

IMPLANT PRACTICE SUCCESS REPORT

from Thommen Medical and Levin Group



Welcome to Issue #16 of ***The Implant Practice Success Report***, a monthly newsletter on implant practice success. Levin Group and Thommen Medical are very pleased to provide business education to you and your team. Each month, ***The Implant Practice Success Report*** will feature leading edge education for managing, marketing, and maintaining a robust and successful implant practice.

In this issue we focus on using systems to improve your management and we look at an important question I frequently get asked from new surgeons getting started.

How Good Is Your Management?

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

The basis of all surgical practice management is one word: systems. A system is a process that is conducted to achieve a desired result, but there is more to systems. Most surgical practices could achieve higher revenue, increased efficiency, and lower stress by upgrading the systems that they currently have. The following three recommendations will be powerful in helping a surgical practice achieve and maintain high levels of success over the course of a career.

1. Systems need to be detailed and step-by-step.

We have always felt at Levin Group that systems need to be created in a step-by-step fashion. When people tell you to improve your systems, they don't realize how difficult that is unless the systems are broken down by steps. What we see in most surgical practices is that a change will be made and inserted into a system, but not necessarily in a step-by-step format. As multiple changes are made, they gradually begin to degrade the system in terms of efficiency because they're not well thought out (again, from a step-by-step standpoint). Once systems have been outlined step-by-step, the team can use these systems as excellent training tools. People do well when they know which step follows the previous step. Practices do well when they want to make a change and they make it at an individual step level. Consider the analogy of creating computer code. You don't simply start inserting random upgrades here and there. You insert a change in the computer code between step A and B and the next improvement might be an insertion of computer code between step E and F. This allows for a practical and logical set of changes to be made over time in the surgical practice systems and the team will have no problem understanding exactly where those changes are being made and the system will be improved.

2. Systems need to be documented.

When systems are documented, they become the training manuals for the team. We are in an era of a

staffing crisis in dentistry that may last a while.

Practices that can train current team members to reach their highest potential and train new team members faster will have excellent results. Training comes from systems. The days of "on the job" training will end as this approach won't be sufficient to properly teach team members how to do their jobs. This is because dentistry has become more complicated due to advances in technology and longer learning curves. When staff members can review documentation on how to do a job or task properly, they will excel and help increase practice revenue each year.

As team members work through the documentation, you should also ask them for feedback. What could be improved? What steps are necessary? What did a new team member do at their old office that they think was better? Getting the team on board with continual practice improvement goes a long way in the science of surgical practice success and long-term staff satisfaction.

3. Systems should be proven.

Successful models of surgical practice systems already exist. They can be gleaned from webinars, seminars, articles, books, or consultants. Understanding that the systems that are being accessed have already been proven is like having the house plans of a beautiful home that has already been built. You don't have to worry about whether they will work as much as how well you will work them.

Using proven systems saves a lot of time and minimizes waste and mistakes. Too many surgical specialists have a "go it alone" attitude that ends up slowing practice performance for a longer portion of their career. In an era where the average retirement age of a dentist is now approximately 72, it's important to access practice potential as early as possible.

In summary, you want to have step-by-step, documented proven systems.

Questions From New Surgeons

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

I frequently have the opportunity to speak with young surgeons. Many of them approach me having decided to open their own practice and want to know what the most important factors are for potential success. This is an excellent question and one I am always excited to answer.

I have thought about this type of question for the last 38 years of my career as the CEO of Levin Group. In that time, I have focused on understanding what is important (and what is not) when it comes to building highly successful practices. The answer to this question is remarkably simple.

There are two factors in the success of any business that override all other factors: marketing and sales. Marketing is the starting point as it is what helps motivate someone to buy something and create a sale, which creates revenue. Unfortunately, most entrepreneurs are so in love with their product that they don't understand that their future success will be based far more on marketing and sales capability than the product itself. This is why most entrepreneurs go out of business within five years.

Most newly minted surgeons have good skills (their product); however, that doesn't necessarily differentiate them from others. The reality is that the truly successful practices have excellent marketing. This means that a new surgeon's very first effort should be to develop a marketing plan and carry it out. This marketing plan needs enough strategies and

different categories of strategies that would appeal to a wide base of referring doctors in their area.

Keep in mind, marketing is not an overnight activity. New doctors are often "semi-desperate" to get patients in the door and increase revenue; however, great practices are built one step at a time. Through years of observation, I've found that a well-constructed referral marketing program requires approximately six months to hit an inflection point where referrals start to spike much faster than in the first six months. This is based on an understanding that all marketing strategies for surgeons are typically about relationship building, frequency of contact, and customer service. When these come together in the right categories, referrals go up.

Always remember that the two key factors in achieving success in a surgical practice are marketing and sales.

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Roger P. Levin, DDS is the CEO and Founder of Levin Group, a leading practice management consulting firm that has worked with over 30,000 practices to increase production. A recognized expert on dental practice management and marketing, he has written 67 books and over 4,000 articles and regularly presents seminars in the U.S. and around the world.

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