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Referrals, Recommendations, Reviews and Reciprocation of Love

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Kevin: Good day everyone. Welcome to the latest episode of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator Podcast. The one and only, my dear friend and brother, Scott Manning.

Scott: Kevin, great to be here. And as everyone who knows me always says, "Thank goodness there's only one of you." Let's do what we can do. Speaking of the one and only, we have the Valentine's Day. I know you're going to say that already, but I wanted to wish you happy Valentine's Day. Such a special thing, Kevin. You've been my Valentine for so many years. And now we get these fine people here who listen to us that like what we have to say. If our Valentines don't like us today, we just jump on this call, pretend the people listening do.

Kevin: I love it. And as you have referenced, today happens to be the official Valentine's Day. So as Scott said, sending all the love from beautiful rural Springfield, Tennessee. For those of you who don't know, and maybe this is the first time you're hearing it, yes, we moved for the seventh time in the last nine years and we're happy. Happy to be in Scott's backyard doing this podcast from the same state from here forward.

So friends, couldn't think of a better topic seeing as how today is the day of love. Although, Scott, you and I say this all the time, no different than we celebrate every day and we don't need a particular day. We love those who we love every day, not just because of today being a day we're supposed to focus. Yet, why don't we do this? So since it's this day of love and we're focused on it, and I think that it's not just of giving, it's when you're with the right people, love is reciprocated. And that to me is why I wish people would be more comfortable in asking patients for things such as referrals, recommendations, reviews, all those different kinds of things, because they have just had this opportunity to pour their heart, their care, their soul, their love, agape love, into a patient, patients, all day long.

And guess what? At that moment, you deserve to ask for something in return because love is a two-way street, right? So Scott, I want this to just take on a life of its own. I'd love to just stay in this essence of connection that leads to goodness. Most specifically, I would love to make sure that we do spend a little time on referrals because let's face it, it's the single greatest thing that we can do in our practice, and it just takes a few key elements. So why don't you begin and let's see where the day of love takes us, my friend.

Scott: Yeah. Well listen, thank you very much for sharing this and driving the theme home here. And I guess when I was pondering about this, I like to always start with, let's say the obvious. In addition to the fact it's Valentine's, it doesn't matter when you watch this or listen to this, whatever you do; what really matters is that every person would say, every practice, Kevin, since the beginning of the time they say, "Our best patients are word of mouth." They say, "Our best patients are referral patients." And then if you follow that question up with, "Okay, so what do you do to create more of those?" The answer is nothing, most likely.

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Scott:

Now our people of course do more than let's say anyone else, but even still, it hasn't become, I would say the word, "systematic." But I would also, more specifically I would say, "a culture of referrals."

An environment that is, to your point Kevin, is sharing, is creating, is giving people something to talk about and making this more of a relationship-based practice. I would say that the three principles that I would just like to mention is, the first one, is you got to be doing something that people actually want to talk about. That's the first step to love is let's do more than somebody else does. And I suppose as I wrote about this week, and anybody that needs a holiday to tell somebody they love them and do something special obviously doesn't have a great relationship, because the whole idea is that you ought to be doing those special things daily. If you got to put a reminder in your phone. One of the things we talked about at Wealth Group is every single day build in the "significant other gratitude;" like morning, evening, whatever it is.

Just take a moment and intentionally schedule doing something nice. In your practice, the first deal is number one, do transformative dentistry, number one. Number two, make like Kevin and choose to be extraordinary with your intake process. We just had our Advanced Event and with every one of the seven steps of the patient experience, do something that makes you stand out. Be the team member that gets their name mentioned in the review because you chose to be extraordinary. I would just say that's number one, okay, do more shit to be talked about.

Number two is let's not placate this as it's all about patients getting patients. You are the ones that stand to gain the most. So we say, "What are we doing?" And I'm talking good old fashioned, every team member with business cards. I'm talking good old fashioned, get a testimonial, and then once a week, everybody posts it on their social media networks and brags about it. Posting stuff on your practice social media is pointless because the only people who see that are already freaking patients! We need to say, "Are we believers in what we're doing? Are we sharing our love for what we do with other people?"

And then the only last one, I would just say, Kevin, and you said freestyle, so that's what you're getting. The last thing I would say, Kevin, which I think you're incredibly a master at, but when we think about patients, they don't need to be bribed. They don't mind being incentivized. They don't mind it being fun. But if you're doing something great for someone, actually you love to tell someone about it. But they do need motivated, they do need inspired, they do need it to be brought to their attention. And so people will do you a favor if you ask, provided you've put enough deposits in the emotional bank account of service and relationship. But that would be my three loving points.

