Blueprint for Building a Robust Referral Network

10 Key Drivers of Exponential Referral Network Growth



<u>nttps://lanissabrantley.com/home</u>

Welcome Friend!

I am so glad you're here.

First, let me commend you for realizing the value of physician referral relationships. That makes you unique.

Most practices don't even make it to this point.

While they like the idea of a *Physician Referral Network*, they take a look at their clinic schedule and other items on the practice to-do list, and referrals get pushed to the back of the priority line.

Whether you realize it or not, you've made a powerful decision...

Just by downloading this guide, you're taking action to see more patients, get better-qualified leads, and grow your practice.

You're ready to impact more patients, change more lives, and reach more referring doctors than you can right now.

Building your physician referral network program allows you to do that.

This guide is the blueprint to get you started.

Here's to seeing more patients from more referring doctors.





The THE STRONGEST REFERRAL NETWORKS START AT HOME

So.. You're ready to get more physician referrals.

You've come to the right place.

This guide contains a blueprint for building a robust referral network. Within this blueprint, you'll find the 10 Key Drivers of Exponential Referral Network Growth.

I like to think of each driver as a lever you can pull.

If you pull on the lever a little, you get a little success. If you go full throttle, it will catapult you into greater success more quickly.

Pulling one lever will get you some traction. Pulling all the levers will get your referral network program running like a well-oiled machine.

So, what are these key drivers?

The first and foremost driver of exponential referral growth is... (If you don't have this first, nothing else matters.)



CLINICAL EXCELLENCE



I don't know of a single referring doctor who wants to put their name and reputation on the line by sending patients somewhere they won't be well taken care of or have good outcomes.

Think about the brilliant doctor with a bad bedside manner or grumpy office staff. Even with a solid clinical outcome, it's not going to be a five-star experience.

Good care doesn't just happen in the office. It starts on the phone or on your website long before a patient walks in the door.

If patients don't have a good experience, you've lost them before they ever step foot in your practice.

Once the patient does arrive, they should receive considerate and compassionate care.

Most practices believe they do this most of the time but what are you doing to ensure the best patient experience? When was the last time you walked around the practice just to listen and observe?

Patients have a choice when it comes to their health care and it's an emotional decision. How are you making them feel?

It's an honor and privilege to serve patients. Without them, there is no practice.

So... If you're looking to grow your physician referral network...

Start here... With clinical excellence and great patient care.

Growing a referral network starts at home. Is your house in order?







Does Your Practice Suffer From Leaky Referral Syndrome?



Leaky Referral Syndrome.

It's a condition all practices suffer from in some form or fashion.

Chances are, you've experienced Leaky Referral Syndrome and you may not even realize it.

What exactly is Leaky Referral Syndrome?

Leaky Referral Syndrome is a condition within a medical practice characterized by leaks in the patient referral process resulting in the loss of referrals.

Leak·y Re·fer·ral Syn·drome

/ lēkē/ /rə fərəl/ / sin drōm/

noun

A condition within a medical practice characterized by leaks in the patient referral process resulting in the loss of referrals.

The symptom of Leaky Referral Syndrome is the loss of referrals.

But... The root cause is a broken referral process.

Which... Can occur for any number of reasons from disorganization, to poor communication, to not having a process to begin with.

Whatever the cause of your Leaky Referral Syndrome, there's good news...

Leaky Referral Syndrome is 100% curable.

The #1 cure for Leaky Referral Syndrome is to have a Solid Referral Process in place.

Think Blockbuster Versus Netflix

The best referral processes should be simple and seamless for the referring practice and their patients.

If you're making the process too complicated, you will lose referrals to the competitor who makes it easy.

Think Blockbuster vs Netflix. Would you rather be Blockbuster or Netflix?

A great referral process also makes things easy for the patient.

Don't make the patient call you. Call the patient and reach out to them right away.

And if you don't reach the patient on the first on the first try...

Try again... And again... And again.

How many practices miss out on the opportunity to care for patients because they contact the patient one time and forget it?

There is no time like the present to take inventory of your referral process.

You may be thinking, "Hey! Our referral process is pretty good." That may be the case.

But could it be better?

Here are some questions to get you started:

- How does a referral come in?
- What happens to the referral once it's received?
- Who is responsible for getting the patient scheduled?
- How quickly is the patient contacted?
- What is communicated back to the referring doctor?

