



6 Steps to Attracting Referrals

Strive to Stand Out and Create Lifelong Connections

BY WENDY O'DONOVAN PHILLIPS

You likely already know a handful of physicians and fellow dentists who are sending new patients your way. What if it was possible to exponentially increase the number of referred patients to your practice? Here are six steps to help you do just that:

- 1. Mine for referrers.** Make a list of doctors who already refer patients to your practice. Establish an account on LinkedIn and connect with all of those doctors. After you've made connections, view their profiles and explore the doctors with whom they are connected. Reach out to any of their connections who also could make strong referrals to your practice. With your request to connect, send each new connection a simple email, such as: *"I believe that your practice and mine share similar attributes and that we may be able to refer patients to one another. Are you available next Tuesday to meet over the lunch hour or for a call to discuss?"*
- 2. Make a presentation.** As you schedule calls or meetings with potential referrers, be prepared to make an impact. Whether it's as elaborate as using a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation or as subtle as distributing a brochure about your practice, you will want to leave the prospective referrer in awe. Put something in their heads and hands that will make your practice memorable.
- 3. Provide a referral form.** The easier you make it for your referring doctors to take action, the more likely that they will do so. Put referral forms in their hands before you leave that first in-person meeting or mail copies to them directly after that first call. Better yet, provide them with a link to your website, where they can find a digital referral form to make the referral process simple and fast.
- 4. Blog.** You are an expert in your field, and others may benefit from your knowledge. Take an hour each week to write a 500-word blog post with content that aims to help solve issues that prospective referrers likely are facing. Post the blogs you write to your practice website, and send a snippet of this content along with a link to the full post to your referring doctors via email, possibly using an automation software product like Constant Contact®. This is called content marketing, which can keep you top of mind, as well as position you as an expert worthy of referrals.
- 5. Make regular contact.** Another way to stay in touch with referrers is to send birthday, anniversary, and holiday cards. Make a point to take one referrer to lunch each month, and stick to a rotation so that you regularly see each one. Send flowers or a gift basket to your referrers once or twice a year. Around the winter holidays is a good time to do this. The more often they think of you, the more often they will refer patients to you.
- 6. Give thanks.** Once a month, someone in your office should handwrite thank-you cards to each doctor who referred a patient to you within the prior four weeks. Take it a step further by writing thank-you notes to referred patients, too. Gratitude goes a long way in creating lifelong referrers—and patients—for the practice.

Follow these six steps to help your practice stand out in the minds of doctors with whom you are networked. The dentist who makes an effort to gain referrals likely will benefit by gaining not only new and improved connections with colleagues, but also new patients. ♦

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