



NEW DIRECTIONS IN ORTHODONTIC MARKETING PART 3

This is the third installment in a series of articles on how orthodontic marketing has changed as a result of a trend that I refer to as the orthodontic competition explosion. This increase in competition has transformed the way orthodontic practices design, implement, and track their referral marketing programs. Is your practice experiencing the challenges of increased competition? If so, you'll need to understand where it comes from and how to take the first steps toward addressing it.

Competition Trends

We are at the beginning of a rapid increase in competition that will affect referrals in orthodontic practices. New sources of competition include:

- **General Dentists.** The emergence of aligners has made it easier for general dentists to perform some level of orthodontics. And while they still represent the minority of orthodontic cases performed annually, treatment by general dentists is increasing each year.
- **Orthodontic Retail.** We predict that more than 1,000 retail orthodontic stores will open within the next five years. They will create a high level of visibility for orthodontic companies or practices that are networked with the stores. These stores provide diagnosis and sell orthodontic treatment performed outside of the stores, at lower fees.
- **DSOs.** Large DSOs and gradually smaller group practices are incorporating orthodontic care into their offices.

These are the largest emerging trends that are leading to the orthodontic competition explosion. While parents and patients will continue to seek orthodontic care from orthodontists, the level of competition continues to increase and orthodontists will need to radically change their referral marketing strategy in order to remain successful.

by Roger P. Levin

Strategies and Quantity

Most orthodontists have limited marketing programs and no marketing training. In the past, this didn't matter. Orthodontic practices could perform limited marketing and still be very successful. However new competition demands effective marketing. We now advise practices to create focused marketing in five areas—patients, parents, social media, referring doctors, and community.

Keep in mind that there are two factors that determine the success of these programs. The first one is strategies. Selecting strategies for each focus area is critical. People react to a multitude of different types of marketing messages, branding, outreach, fun, excitement, and energy. Your practice's marketing strategies need to be selected in all of these different categories and combined in order to create a synergized marketing result.

The other factor is quantity. In referral marketing you must have a specific number of strategies in each category. Having one brilliant strategy in each category will not get the desired result. However, when you combine multiple strategies in each category, many of which integrate with other strategies, the results can be powerful. For example, an orthodontic practice that starts a community food drive with its patients, can market it on social media, and set up a contest with rewards for people who donate the food. This marketing activity has actually touched three key areas—community, patients, and social media. This is just one of many examples of how referral marketing needs to work today.

In this new era of increasing competition, lackluster referral marketing programs just won't work for practices that want

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success. Keeping a high level of marketing at all times is now essential for every orthodontic practice. By combining strategies and quantity, any orthodontic practice can increase referrals. ◊

About the Author



Roger P. Levin, DDS is a third-generation general dentist and the Founder and CEO of Levin Group, Inc., a dental management consulting firm that has worked with more than 26,000 dentists. He is an internationally-known dental practice management speaker who has written many books and articles.

Contact Info: 888.973.0000 • levingroup.com/ortho