



# Implant Game Changers

**A Whitepaper Series By Roger P. Levin, DDS**

Implant Game Changers is a monthly whitepaper on an important implant practice management topic. It provides you with a quick and easy way to understand a specific business challenge and how to translate the solution into higher production and profit, greater efficiency, more implant patients, lower stress and greater personal satisfaction. These whitepapers contain recommended actions and strategies for a stronger and faster post COVID-19 recovery and sustained practice success.

# 5 Ways to Increase Specialty Practice Production

The recent pandemic revealed a great deal about the strength and success of specialty practices. Perhaps the most important lesson learned was that production is the key factor for success. This also means that production is the most important statistic to track daily, weekly, and annually.

As I have explained in many webinars for specialty societies and organizations, if production stays strong, the practice will be fine. Most specialty practices fared well throughout the pandemic, but that wasn't a given or certainty during the shutdown. No one knew where the pandemic was going even though specialty practice production turned out better than expected, though not necessarily for obvious reasons. For example, many specialty practices were able to make up lost production from the shutdown due to pent-up demand during the reopening phase. To keep up with this demand, practices had to work faster and harder which led to a high level of fatigue and burnout. Other challenges included staffing changes as some staff were concerned about returning to practices safely or had other issues (i.e., childcare, illness, etc.) that kept them from remaining employed.

Now that we're gradually moving through the pandemic, there are lessons to be learned that can help in your efforts to maintain strong specialty practice production.

## Understanding Stress, Efficiency, and Production

There are different sources of production. The first is referrals. As I have stated clearly in other Levin Group whitepapers and videos delivered by Thommen Medical, referrals are the lifeblood of the specialty practice. If there are enough referrals, everything else will automatically happen, even if it

causes chaos, stress, or fatigue. However, regarding practice production, chaos, stress, and fatigue are direct indicators that the practice is performing below potential. This doesn't mean that it has bad production or is in danger, but it is definitely below potential.

Stress alone can indicate production is below potential. Stress is mainly caused by inefficiency in practice systems. Many practices have moderate to poor performing systems. If times are good and there are enough referrals, a practice can make up for this lack of systems, but when it is challenged or facing rising competition, it will begin to falter or decline in production. Stress results from inefficiency. The more inefficient the practice, the lower the production is relative to potential. I am referring to net production after insurance discounts.

Keeping production strong is an excellent business strategy for specialty practices. In fact, if practices can only focus on one non-clinical area, it should be production. If production stays high, the practice will perform well. When we examine some of the best specialty practices, we see that excellent systems allow the team to become fully trained at the highest level and this leads to excellent practice production. Practices, unlike large businesses, do not have training departments where they can focus on continual employee training. Instead, specialty practices must implement step-by-step systems and insist that the team members follow them. Documented systems are the "playbook" that allows the dental team to win each day. Just like any sport that has a playbook, it's important to know the measurements that tell you whether a team member is performing at the right level. In almost any specialty practice, if the systems are in place and the team is following them, then production will be strong and growing.

## Five Playbook Strategies for Increasing Specialty Practice Production

### 1. Properly welcome patients during the new patient phone call.

The very first step is to convert the new patient phone call into a value-based experience. Simply getting a call from a referred patient doesn't mean they will schedule, show up or accept treatment. The first system that should be put in place is called the New Patient Experience. This is a process that must be designed step-by-step and script-by-script to help specialty practices capture as many referred patients as possible.

When a patient calls the practice, they don't expect to have a value-building phone call. They are merely calling to either ask a question or schedule an appointment. This is where the specialty practice must take positive control of the phone call to create an image and brand of the practice that is extremely positive. This begins, like any system, with the playbook. We start with a script that is put into place as soon as the front desk staff member realizes that the caller is a new patient. The script should lead the team member in taking time to get to know the patient, complimenting the referring doctor, discussing why the patient is calling, building the practice brand, enhancing the specialist's reputation, schedule the appointment, and let the patient know the practice will do anything to help them and provides a great patient experience. Think of this as the first step in the New Patient Experience. It's not a phone call to quickly get through and get back to work. It's a call to help build new friendship. When you do this the results will be amazing.

