

IMPLANT PRACTICE

SUCCESS REPORT

from Thommen Medical and Levin Group



Welcome to Issue #3 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 implant doctors and their teams. 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 creating value around your implant-related services for the patient and for your referring doctors.

Creating Exceptional Value for the Implant Patient

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

Dental implants are different from other aspects of dentistry. Although they offer an excellent standard of high-quality and improve the lives of patients, they are still viewed by many as an elective decision. Because most dental implant cases are still not covered by dental insurance, patients must decide if they are willing to invest in the procedure in terms of money, time, and inconvenience.

We have spoken to many implant surgeons who tell us that they have very high case acceptance. While this is most likely true, what they don't realize is that it could be even higher because there are a significant number of potential implant patients that never set foot inside their office for consultation. In a study by Levin Group Data Center, we found that 35% of patients referred to an implant surgeon for a consultation never make an appointment. This represents a significant level of lost opportunity in case acceptance, which is most likely due to the referring office not communicating the true value of implants to the patient. General practices are extremely busy environments and with COVID-19, they are even busier. Operating at approximately 74% (on average) of the pre-COVID patient volume, they are doing everything possible to move patients through the office quickly and efficiently.

Unfortunately, their concern for efficiency means that they don't necessarily take the time to emphasize why implant dentistry is so important and valuable. Many referring doctors simply tell the patient that they should have an implant consult, give them a referral and a business card, and suggest that they contact the specialty practice. This leaves the ball firmly in your court. Given this situation, it's interesting how much emphasis many specialty practices put on concepts like social media marketing that often gives them mixed and inconsistent results. Remember, 35% of referred patients never make an implant consult appointment, so it just makes good sense to focus time communicating with referring doctors regarding how they refer a patient. In fact, this may be one of the highest priority impact opportunities in increasing implant referrals. What makes it so great is that it's so simple.

Sometimes the simplest solutions are the most powerful. We usually think of very complex solutions as having the most value, but the problem with complex solutions is that they rarely get implemented and carried out on a consistent basis, or at all. Another problem with simple solutions is that they seem so obvious that they're overlooked because, well...they seem so obvious. But communicating with referring doctors is a powerful solution to help increase implant referrals for any specialty practice. Simply have the referring practice call on behalf of the patient while the patient is still in the referring office to schedule the appointment.

Simple? Yes. Powerful? Yes, but how powerful? The data is clear. When referring practices call and schedule the patient for the implant consult, 95% of patients keep the appointment. And even though there may be a small increase in the number of implant consultation no-shows, it's small relative to a very large increase in the number of implant consults.

So how do you do this? Communicate up front and often that your practice would be delighted to receive the call and schedule the patient. If the patient is not prepared to schedule right away, then the referring practice can provide the patient's contact information to the specialty practice so that they can reach out to the patient on their own. Don't think of this as being pushy or over the top. It's Five-Star Customer Service. You're letting referring practices know that you are happy to remove the burden of having the patient make an appointment, giving them one less thing to do or think about. The big plus for you is that you gain more control of getting the patient to your office.

Even if the data did not clearly show a 30% increase in referrals for implant consultation, the improvement is still staggering. What if it was only 15%? There are still many opportunities to increase implant consultations at this level. Lastly, keep in mind that an implant consult from a referring office has more endorsement and value than when a patient simply calls from an external marketing campaign.

The Science of Referral Marketing

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

Referral marketing is the backbone of most specialty practices. I believe that when you're seeking to increase the referrals for implant cases, a scientific referral marketing program is the absolute key to success. But what is the science?

For 36 years, Levin Group has worked to create a scientific approach to referral marketing. This was not easy as this information is not taught in business schools, dental schools, textbooks, or just about anywhere else. As we have worked with thousands of specialty practices, we continually attempt to quantify, categorize, and put data behind referral marketing. Here are some of the findings that will be beneficial to any specialty practice.

- 1. Referral marketing is partially based on building strong relationships.** Think about the referring doctors who are your good friends. They are typically A-level referral sources. Why? Because doctors will always want to refer to their friends. The real question is whether the practice has developed the right level of relationship with other referring doctors. We have seen time and again that as relationships strengthen, referrals increase.
- 2. The secret of success for referral marketing is quantity.** The referring practice must have enough of a quantity of outreach strategies to build relationships, drive the brand, and communicate confidence, convenience, and caring. Believe it or not, quantity is just as important as quality when it comes to strategies, and the magic number of strategies is approximately 15. We don't know why it is 15, but after years of testing we always suggest that every specialty practice have a minimum of 15 strategies functioning together simultaneously. These strategies include everything from simple text messages to expensive events (when safe again, of course). There are practices that focus on inexpensive strategies, practices that concentrate on expensive strategies, and others that use a combination of both. Whatever the focus, the outreach of 15 strategies keeps the specialty practice front and center for the referring offices.
- 3. The Professional Relations Coordinator (PRC) is essential to any referral marketing program.** No list of the key factors in the science of referral marketing would be complete without mentioning the role of the PRC. The PRC leads all the program activities, taking a large burden off the specialist.
- 4. Consistency is part of the science.** In our experience, the #1 factor in referral marketing failure is inconsistency. Even the best strategies, the right quantity, and a PRC will not make up for inconsistency. Most specialty practices go through cycles of on-again and off-again marketing. However, inconsistency is challenging to overcome, especially in the in the face of the pandemic and increased competition.
- 5. Categorization and measurement are also part of the science.** You can't have science without a measurement. We recommend that you categorize your referring doctors into four groups based on levels of referrals and production. Analyze each group's activity monthly so you can target and retarget accordingly. The measurements will demonstrate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the referral marketing program, as well as modifications needed to be made.

There are other parameters of the science of referral marketing, including training of the PRC, number of touch points per referring office, strategies to elevate the number of referrals from the four categories of referring doctors, and so on. But the basics outlined in this article will help to improve the referral marketing performance of any specialty practice.

ROGER P. LEVIN, DDS

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.

To contact Dr. Levin or to join the 40,000 dental professionals who receive his Practice Production Tip of the Day, visit www.levingroup.com or email rlevin@levingroup.com.