

Building Referrals from Physicians

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10 tips for Medical Specialists, Surgeons & Allied Health Professionals

ONE: Do everything possible to make sure your patient satisfaction is better than your competitors'. Conduct patient satisfaction surveys, study the results carefully and improve on all areas of weakness.

TWO: When your patient satisfaction surveys show superior results, promote your findings to existing and potential referral sources. State how you have been sensitive to the needs of your patients and what actions you undertook to achieve such high ratings. Invite them to peruse your patient surveys (without violating HIPAA).

THREE: Make sure you hire people who are warm, outgoing and have excellent communication skills. Have your most qualified staff person(s) develop relationships with the office staff of your potential and existing referral sources. Your office staff can boast about your skills. You cannot. Allow them to take office managers to lunch, build close relationships and have them enthusiastically paint pictures of how well you take care of your patients.

FOUR: Keep track of each referring physician's referral activity on a monthly basis. When a physician's referral volume drops, visit that physician, make sure everything is o.k., express your appreciation for having faith in your services and ask for more referrals.

FIVE: Seek out joint opportunities. For example, if you are an audiologist who is going to make a presentation to a group on hearing aids, invite an ENT whom you wish to increase referrals from to join you to discuss a topic related to hearing.

SIX: Create a DVD six to ten minutes long that clearly sets your practice apart from your competitors. Offer the DVD to office managers. Include a cover letter and a small gift card from a coffee store as a thank you in advance for watching the DVD. Follow up with a phone call. Answer her questions and ask for an appointment to visit with the doctor.

SEVEN: Set up lunch in-services for potential referring physicians and their staffs. Bring in lunch. Make sure your presentation separates your practice from your competitors.

EIGHT: Periodically hold after-hour get-togethers at your office. Offer food and drink. Invite both existing and potential referral sources. Send invitations and follow up with phone calls to those who

do not RSVP. Set up follow-up meetings with those who do attend.

NINE: Offer your services at substantial discounts or for free, if feasible, to potential referring physicians and their office staffs.

TEN: Innovate your practice so you offer a *clearly* better patient experience than your competitors. If you are substantially superior to your competitors in terms of quality of care, customer service, patient convenience and/or consistency, you can create a promotional program targeting referral sources that will yield fantastic results.