### 2. Schedule the patient implant consult within seven days.

Implant patients often have a different psychology than other patients. If a patient in the general practice, has pain or an emergency they will schedule with the specialist to whom they are referred as soon as they can. The same urgency does not exist around dental implants. Most implant cases aren't emergencies and can be put off for consults for several weeks, months, or possibly forever. In fact, 35% of patients referred for implant consults to a specialty practice never actually make

an appointment. Therefore, when a patient does contact the office, it's critical to bring the patient in as soon as possible. At Levin Group, we encourage our specialty practice clients to build a schedule that allows for implant consults to be seen within seven days and communicate this in different ways to referring doctors.

Letting referring doctors know that you'll make time to see their implant patients for consults within seven days sends a strong message about your commitment to the referring doctor and their patient. At the same time, the sooner the practice can schedule the patient, the more likely it is that the patient will keep the appointment and accept treatment. Life is complicated for many patients and when their appointment is later rather than sooner, factors can intervene that force them to cancel. These patients may never come back. Practices should also consider that the sooner the consult, the sooner the case can be started. This means that production grows faster sooner, which is an excellent business principal. Additionally, seeing implant consults within seven days, when possible, will increase the number of implant patients and cases seen by almost any specialty practice annually.

### 3. Schedule all large cases ASAP.

This needs to be a firm practice policy. The reasons are simple. The sooner the patient is scheduled the more likely they will retain the appointment and any motivation or excitement that was derived in the referring practice. This is like the description above about life throwing patients curveballs that cause them to cancel their scheduled implant treatment. Practices should measure each year by how many implant cases are scheduled and not completed. This number will most likely be higher than most specialists think.

By starting the implant case sooner rather than later, production once again goes up. Keep in mind that no matter what you do or say, some patients cannot have implant treatment until it is convenient for them and that could be weeks or even months away. Practices should periodically reach out to patients that delay treatment to help keep them motivated.

#### 4. Complete the entire case when possible.

Different specialists and patients have different philosophies about how they want to proceed with treatment. Some patients will ask if they can do the implant case all at once or if there are other options such as breaking it up into two or three different periods of time because they are concerned about the postoperative recovery or expense. The challenge with this is that many patients never fully complete their implant treatment when it's done in phases. They will lose their motivation or find other reasons to put it off. The one guarantee of completing implant treatment in one appointment is that the patient will have received optimal care because they've gotten the entire recommended treatment.

One option to consider and promote is patient financing. Patient financing, especially interest-free financing, can often help patients to feel financially secure enough to handle the expense of the entire case all at once. Implant treatment coordinators should become excellent at leading a discussion that helps patients understand their financial situation and lets them know that patient financing is available. Scripting will help the coordinator to review each financing option and guide the patient in selecting the one that is most convenient and comfortable for them.

#### 5. Remember, implant patients have friends and family.

Upon completion and follow-up of an implant case, there should be a process to let patients know that they're welcome to refer friends or family. Strategies for encouraging referrals from satisfied implant patients include free implant consults and small discounts on implant treatment, which should both be solidified with a "Friends and Family" courtesy card. In many cases, happy implant patients talk about their implants to others and over time can build a small cadre of annual referrals. It's not unusual to receive referrals from an implant patient years later and this also contributes to increased practice production.

There are many ways to grow practice production, especially through dental implants. Patient referrals, community branding, and a great reputation all go to the heart of making this happen.

### Summary

Implant diagnosis and treatment is different than many other specialty services. Although it's becoming a much more standard form of care, it's still an elective option. Dental implants are one of the best ways to improve a patient's quality of life while simultaneously increasing your practice production. The recommendations in this whitepaper can be put in place quickly and easily. When most of them are followed, practice production will increase in a very short period and practice production is what keeps specialty practices healthy in both the short-term and the long-term.

#### 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](http://www.levingroup.com) or email [rlevin@levingroup.com](mailto:rlevin@levingroup.com).