Kevin:

That's fantastic. And so I want to build on where you started, and this is one of my favorite topics to talk about for many reasons. As a reminder to everybody so that you hold as much value in what I'm about to say, is, for those who haven't heard it, you'll hear it now. For those who have heard it before, it's a strong reminder. I built from the ground up for 20 years a consumer facing service business in the financial world. I gave people money to buy houses.

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Kevin:

I gave people money to refinance, save money, all sorts of different kind of things. And as I say all the time, it's the closest thing that is equal to what you all do in healthcare because it tends to be the single largest financial transaction that most people will ever make in their entire lives. There's a lot of stress and anxiousness and uncertainty and trust issues and all those kind of things, same that you deal with in healthcare.

And so I am a living, breathing example of how to do this. And the good news for all you friends is this, it's very simple. Number one, to ask for a referral, the purpose is to create the awareness for the patient that you want. You want, you desire, you strive to have more new patients and specifically patients who are of the same ilk as the patients you love. You want to expand your love within the network of people who that's how you feel about them. Patients walk through your door, they go through your experience, they think it's crazy busy. They're like, well, they don't really need anybody. Not that they wouldn't recommend you, it's just they don't feel an urgency to, they don't have this acknowledgement from you that you want it. It begins with patient needs to know you want more.

And of course, if you have a really wonderful reason why, it's going to make it even easier. That's number one to add on to what Scott said. Number two, this will make or break whether or not this will work for you longterm, and it's consistency. You don't turn on the referral faucet! If you go out and you mail 100,000 postcards, I guarantee you someone's going to pick up the phone and call. Okay, that's turning on a faucet. Now, it might not be the right person. Someone's going to call though. With a referral, it may take them three months, six months, twelve months, two years, who knows how long, because they just aren't in the right conversations. They're not talking about it on a regular basis, nobody's asking. And then all of a sudden when it happens, boom, there we are. Consistency is the key.

Every patient, every appointment, every time, for eternity. And I tell you the funny story, friends, I had lots and lots of repeat clients in my 20 years. In fact, I still recall the record for a couple, 16. I did 16 mortgages for them. And do you know that every time I spoke to them, I asked them for a referral, it became this little joke. And how I ended the joke is I said, "Well, I'm glad you guys know it's coming. Got to remember though, the reason I'm asking is because I want to make sure that you always know that I want to serve people who you know, who you want to be taken care of because that's my mission and I can't let you forget it." And then I give them a big hug and everybody's all happy and we have some fun. It's consistency. I don't want to hear the excuse of, "Well, I see them every six months." I see them this, I see them that, beautiful. That many more times to ingrain it in their mind that they actually want it.

And then the third component of this deal, and this is where Scott was wrapping up on his initial points is this. When you provide something of such extreme value, which you all do by the way, I know sometimes you need a reminder of that because you do it all day long and you think it becomes just average and ordinary. It's not, it's extraordinary. And when you put attention

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Kevin:

to the actual experience and the care and the mindfulness of the conversations you're having and being present and all those different kind of things, there is nothing wrong to ask for a favor at that moment because everybody wants to do that for you.

We wrap it all up, everything is great. We're hugging, everything. Say, "Patient before you leave, can I ask you for a favor?" And then you stop. Okay? Don't say, can I ask you for a favor and then go into the ask. "Patient, can I ask for a favor?" "Oh yeah, Kevin, absolutely. What can I do for you?" "Listen, when you're out just in everyday life and anybody brings up anything you having to do with dental, sleep, implants, surgeries, whatever, would you be so kind as to recommend us, share your story with them so that we would have the chance to earn their trust and confidence to be their dental practice family of choice?" "Oh, absolutely." Another big hug like everything is great. It's that, friends, it's that simple. Yet you have to be willing to put in 20 seconds to give something that feels like it has emotion to it, that's genuine and solidifies everything that you've done.

And I would say this: if you're not comfortable asking for a referral, then I would say to you, are you uncomfortable with the experience that you're providing patients that you don't think you're worthy of the ask? And I want you to ponder that. And if you've got to rewind 30 seconds and listen to that again so that something between what Scott is saying, I'm saying, what we'll continue to say here for the next 14 minutes that we're together, is I want you to become more comfortable than ever before with shouting from the rooftops and asking others to do the same. Scott Manning.

Scott:

Well, look, Kevin, as always, you bring it down to a tangible format. You think things to do actually, right? But also like that you took it to a place of belief and mindset around it, which I think is just missed because why would we not do this? And this is where I go back to, I didn't want to overemphasize the systematic part of it, but I want to just mention that you have to build it in. It's got to be protocol. And so when you think about, and you can go to the portal, you can watch the very old, but tried and true referral videos, you could get one of the second, maybe third book I ever did was about, "The Five Golden Rings of Referrals," many of which I learned from Kevin's experiences, what he's describing in his business. And the point was low-hanging fruit.

