



ORTHO2

The Customer Service Secret

by **Dr. Roger P. Levin**

Highly successful orthodontic practices have a secret. And despite it being obvious, it's one that many orthodontic practices never figure out. Any guesses? Well, it's not fixing the scheduling system, training the treatment coordinator, or increasing the referral marketing activities. But it is in fact the reason why highly successful orthodontic practices perform better. They have more patients, higher case acceptance, higher customer satisfaction, and more referrals. And when practices use this secret consistently, despite the competition, they flourish. The other benefit of the secret is that these practices seem to be happier because implementing the secret is fun and puts everyone in a good mood.

Give up? The secret is of course, excellent customer service!

Customer Service First

Excellent customer service may not be the profound answer you were expecting, but when you provide it from the very first patient encounter, it will produce profound results. In fact, it's outstanding customer service that places practices in the top 1% of patient satisfaction.

Many offices feel that customer service begins when they meet the patient. However, the most important time in the entire patient relationship starts with the very first phone call. In that phone call it's essential to help build a relationship, communicate caring and compassion, demonstrate how excited you are to meet this new patient and family, and assure the caller that you will do everything possible to provide an outstanding experience.

Most orthodontic practices believe that they already do this, but generally that's not the case. It's not that they are bad or poor in the first phone contact, it's that they're simply just okay. And in today's competitive orthodontic industry, okay won't cut it. All too often front desk people are focused on getting the patient on the schedule, telling the patient the information that your practice needs from

them and saying goodbye. Your front desk person must understand that the first phone call will determine the patient's desire to visit the practice, and whether or not they are oriented towards the treatment.

So how can you help your front desk wow new patients on the first call?

Scripting is Critical

Because all staff members aren't always natural stars in regard to communication, scripting is the training that allows them to excel. You can't rely on the natural talent of your team, and experience is almost irrelevant in this process. I've seen 18-year-olds excel at first contact relationship building and I've seen people with 30 years of experience completely fail. The key is the attitude, motivation, and strong scripting.

Front desk people are constantly challenged by multitasking activities and interruptions. Then the phone rings and it's a new patient, which sometimes is perceived more as an interruption than an enormous opportunity. In scripting the first contact, you want your front desk people to be focused on every new patient caller and be excited that they called. You want them to tell the new patient caller how delighted they are that they called, and that they will do everything possible for them to have an outstanding experience. Have them back this up with examples of what your practice does in terms of providing a great doctor relationship and excellent clinical care.

It's also essential that the front desk person brings high energy to the call because it demonstrates that they really mean what they're saying and helps the new patient caller to become excited about meeting them. The front desk person should also attempt to learn as much as they can

Reprinted from

The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2
July 2018 - Volume 36 Issue 3

about the new patient and family. They should be prepared to ask questions because this is the best way to get to know a patient and develop a relationship. For example:

- Whom may we thank for referring you?
- Where does John go to school?
- Isn't it great that we have clear aligners for adult patients so that you don't have to walk around with braces?
- Do you know anyone who has had aligners as an adult?
- How did you hear about us?

Once you learn certain things about the patient caller, you can then begin discussing things that are interesting or that you have in common. This is how you build outstanding relationships.

The secret of success of highly successful orthodontic practices is wowing and impressing new patients from the very first contact—it sets the stage for success. When the secret is properly implemented, patients will arrive for their first appointment already predisposed to liking the office, accepting treatment, and referring others. And when customer service is consistently excellent throughout the entire patient experience, the number of referrals will go up even higher. Customer service is the ultimate way to differentiate your practice. Providing it from the very first contact will ensure long-term success. ◊

About the Author



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