

# IMPLANT PRACTICE SUCCESS REPORT

from Thommen Medical and Levin Group



Welcome to Issue #12 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 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 building a culture of customer service and team burnout .

# Build a Culture Around Customer Service

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

If you want to build a great culture with a highly focused team you need to have a very specific objective for them. One of the best choices is to rally the team around improving and maintaining excellent customer service. As a specialty practice, your practice lives and dies by referrals. This means that you have more than one customer base.

The first customer base is the patients. The challenge here is that many specialty practices focus almost exclusively on patient customer service and don't focus on referring practices. Even their patient customer service, which may be good, has not yet reached great.

The second customer base is referring practices, and within that there are sub-customer bases including the referring doctor, hygienist, front desk staff, and others in the referring practice. The sub-customer bases are very real. It often happens that referrals come from the doctor, cases are identified by a hygienist, and patients ask the front desk staff for their opinion on the referring practice.

Keep in mind that the key to customer service is not a massive or fast overhaul. Customer service success is truly achieved through continuous small improvements. We often challenge Levin Group clients to identify one improvement that can be made in customer service each month. This may not sound like much progress, but making 12 customer service improvements a year (one each month) will help the practice to develop a culture—a thought process and behaviors that will benefit the practice immeasurably.

By galvanizing the team around the objective of improving customer service—including them in the selection of improvements and helping them understand that customer

service can make or break a referral stream for the practice—a culture of customer service will begin to emerge. Team members will begin thinking about extra things that they can do to help patients. Eventually this will all lead to a concept that we teach called, "Moments of Magic."

What is a Moment of Magic? It is having every doctor and team member do one extra thing every day for one patient. That's all...it's that simple. One extra thing every day for one patient by every doctor and team member. To create accountability and make it fun, your morning meeting can be the time when team members provide quick reports (10 seconds each) on what their Moment of Magic was the day before. If you don't have morning meetings, create accountability partners where each partner tells the other about their Moment of Magic and randomly change partners every 90 days. Keep in mind that doctors should also have accountability partners. If you think this sounds silly, then you don't understand the power of improving customer service with little actions each day. Actions become habits and habits build great specialty practices.

Be sure to periodically ask the team at monthly staff meetings if they feel the customer service is improving. By framing it as a question and allowing for responses, the culture is driven further. People begin to take ownership and responsibility to achieve the objective and understand that excellent customer service is the new standard and how it contributes to ongoing success.

One final idea is to have a team member or doctor bring a customer service story to the staff meeting. The more you talk about customer service, tell stories, and compare your practice to these good or bad customer service experiences, the faster the culture will grow.

## ROGER P. LEVIN, DDS

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# Is Your Team Burning Out?

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

One of the remnants of the pandemic is that many specialty practices lost staff members. Some never returned after the shutdown in the spring of 2020, while others returned and then decided not to remain in the practice. Furthermore, staff members had challenges that forced them to reduce some their work hours or change their schedules. This put pressure on specialty practices, increased stress, and, in some cases, lead to chaotic days, weeks, or even months.

As we continue to move through the various stages of the pandemic, things seem to be smoothing out in specialty practices, but they are still experiencing a very serious staff shortage. In fact, it's not unusual for practices to advertise for two or three months before they even receive applications for a position. This makes it imperative for practices to do everything possible to retain current staff members so they can avoid having to go through the recruiting, hiring, and training process.

One of the questions every leader should be focused on is whether any team members are beginning to burnout. Keep in mind that burnout is different than fatigue, stress, and anxiety. Many specialty practices have had years of those symptoms, but burnout is different. According to the world health organization, burnout is an occupational phenomenon that is caused by long-term chronic workplace stress.

If team members are burning out, it's only a matter of time until performance declines, attitudes go from positive to negative and staff members simply resign. Burnout can have a severe effect on people to the point where they will make life decisions that might not be in their own best interest simply because they cannot handle their daily duties.

If you think that a good night's sleep, relaxing weekend, or a one-week vacation will take care of your burnout you're wrong. Burnout often takes months to work through and can create a scenario where specialty practice performance is negatively impacted. Consider the following example:

A Levin Group client had a front desk staff member who had truly entered the burnout phase and it showed because this person went from being delightful to ill-mannered. Two referring doctors, who were personal friends of the specialist, independently called him to let him know that the front desk person was being extremely rude to their front desk staff

and patients. Friendship or not, referring doctors will only tolerate this kind of unpleasantness for so long because they can't have unhappy patients or front desk team members in their own office.

The best way to address burnout is to prevent it. Take time to evaluate the office environment and attitude of yourself and the practice team. As the leader are you optimistic, upbeat, energized, and positive? Is the practice environment a safe place that staff members can come to every day to help patients, do their jobs, make a difference, and not experience additional high levels of stress and chaos? Is there open communication in the practice for team members to have a sense of what is going on, where the practice is headed, and the general purpose of their work?

If a team member is experiencing burnout, then either the doctor or office manager should meet with that person and offer them a compassionate ear. Burnout is real just like a broken leg, except that you can't see that the person is limping or wearing a cast. A team member who is experiencing burnout is potentially a team member who will be lost and replacing quality team members today is extremely difficult. Approach burnout with compassion and identify strategies to help that team member. You may have to consider whether they need a day off, a one-week vacation, or a reduction in job responsibilities? None of these are desirable, but they can be a necessary first step in helping someone to address burnout.

When you meet with people who you think may be experiencing burnout, you can make the point, that part of the solution could be getting enough sleep, eating properly, exercising, and taking time to focus on things the person enjoys doing. I remember one specialty practice client whose entire team went to the gym together three nights a week. Furthermore, they liked each other and thought of each other as friends. As a result, it was rare for a team member to leave the practice and they had a fierce dedication to practice success. This helped the practice produce in the top 10%.

Today burnout will be part of many dental practices. The opportunity to prevent it, avoid it, or help team members through it will make an enormous difference in long-term specialty practice performance.