



Dr. Roger P. Levin DDS
Chairman and CEO of Levin Group, Inc.



Building TOTAL PRACTICE Success™

Our commitment is to help every orthodontist grow regardless of the economy. Every orthodontic practice has the potential to transform into A Levin Practice™ and anticipate these results:

- Continually increasing production
- Continually increasing profit
- Continually increasing referrals
- A low stress practice environment
- High levels of professional satisfaction
- Reaching financial independence sooner

Our consulting programs are based on proven systems and strategies that have delivered successful results to thousands of practices for more than 24 years. Levin Group Consulting Programs are the established benchmark for practice management excellence in our profession.

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Creating the Ideal Patient Experience

A Monthly Article on Practice Management

Presented by Dr. Roger P. Levin and Ortho Technology, Inc.

Each ortho team member plays a vital role in the patient experience. Most parents and patients judge an ortho practice more by the customer service they receive than any other factor, including clinical care.

This may surprise some ortho team members. While clinical care is paramount, realize that patients and parents are not orthodontists so they cannot effectively judge the care— at least not until treatment is complete at the end of 18 – 24 months.

Each time a parent and patient visit the practice and receive outstanding customer service it validates their selection of your office. When they feel good about where they receive ortho care, parents and patients will recommend your practice to family and friends.

Outstanding customer service drives referrals—from both GPs and patients. Referrals keep an ortho practice growing, which is critical to the office’s financial well-being. A successful practice is important to everyone. If you ever worked at a practice experiencing financial difficulties, you know the stress everyone is under... will hours be cut? Will salaries be frozen? Will layoffs occur?

Strong customer service is one of the best ways to ensure practice success now and for the long-term. And there is much that you can do to provide patients and parents the best experience possible!

How to Provide Great Customer Service

1. Treat Patients and Parents Like VIPs

Parents and patients want to believe they are the ortho practice’s *only* priority when they come in for appointments. Practices with excellent customer service strive to make their patients feel this way. If an ortho practice is running late when the patient arrives, or does not seem prepared for the appointment, patient confidence and trust decreases, as does the perception of quality of care.



To help build a strong practice-patient relationship, the orthodontist and staff members should learn as much as possible about each patient. Little things such as birthdays, school activities and accomplishments mean a great deal to patients (and parents) when mentioned during the appointment. On the patient information sheet, team members should keep notes about important events in the patient's life. This type of attention strengthens relationships with patients and builds a high level of trust.

Here are some other examples of VIP treatment that patients should receive:

- All patients and parents should be greeted as they enter the office. The scheduling coordinator should let patients know how delighted the practice is to see them.
- Each team member has an opportunity to enhance the practice-patient relationship. Say hello, smile, ask a personal question, ask how the patient is doing, escort the patient when the opportunity exists and thank the patient for visiting the office.
- Every time the patient comes to the practice learn at least one new thing about the patient. By asking the question, "What is new in your life?" you start a discussion that often results in a stronger practice patient relationship.



Former NFL quarterback Roger Staubach once said, "There is never a traffic jam on the extra mile." Exceeding patient expectations will differentiate your practice.

- Thank every patient for visiting the office. The orthodontist, assistant and front desk staff should always end conversations by thanking the patient. Let the person know that he or she is appreciated. This type of feedback results in patients and parents feeling extremely positive about the office.

2. Be Enthusiastic

Superior customer service requires enthusiasm on the part of the orthodontist and the team. No one likes to walk into a place of business and be greeted by blank, grumpy or unhappy faces. For example, it is not enough for staff members to thank patients and parents for visiting the practice. The team must do it the right way—sincerely and enthusiastically. Using power words such as "Great," "Fantastic," "Terrific," or "Wonderful," at the appropriate time is one way to convey enthusiasm when speaking with patients. When you "WOW" patients and parents, they will be much more likely to refer friends and family.

3. Listen to Your Patients

When patients and parents are checking out, the front desk coordinator should not only thank them for visiting the practice but also ask how the appointment went. "Did everything go as expected? How were you treated today in our office?"

These are questions that can help elicit useful patient feedback. Another technique is to conduct patient surveys once or twice a year. Surveys should include 5–10 questions and take only a few minutes to complete. By listening to patients and parents, the practice can pro-actively make improvements, update practice systems and correct situations that could turn into bigger problems.

4. Follow Up With Patients

Follow-up is about going the extra mile for patients. As former NFL quarterback and businessman Roger Staubach once said, "There is never a traffic jam on the extra mile." Exceeding patient expectations will differentiate your practice, and follow-up is one of the best ways to do that.

Follow-up refers to returning patients' phone calls, getting them information they have requested, and answering questions. Always follow up with patients and parents. If for any reason a team member is too busy at the moment a patient or

parent calls with a question or concern, it is incumbent on someone in the practice to call back that person as soon as possible. Even if a phone call cannot be returned right away, or if the necessary information cannot be found at that time, the team should never let a day go by without getting back in touch with patients and parents who call the office.

Conclusion

Customer service is a team effort. Every patient/parent interaction is an opportunity for the practice to shine. This requires the participation of the entire team, including administrative personnel, clinical staff and the orthodontist. When every team member does his or her part, the practice creates an ideal experience for patients and parents.

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