



GUIDE TO

Increasing Referrals





The rules of healthcare have changed. Medical practices dependent on referrals, such as diagnostic imaging centers, are faced with the reality that the changes issued by the federal government on reimbursement rates and referral practices, among other changes, necessitate a fresh—more likely guerrilla—approach to retaining and expanding business. For many, employing guerrilla business tactics presents an added challenge in an already difficult environment.

Steps to get your practice on par with the best!

1 Deliver Great Service

Little can convince a patient to return if the care quality is poor. Top-quality medical care along with compassionate, individualized attention is a must. Board-certified, fellowship-trained specialists with specialty knowledge and experienced, registered and licensed technologists will inspire the most confidence. Advanced diagnostic equipment is another way to earn respect from referrers and patients. You may wish to offer VIP services for those seeking a higher degree of convenience or comfort. Address gaps between your assessment of your center's quality of care and that of your patients' through data collection. Survey your patients to find out the decision drivers for choosing your practice and how they define "great" service.

Acting immediately on patient complaints can be a great tool for winning back unhappy customers. Identifying and correcting chronic problems with staff or procedures will provide the most important benefit.

2 Network in the Community

Develop multiple avenues for obtaining new referrals through relationship building. This can involve deploying a team of field marketers and networking. Get involved. Position yourself as a leader in the community and participate in industry and community events. Volunteer to speak at Chamber of Commerce meetings or sponsor a local business association's breakfast event. You never know from where the next referral may come.



3 Motivate the Staff

Look first to your staff as they are “face” of the practice. Have them build rapport with their counterparts at referring offices. Make sure your office stands out for its friendliness and stellar service. Establish service standards. These can range from answering the phone promptly with a friendly voice, minimizing caller hold time to less than 1 minute, and returning calls quickly. Encourage your staff to act as ambassadors. They live in the community, and their friends and family members at some point may be in need of diagnostic services. They can espouse the great service your center provides. Offer a “friends & family” discount, if that helps.

4 Show Appreciation

Be sure to ask patients how they found your practice. Acknowledge the referrer, especially if it's a new referrer, by sending a thank you, and try to meet personally with each physician who refers a patient. Continue to nurture new referring sources with regular visits to demonstrate appreciation. You can also use the visit to gather intelligence on how to make the referral process easier and more rewarding.

5 Make Referring Easy

Consider the quality of the referrer experience. Having a great patient-referral process is likely to keep them coming. Minimal effort often translates to maximum volume. Online portals are the best way to streamline the referral process. Make the process welcoming, intuitive and hassle-free. By automating as many functions as possible with the fewest possible clicks, you save the referring office time. Plus, you can offer premium services that encourage collaboration and add value to the relationship.

6 Collaborate

Care coordination is increasingly important and requires collaboration among providers. Fostering collaboration results in better patient outcomes and helps solidify physician relationships. Technology can play a big role in collaboration particularly with patient registration, results-delivery and follow up. For registration, make it easy for physicians to request an appointment with your practice online, manage insurance eligibility processes and provide electronic or downloaded forms for both patients and physicians.

Encourage referring physicians to schedule appointments while the patient is still onsite to prevent referral leakage. Providing driving directions and maps to the diagnostic center can help minimize late arrival times. Inform referrers when patients fail to keep an appointment, do not complete a test or require additional tests.

Finally, try to encourage more interaction by providing multiple communication methods. Instant messaging or web chat is a convenient way to be responsive and promote dialogue with referring office staff.



7 Manage Referrals

It's difficult to gauge the success of your marketing efforts unless you have a means to measure them. The trick is to select a tool that can store contact information, record all communications and marketing activities, identify existing and potential referral sources, and track referrals in real time. That way, you can determine the success of particular marketing efforts as well as spot trends heading up or down in referral volume, even by modality.

Be sure you can track volumes by individual physician or group and document expenses for the promotional lunch or doughnut delivery to the referring office. A mapping feature is very useful when planning out marketing trips and identifying underserved geographic regions. Field marketers also find value in being able to schedule appointments on location. Find an application that integrates seamlessly with your RIS and automatically converts a lead into a referral account immediately after a new patient arrives. Built-in analytics helps you develop strategies based on real-time business intelligence. It also offers insight for evaluating marketing staff productivity and the impact of the overall program.

8 Engage Patients

Help patients feel more comfortable about the practice and the tests they must undergo. Stock referring offices with well-designed pamphlets that introduce your center's radiologists and staff and highlight the services and features that set you apart from the other centers in the area. Provide referrers with instructions and educational materials, both online and print, for common diagnostic tests. These can support physician-patient conversations prior to the tests and help provide reassurance to patients not knowing what to expect. Prior to the appointment,

send out reminders to patients and make note of any special needs or assistance they require with language, transportation, mobility, etc. Convenience is important to patients too. Offer patients the opportunity to request or change appointments or access their patient information through an online portal. And, as mentioned earlier, gather their feedback on their experience through satisfaction surveys.

Increasing Referrals is a Matter of Survival. *Isn't it Time to Act?*



AbbaDox is a healthcare software provider specializing in radiology workflow solutions. The company's comprehensive cloud-native platform helps outpatient imaging centers optimize their operations throughout the entire patient journey by bringing together native applications, third-party integrations, and value-added services into a single, easy-to-use solution. Since its founding in 2003, AbbaDox has become known for its scalability, flexibility, and simplicity.

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