in the January 2011 issue) will continue with more examples. Samples of all the strategies covered are available by contacting Nancy. ◊