Number one, every new patient. If they have a significant other or a spouse, the vast majority do, right? They should be the first referral. If you're seeing children, if you're seeing older people and they all live in the same area, again, it's low-hanging fruit. It just requires it to be part of the experience. On the back end, when people complete their treatment, we celebrate. One of the themes we talked about in the advanced psychology training that we did last week was all about constantly rewarding good behavior and celebrating with the patient everything. Making the phone call, walking in the door, saying yes to a complete health treatment plan, make an investment, finishing the deal, coming into hygiene and being healthy, coming back into the specialty practice and the sleep's improved. They're now wearing their denture, their hybrid, the arch, something. It's constant celebration.

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Scott:

And then in doing so, it moves you into the step in the protocol, which says, to Kevin's point, who else can we help? And giving that person a privilege of doing it. Now, I want to shift. Kevin's usually all tactics and action steps. I want to throw a couple out there too. Boots on the ground, we're talking about Valentine's. It could be Halloween, it could be Thanksgiving, it could be St. Patrick's Day, it could be Mother's Day or Father's Day. One of the easy things to do is leverage societal conversation, as fricking scary as that sounds, is whatever's going on in the lives of others, use it. Example, this could be "share the love month" and every patient who brings you referral, we get their picture on the wall and a little heart and they get entered into a drawing that we're going to give away some date night at the best restaurant.

Okay. Again, that's a little cheesy, a little gimmicky, but the fact is all the brick and mortar businesses do it because it works. Okay? The little workout place, they have the same stuff. We have to not sit back, be arrogant people thinking we just deserve referrals. We have to create modalities for it to happen. Same thing where we're getting testimonials. The questions, what are you doing with them? We're getting reviews. What are we doing with them? I hate the idea of building up reviews for the sake of building up reviews, okay? Because it says if we get enough reviews, more people are going to see us online. Well, that is true, but the most important reason, we should be getting the patient to validate their experience so they're more attached to you. We should be taking the review off the website, printing it off, sending it to the email list, building our wall of five-star customer service.

There's got to be a greater purpose that leads back to relationships and things that we can control and we can keep into the flow of what we do. I could keep going. Team members, I already mentioned, bring in patients, incentivize each other, give each other a goal. Go participate in the breast cancer awareness month. Go do a talk at your child's preschool. Let's think outside the box of ways that we can share the love. And I would just bridge this over to Kevin's last question that he did to this 16 times repeat. They moved more times than Kevin. That's what happened with these people. But it was good for the mortgage business. What happened is he's asking who he can be of service to, right? Imagine a patient who works at a place with other coworkers that would love to get healthy, or whose spouse works somewhere that we could have a conduit in, maybe some of our doctors doing early treatment or frenectomy or mild functional therapies or other things like this.

There's other rabid communities that already exist where people are talking to each other. The thing that is going to allow you to get something out of this discussion is to think about the context of your own life, other places you do business at, and how much more you love the patients who come in already motivated, already pre-sold, they already drank the Kool-Aid because their friend gave it to them. And then say to yourself, what can we do to be proud of our practice, of our mission, the purpose we have, and how can we take responsibility, as I like to call it, to do less dependency on stranger danger marketing, having to convince everybody who walks through the door, and more of that attraction based referral culture that allows you to work smarter,

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Scott: not harder, help more people in more meaningful ways. But Kevin, I'll let you wrap us up with some things to do.

Kevin: Well, I love all this and it's really incredible on such a, let's call it a simple topic, although people make it complex because they insert emotion and prejudgments into it, when in reality it's one of the single easiest things to do when doing what you do because you create these incredible outcomes for people, that unless they're just the Grinch, would be more than happy to say wonderful things about you. Just a couple more tactical things, then I'm going to leave with a really cool quick story that was text to me today.

Number one, when somebody refers, patient comes in, successful outcome. Depending on what HIPAA says, and I'm always very conscious of that. Friends, that's why I always say the disclosure in case I'm out of line, is I would just say, "Hey, is it okay if I send a little thank you note to your cousin for referring you over?" "Oh yeah, that'd be wonderful." Whatever the case. Okay. If you have to take that step, do it. If not, if that's not a bother, then man, could you imagine writing just a quick handwritten note, send it in the mail to the person who referred them and just say, "Listen, thanks for doing that. We're so excited to have met...blah, blah, blah. Thanks for having trust and confidence in us."

I did this, and what we would do is we'd do it once a week. End of the week, all the mail went out on Friday. At the time, we did a little \$5 Starbucks card because I served a very large area. It was hard to find anything local that would be consistent that people could take advantage of. We just said, "Thanks for referring so-and-so for having to trust confidence to refer so-and-so. Please enjoy a treat on us. Have a wonderful day." And people went crazy over it. I mean, it was just some of the most heartwarming messages that we would get back is a moment of thanks because we sent something in the mail, five bucks. That was it. It was crazy.

