



ORTHO2

Igniting Your Referrals

Part 1: Ignite the interest of your professional referrals with gifting and signature parties

by **Nancy Hyman**

Savvy team members interacting with the professional community quickly realize that visiting dental offices and delivering muffins and business cards no longer have the desired effect of gaining more referrals.

You may be using these strategies past their effectiveness date or you may be located in a highly competitive area that requires more thoughtful presentations. A small adjustment in your current initiatives combined with fresh strategies may result in renewed interest in referrals to your practice. I have outline below several promotions, reported as very effective returns on marketing dollar investment in the office of Dr. William Hyman and by clients I have recently interviewed.

Monthly Staff Drawing

Every month for the past dozen years I have used this concept and always experience strong participation by referring offices. Institute a monthly staff drawing unrelated to quantity of referrals. This drawing is open to staff only and is a monthly reminder of the benefits of referring to your office. Mail monthly to your full target list and select a winner strategically—either a “B” or “C” referrer whom you wish to intrigue or an “A” referrer as a “thank you.” Hand deliver the prize, valued at \$50.00, along with a food item for the other staff members.

Keep the monthly staff drawing prizes and process simple; the referring staff will complete the form and fax or mail it back to you. I have tested drawings with participation beyond completing the form, such as “my favorite movie is...” The return rate is lower for this type of format.

Suggested prizes include tickets to professional/college sports events, stadium blankets, restaurant gift cards (Marie Callendar’s, Olive Garden, or other moderate price-point selection), car detailing, gift cards (Victoria’s Secret, Barnes and Noble or Borders, Gap, gas card, Target, Wal-Mart, Best Buy, Bed, Bath, and Beyond, Bath and Body Works, or your local supermarket) water park or theme park tickets, lunch for the full office (delivered by your

practice rep or in a restaurant), lotto tickets, flowers for each staff member (full team prize), fruit basket, gourmet food basket, scented candles (full team prize), pumpkin pie, beauty bag (lip gloss, nail polish, and body lotion), manicure/pedicure, spa day, or individual gift cards for full team prize such as Baskin Robbins, Jamba juice, etc.

Birthday Recognition

In 2010 our office is focusing on birthday recognition for all dental referrers and their staff. In 2008 and 2009 I hand delivered birthday cakes to each “A” referral level dentist during his/her birthday week, with a signed card from Dr. Hyman. Our marketing team is gathering the birth dates of all doctors and staff members in our targeted list of 125 offices. Each staff member will receive a gift card and signed birthday card. Due to the volume of recipients we will mail the staff gift cards. Doctors will receive hand delivered birthday cakes. “A” and “B” level referrers will also receive a gift card to an upscale restaurant.

Signature Party and Entertaining

Creating an annual signature party at your office is a wonderful opportunity for referring doctors and their staff to familiarize themselves with your practice in a relaxed atmosphere. Invite all offices on your target list. Timeline: Save the date cards, 6 months prior, hand delivered during practice rep visits; invitation mailed 2 months prior; invitation 1 month prior to non-responders; reminder letter to all attendees 1 week prior; reminder phone call 1 day prior to all attendees. Thursday lunch hour (12:00–2:00) or early evening (5:00–7:00) generate the best response. Offer a raffle every 10 or 15 minutes for gift cards and/or gift baskets. Music and a photographer may also be included. Hand deliver photographs to staff or locate a

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service for instant photos. A wine and beer selection or featured cocktail (cosmopolitan, appletini, sangria, or margarita) may be included at evening events.

Try these recommended party themes:

January: Let's Have a Wonderful New Year

February: Love Is in the Air

March: Luck of the Irish or We Are Lucky to Know You

April: Ladies Spring Lunch

May: Cinco de Mayo

June: Spring into Summer

July: Love the USA or Celebrate the USA

August: Summer Days or Summer Break

September: Football Fever

October: Pumpkin Fest (give each attendee a pumpkin) or Oktoberfest

November: Thanksgiving Feast or We Are Thankful for You

December: Holiday Spirit or Tamale Fiesta

In part two of this article (January 2010) Nancy Hyman will discuss scripting for the practice representative's dental office visits and presentation of professional referral material. ♡

Part 2: Scripting and marketing materials can create the "WOW" effect

Your Practice Representative is the key to a successful link between your practice and your professional referrers, placing you in the forefront of the dental teams' minds when suggesting an orthodontic referral. In researching client feedback, two areas of planning have consistently proven effective: a consistent message scripted for each visit and presentation of superior collateral materials promoting your practice and its unique qualities.

