

# Developing a Referral Network

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Networking with others is essentially an interpersonal skill that can be employed effectively to build a profitable referral network for doctors. Engaging with the right kind of referral network partners that share the same values and commitment as the doctor will go a long way in developing a sustainable and effective referral network.

## Create a Short-list of Potential Names

In an online world that has an overload of individuals, agents and firms claiming to provide successful referral networking, it is critically important to choose the right type of referral network partners. To begin with, the doctor should create a list of the specialty areas within their practice that could potentially generate a fair number of referrals and create a significant income stream.

Once the list is finalized, the doctor may look for potential network partners, and possibly have three to five names short-listed for each specialty area.

References can be sought from colleagues and peers in the industry, Google search, and via respected online forums, blogs and sites that are focused on the medical community.



## Seek One on One Meetings for Evaluation

To evaluate the right referral network partners, it is important to engage in one on one discussions rather than simply relying on an individual's claims. The meetings can be held online via Skype, Google Hangouts or other means. The doctor should prepare a list of standard questions that address their key expectations and requirements from a network partner.

The doctor should try to understand the niche or specific areas of strength of a potential referral partner. Medical field is highly specialized and the best results can be achieved when a doctor creates a referral network that is in harmony with the areas of the strength of their medical practice.

## Adopt a Proactive Approach to Network Development

When a medical professional adopts a “wait and see” approach, it will usually not lead to creation of the desired level of networking in a highly competitive environment. If the network partner says: “If I learn about someone requiring your services, I will get in touch with you,” that is not going to be of much help.

Doctors who really achieve an incremental level of referrals every month are usually the ones who proactively ask for the referral, and not wait and hope. Periodic engagement with colleagues and existing network partners, and seeking new referrals will yield results.

## Focus the Efforts on Motivated Network Partners

The doctor should spend time and effort on networking with potential colleagues if they have the commitment, motivation and time to send them the proper referrals. A successful referral relationship will happen when both parties are equally enthusiastic and work for mutual benefit.

If the potential referral partner shows laxity or lack of professionalism, they may not be the best partner to work with. Referrals will be generated when both parties spend a dedicated amount of time to make it happen. The vision of the doctor must match with that of their referral colleagues.

Personal meetings and visiting the offices of referral colleagues can also go a long way in developing a strong referral network. A visit to the partner’s office will allow the doctor to know the referral coordinators and engage with them personally. More often than not, it is the staff members who are initiating the referrals. Therefore, a rewarding interpersonal engagement with the entire team of the partner can support the network in the long run.

### About the Author:


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### Build Brand Advocates for your Practice Focus on Referral Marketing

Top five reasons why referral marketing can work fantastically for healthcare practices:

- It's an effective way of attracting a highly relevant potential patient base.
- Recommendations from friends are viewed as personal validations.
- Referred patients tend to display a higher level of loyalty; in other words they are less likely to leave.
- Referral marketing can bring down your sales expenses and simplify your sales cycle.
- Closing ratio for referred leads is 60% compared to a close ratio of 10% with non-qualified leads.



"Stellar patient experience" can drive brand exposure in the era of health 2.0. As the emphasis shifts towards more personalized marketing, engaging with potential patients can happen on multiple levels and over a variety of platforms.

One-on-one engagement not only makes your patients feel special, but it also shows your patients that you care about their experiences and expectations. Patients will rave about your practice if they are happy and satisfied.



### Keep in mind:

- 92% of consumers today trust recommendations from people they know.
- Referred patients can bring higher profit margins.
- Referral marketing can help you display true practice value and it encourages patients to recommend your practice brand to direct family and friends.
- 83% of consumers today will recommend a brand, product, or service if they are satisfied with it.



### A simple 4 step referral program works like this:

- Identify a list of patients who are most likely to refer a friend, relative, or colleague.
- Encourage brand advocates to use referral links to recommend your practice to their friends, family, and others in their network.
- Use an effective referral marketing software/system to keep track of all referrals.
- Reward your brand advocates using incentives such as discounts, cash prizes, or other premiums.



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