And so whatever you want to do, be creative with it. It doesn't matter to me. It's just the effort of acknowledgement because you want people to know you appreciate it and not just take it for granted. If all we do is ask and then we don't thank, that's a missing step. It's important to start with and have the courage to ask on a regular basis, "Patient, would you do me a favor?" Okay, sure. Great. Then it happens. Well, let's acknowledge it and be grateful for it. Now, in today's world, I can't believe I'm going to say this, yet I am.

I would even argue that a personalized text message would be almost as, almost as, I can't go all the way, almost as powerful as a handwritten note in the mail because most people get these short, standardized text messages from businesses and organizations that if it was actually thoughtful and customized with your name attached to it, I'm certain it would come across in a super powerful way because I know it does for me. And I'm a text guy, I don't want you to call me, I don't want voicemails, I don't want email. You send me a text, I love you to pieces, okay? That to me, and that's in my consumer world.

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Kevin:

I just want to make sure we don't miss that piece, friends, is that we don't want to leave it undone. We don't want to leave it open-ended. We've got to close the loop on the request so that it becomes something that they will continue to do.

And Scott gave you other fun, crazy things that you can do as well with the whole pictures and put them up on the walls and all those kind of things. Believe it or not, friends, people really appreciate that. What I would tell you to do is I would take your reviews that you get online, I'd print them off. Next time that patient comes through there, I'd say, "Patient, I just want to thank you for this review. I'd show them the piece of paper in front of their face. I'd say, "This review, your words, I promise you your words are going to have far greater impact on people making smart decisions about their health than anything we could ever say. Thank you for that. Would you mind taking a picture with me so that I could take your review, put our picture together and put it up on this wall? So when new patients come in and they're waiting to go back into the clinical setting, that they could read some of this so that they know what they're about to experience?"

Holy smokes. A review comes to life online with a picture of a real human being. I mean, friends, we could go on for days for this kind of stuff. I just wanted to say that to you because someone sent me today, one of our amazing practices in great state of Colorado, sent me this thing today, and the doctor was just elated that his team did such a wonderful job. And basically it was a five star review that says, "I was incredibly fortunate to come across a dental practice when I urgently needed dental care without the luxury of time for research. Despite reaching out to a few other places, their schedules were booked far in advance. What set the dental practice apart was not only their ability to accommodate me within a couple of days, but also the exceptional professionalism and warmth displayed by the team during our initial conversation to schedule my appointment. Her helpful demeanor played a pivotal role in my decision to choose them. This underscores a valuable lesson for businesses and how to attract clients right from the outset. However, that was just the beginning of my positive experience. The doctor and team, the entire team, are truly outstanding professionals who deliver top-notch services. Their transparency and thorough explanation of each procedure instilled confidence in me. Having visited numerous dentists over my 60-plus years, I can attest that while many are competent..." and then I don't get to see the rest of it.

Point being, number one, I just have to say this: they didn't rush an emergency in in two hours. Couple of days! They got in in a couple of days, this person was elated because everybody else was saying, "Come in in a few weeks." And then boom: next time I see this person, first, I'd send them a handwritten note and say, "Oh my gosh, thank you so much for writing that review. It was really amazing. We're printing it out and we're showing it to everybody who walks through this door." Next time that patient comes in for their visit, I would get a picture with them, slap that baby on the wall and be like, "You are the star of the show. Thank you." Give them a big hug, send them on their way. Scott Manning, final words from you, my friend.

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Scott:

Well, I mean, Kevin, you blew the doors off there. And I think what I would wrap up by saying: referrals are not a marketing company's responsibility. They're not a patient's responsibility. They're not any one team member's responsibility. They are a practice-wide, I would say cultural and all team members responsibility. And we just need to believe in the value of them, and we need to realize that the greatest thing that it does is not get you more patients. The greatest thing it does is it makes the existing patients who become ambassadors and advocates even better. And that's what I would say.

Kevin, too often we say we are in the relationship business, but we are really in the transactional visit business, because very rarely is there anything done before or after any of this. And so what I would do is I would challenge us to not be in the patient procedure of the moment business and truly be in the relationship cultivation referral business. And that's going to change the game across the board. Thank you very much, Kevin. Everybody take care. Just make it happen.

Kevin:

Well done, Scott. Way to wrap it up. Friends, you ever want to talk about this, I'm your guy. Get on my schedule. Let's do it. Let's put something together. Simple yet significant, which is my theme for this year, friends. All right. Thanks everyone for listening in to the latest episode of the Dental Success Today Practice Profit Accelerator Podcast. Enjoy the month of love and we'll talk to you next month. Have a good one, everyone!