

Boost Your Marketing into the Stratosphere

Part 2

by Nancy Hyman

Today's savvy orthodontic practices create well-planned marketing systems to ensure that the phone is ringing with new patient calls. With a few additional strategies in place, your treatment coordinator can transform callers into patients and boost your practice into the stratosphere!

Promotion #1

Establish Keys to Increased Case Acceptance

I have surveyed the charts of hundreds of patients and found the following steps greatly increase new patient starts.

1. **Predetermine insurance benefits:** Always collect the patient's insurance information at the initial phone call and prepare the benefits information prior to the initial/recall exam. Patients/parents will not sign fee agreements without this vital piece of the puzzle.
2. **Offer a substantial sibling/family discount:** Reward your loyal families with a discount that reflects their faithfulness to your services. I prefer a set dollar amount quotes in place of a percentage. Families may shop for the best fee in spite of their satisfaction with your practice. Loyalty to one doctor is no longer the norm and your "thank you" courtesy indicates your appreciation for continued patronage.
3. **Establish an initial down payment of \$500:** Without fail, all practices transitioning to a reasonable down payment report increased case acceptance.
4. **Pre-sell the practice:** Communicate the doctor's technology/expertise/amenities/differentiation from the competition during the initial new patient phone call, the appointment reminder letter, the brochures mailed to the patient, the new patient reminder call, and the new patient flow-sheet process.
5. **Follow up, follow up, follow up!:** Our team called all pending patients previously not responding to our efforts, all failed and "no-show" recall patients, and

all failed records patients. (This is in addition to a very thorough follow up strategy for these categories during the year.) The "phone-athon" resulted in 8 patient starts!

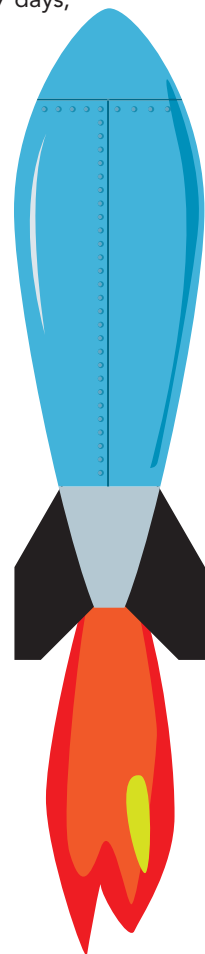
Promotion #2

Follow Up

If the patient does not accept treatment the Treatment Coordinator will call the patient/parent within 7 days, send a follow-up letter and call in 15 days, and alternate phone calls and letters/e-mails for a 6 week period following the exam. Discontinue contact if the contact information is no longer applicable, the person requests to not be called, or the patient starts treatment elsewhere.

Patients who do not respond may be offered a holiday or summer special once per year. The special offer may be a \$250 discount off full treatment. The offer cards/letters are mailed or e-mailed. The team calls each pending patient/parent to alert them that a "special offer" is on its way via mail. Consider a special incentive for accepting treatment at the initial exam.

In review, a sample protocol may consist of 6 points of contact, alternating phone calls/e-mail/letters. After 6 weeks, transition to a schedule of monthly or bimonthly contact, possibly implementing a gift with



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patient start. I suggest a technology oriented gift valued at \$75-\$150. A gift can be more motivating than a discount of the same value. Once or twice annually, contact all pending patients/parents for a holiday/summer special as described above.

Promotion #3

Establish a Reward System for Patient Starts

Consider a reward system for diagnostic records completed at the initial exam or within 30 days of initial exam (with a signed fee agreement) or for scheduling and attending the recall appointment. I recommend Patient Rewards Hub, a point system in which our patients may redeem points on our website for gift cards.

Promotion #4

Develop Pending Patient Scripting

1. The patient/parent wants to talk with spouse:
 - A) Offer to book the records and initial banding appointment to secure a preferable appointment.
 - B) The treatment coordinator or doctor will offer to speak with the absent spouse. This suggestion may be offered at the exam to the present parent and e-mailed to both parents.
 - C) The doctor will e-mail both parents with treatment recommendations.
2. The fee is considered "too high."
 - A) Review your benefits list and give a copy to the patient/parent to take home. In quizzing patients who opted to accept treatment elsewhere, the reason offered was that the fee was higher than the competition without a compelling reason. Address this concern with detailed points.
 - B) Suggest alternative financial arrangements. Ask what down payment is suitable for patient/parent. If the amount suggested is too low state: "Our minimum down payment is..."
 - C) Offer third party financing.

Please note: In a pending call never ask, "Do you have any questions?" Always ask, "What can I do to help you/your child get started?"

Promotion #5

Refine Your Fee Presentation

Be confident in your language skills during the fee presentation and in discussions with pending patients:

Fee concerns: "Is your concern the total fee or the payment plan." If payment plan, suggest alternative options. If down payment, ask the patient what amount he/she has in mind.

- A) Remind the patient of the quality of treatment and specific patient-friendly services.
- B) Utilize the "benefits" list and suggest that he/she take home the list to share with spouse.
- C) Confirm that the referral source is very confident in doctor.

Define your practice philosophy regarding the 5 keys to case acceptance and allow the proper time in the treatment coordinator's schedule for follow up, follow up, follow up! In the office of Dr. William Hyman we have consistently increased our case acceptance and discovered "bonus patient starts" through targeted protocols, scripting of challenging scenarios, and weekly review of goals to allow for adjustment of practice growth strategies. ☺

Part 1 (in the October 2010 issue) covered how to promote your oral hygiene program to patients and to referring dentists in order to market your practice.

About the Author



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