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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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Don't Let Bottlenecks Slow Orthodontic Practice Growth

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



Introduction

Bottlenecks kill systems. They start off innocently enough as a minor tweak, but that turns into another and then another... before you know it, you have created a Frankenstein system, cobbled together from spare parts, add-ons and work-arounds. This "improved" system—whether it be the ortho consultation, schedule or observation patient program—bears little or no resemblance to the original system, especially in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and operational flow.

In orthodontic practices, bottlenecks affect almost every system and are often invisible. Orthodontists become so used to bottlenecks that it's just assumed that's the way things are supposed to be. As the years go on, bottlenecks strangle productivity and choke off profitability.

Perhaps the easiest way to define a bottleneck is to think about traffic. We've all been on freeways that go from three or four lanes down to one lane. Who wants to be inching along when the speed limit is 55 mph? And when those types of back-ups and delays occur in your ortho practice, they can be just as devastating!

The more outdated systems become, the more bottlenecks they spawn. This is why Levin Group recommends replacing systems every 3–5 years with expertly designed step-by-step systems.

Where Are The Bottlenecks?

Here are four of the most common bottlenecks found in ortho practices:

1. The Unbalanced Schedule
2. Delayed Consults and Starts
3. The Inefficient Assistant
4. Late Patients

1. The Unbalanced Schedule

Every ortho practice faces the afterschool crunch. Parents don't want to pull their kids out of school to have their braces checked. The result for too many ortho practices are overbooked afternoons and light mornings.

Huge gaps in the morning schedule indicate a lost opportunity to increase production. By shifting some afternoon patients to morning appointments, the practice

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maximizes its capacity and prevents bottlenecks from wrecking the schedule for patients and staff. A simple technique of offering a 10% discount to certain patients can fill the morning appointments quickly.

While some orthodontists would balk at offering 10% courtesies on fees to fill up their mornings, they are being oblivious to the reality that this simple technique can lead to dramatically higher profits at the end of the year. I am not speaking only about a few thousand dollars, but tens of thousands of dollars (and maybe even more) in increased revenue and profit. According to the Levin Group Data Center, orthodontists on average can add \$50,000 in new production by moving patients to the morning and freeing up more appointment times in the afternoon.

2. Delayed Consults and Starts

New patients drive ortho growth. But if potential patients and parents have to wait several weeks for a consultation, they will look elsewhere for ortho care. In today's atmosphere of ortho shopping, practices have to do everything they can to accommodate potential patients.

Levin Group recommends seeing all prospective patients within 7–10 days. Not only will this protocol increase production, but it will also decrease the number of patients or parents who decide to shop orthodontic offices. The sooner the appointment, the more likely the patient will start. It's worth repeating that once patients agree to treatment, practices should schedule them within 7–10 days. Don't give patients time to have second thoughts or go to another practice.

3. The Inefficient Assistant

While team members are unique individuals who work at different paces, a certain standard of efficiency must be maintained for the ortho practice to perform well. For ortho assistants, the goal is to have the slowest assistant working at a speed that's within 10% of the fastest assistant's pace. This

target can be challenging when an ortho practice has four or more assistants, but it's worth pursuing all the same.

Due to the large volume of patients that most ortho practices see daily, many orthodontists aren't aware of any problems unless one assistant is significantly slower than her colleagues. To identify any efficiency issues, Levin Group recommends that ortho practices conduct procedural times studies every two years. This process will give the orthodontist an accurate record

of each team member's speed and efficiency for a variety of procedures. If one or more assistants are 10% slower than the fastest assistant, then they should receive training to correct any deficiencies.

4. Late Patients

Recognizing that orthodontists deal with large numbers of children, late patients are a significant factor. Each time a patient arrives late, it creates a bottleneck. This is a very serious issue as it leads to stress, lateness for other patients, poor customer service and a frustrated, overwhelmed staff.

How do you avoid this type of bottleneck? By identifying patients and parents who are habitually late for appointments and scheduling them 20 minutes early.

Once patients have been late twice, they move into the 20-minute early category and are never paroled. For the rest of their time in the orthodontic practice, they will routinely be scheduled 20 minutes early to ensure that they are actually on time. I am often asked at my orthodontic seminars if you should tell patients you are now going to schedule them early. The answer is a resounding NO. You simply schedule those late patients early, so that they don't negatively impact your schedule.

Conclusion

Bottlenecks can cost orthodontic practices tens of thousands of dollars a year. For some practices, it's a lot more. Bottlenecks not only affect your current patients, but they also prevent you from adding more patients... due to stress, fatigue, and a perceived lack of capacity.

So the question orthodontists have to ask themselves is— isn't it time to get rid of those revenue-killing bottlenecks by replacing outdated systems?

Attend Dr. Levin's "The Most Powerful Seminar for Ortho Growth" March 9-10, 2012 in Las Vegas, Nevada!

See page 4 for more information, or contact your Ortho Technology Representative for more details.