When choosing orthodontic care, patients have many options, and it is paramount that you develop messages that promote your practice, messages developed from your "strengths" list. To build a "strengths" list, focus on the services and amenities that set you apart from your competition. These are services that other orthodontists may or may not offer that you claim as your own. Consider very specific attributes, avoiding general concepts such as "great customer service," "friendly staff," etc.

Examples of well-defined strengths may include: free consultations, free digital photographs and panoramic x-rays, evening hours, before work and school hours, Saturday hours, referral rewards, complimentary retainer, and no charge for retainer checks for 1 year following treatment. I suggest you use your team and your current patients to create your "strengths" list.

Strengths List

Ask your full team to develop a list of positive attributes about your office. Divide your team in to groups of two or three members. Each group will meet prior to a full staff meeting and create a list of 10-12 practice strengths. A leader from each group will announce the resulting list at a staff meeting. From this list create 12-20 talking points.

Once your strengths are identified these should be used by your team on Practice Rep visits to educate referring dentists and non-referring dentists on the benefits of referring specifically to your office. Your list may also become part of your new patient calls.

At each Practice Rep visit relay 2 "strengths" list messages, and present marketing tools: practice brochure or folder with stepped inserts, doctor resume, and referral cards. I prefer stepped inserts as the subject and/or copy may be changed on an individual insert as new services or technology are added. I suggest full color fold-over referral cards, size 4" x 8" when unfolded. Include space for the referring doctor's comments, several "strengths" and a call to action: complimentary exam and panoramic x-rays, no charge for upgrade to clear braces, etc.

Practice Rep Script

Use this script for outside calls to dental offices.

"I am Mary from Dr. Smith's orthodontic office. Thank you for your wonderful referrals." Drop food or gift item in front of person.

If the office has never referred to you: *"I am Mary from Dr. Smith's orthodontic office. I would like to introduce you to our services. Do you refer to an orthodontist? (Response: "Yes.") We'd like to be part of your referral mix. Several dentists in the area refer to us. We offer (insert here a few benefits of your office)."*

"What is your name?" Response: "Susie."

"Susie, tell me what you do here." Response: Susie explains her role in office. Respond appropriately to Susie's comments: what a great job, you sound busy, etc.

"I have a wonderful new offer for your patients." Present offer card and brochure.

(As an example) *"Your patients will receive two free x-rays, digital photographs, and a free consultation. This is a doctor-referred benefit. Kindly give your patient this offer card and ask them to bring it to our office."* On subsequent visits always replenish the offer cards.

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 will present "12 Marketing Concepts in 12 Months" at our 2010 Users Group Meeting.

Nancy has written articles for Orthodontic Products magazine, Bentson Clark reSource, and the Ortho2 newsletter. She is also the author of Winning Marketing Strategies workbook and Winning Treatment Coordinator Strategies. She may be reached at nancy@hymanortho.com or (323) 308-9817.

The offer may be your talking point or you may add a "one minute message" regarding benefits of choosing your office.

Also carry a "notice." This can be a flu shot save the date, monthly staff drawing, dx/tx letter for patient specific to the office you are calling on, monthly lunch drawing entry handed to each office visited in that month, newsletter, etc.

On the first visit present the welcome packet with stepped inserts and doctor resume for the dentists' review. On subsequent visits offer the welcome packet to key staff members. The packet may also be distributed at sponsored events: lunch and learns, continuing education seminars, etc.

Options to ask:

- *"Is there anyone else I should speak to while I am here?" Or, "Does anyone else handle your referrals that I may speak with?"*
- *"May I meet with your staff to explain our free patient offer?" Or, if no offer, "May I meet with your staff to explain our patient amenities?"*
- *"May I have a tour of your office? It is so lovely."*
- If dentist offers Invisalign and/or braces, compliment the staff on their efforts and assure the team that you would appreciate referrals for "cases you don't wish to handle."

Conversational tools:

- Compliment the office.
- Ask staff member about their job duties.
- Inquire about accepted insurances plans, office hours, doctor's background, etc.

View each contact with your professional referrers as an opportunity to educate the full team with points selected from your strengths list. Create an image that reflects your unique practice qualities and script your qualities for each visit. An aggressive and well-planned marketing calendar incorporating a strong message will assist you in achieving your goals in 2010. ♡