If you find some leaks along the way, don't be discouraged.

Remember, this is 100% curable.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY



You've heard it said before that **communication is key.**

In fact, after clinical skill, communication is the #1 request by referring doctors for their specialty counterparts.

While some practices do this better than others, everyone can stand to improve communication, especially with referring partner practices.

A <u>Wall Street Journal</u> article citing research from the <u>Archives of Internal Medicine</u> reported that more than 69% of primary care physicians said they always or mostly passed on a patient's history and reason for consultation, while fewer than 35% of specialists reported always or mostly receiving that information.

Conversely, 81% of specialists report they always or usually send consult results back to the referring doctor but only 62% of those doctors said they received the information.

Oftentimes, what we think we're communicating isn't even

- (1) being communicated at all or
- (2) being received by the intended party.

Clearly, there is room for improvement.

5 keys (and a few hacks) to unlocking better communication with your physician referral network:

Provide routine patient status updates.

Provide referring physicians with timely updates on consultation findings and treatment recommendations. Let them know how their patient is doing and when they can expect to see the patient back in their office.

Communication Hack #1: Maximize EMR features to quickly and securely send exam notes or other communication to referring providers.

Offer accessibility and availability to your referring partners.

Don't let referring doctors get lost in a complicated phone tree or stuck on hold for 20 minutes. Make yourself available to referring partners. Do they know how to contact you? Do you make it easy for them to reach you or share relevant clinical information?

Communication Hack #2: Share your direct contact information or mobile number with referring providers so they can easily reach you for questions or in the event of an emergency.

Deliver practice updates.

Regularly communicate practice updates, policy changes, new technology or procedure offerings, and other useful information to referring providers. Set a weekly or monthly cadence to communicate with referral partners.

Communication Hack #3: Leverage technology to communicate practice updates via text or email blast.

Follow up.

Check-in with referring doctors and staff to ensure they are receiving the information you are sharing. Let them know how you are sending the information (EMR, fax, secure email) and where they can find it. All too often communication gets "lost" when it's really just sitting on a fax machine waiting for someone to find it and look at it (yes, believe it or not, this still happens).

Communication Hack #4: Identify a <u>key team member</u> to handle all of the correspondence with referring practices. Having a point of contact strengthens the relationship with referring offices and streamlines communication between practices.

Simplify the referral process.

Make the referral process as seamless as possible. I've seen practices require large amounts of specific paperwork just to accept a referral. While the intentions may be good, this conveys how *not* to work with your practice. Gratefully accept the referral whichever way it comes. This is a patient you would not have the privilege of caring for otherwise.

Communication Hack #5: Simplify the referral process with an online referral portal.

Specialty practices that communicate best with their referral partners enjoy stronger referral relationships and more referrals.

Communication is the key to more referrals.

SPEAKING OF COMMUNICATION...

The 4th key to a stellar physician referral network marketing strategy is a strong physician liaison sales team.

Yes... I said the word sales.

Here's the part where some practices remind me that they're not "selling" anything and they wouldn't want to do anything "salesy".

But I'm going to let you in on a little secret...

You are selling.

Every. Single. Day.

As a physician, surgeon, practice owner, or patient counselor, you're talking to patients and "selling" treatment options all day long.

Why? Because it's in the patient's best interest for their health and quality of life to take the treatment, medication, or therapy you recommend for them.

How are you doing this "selling"? By *educating* patients about their disease state and *sharing* the best treatment options to help them.

Selling = sharing and educating.

That's it.

And... If you don't like the word sales, substitute it for a word you like better.

Communicating. Sharing. Educating.

It's a lot like you would tell your bestie about the great movie you just saw or the restaurant you just tried. It's not like the used car salesman you're picturing in your mind.

How will referring doctors know you exist and how can you best serve their patients if you don't tell them?

That's where your physician liaison sales team comes in...

A good physician liaison sales team is well-trained and equipped to tell the practice story and increase referral volume. They are the ones on the front line representing your practice and the face of the organization to your customers.

How about *your* physician liaison sales team? Are they representing your practice in the way you want it portrayed?

5 steps to building a strong physician liaison sales team:

STRONG PHYSICIAN LIAISON SALES TEAM

Hire well

A strong team starts with the right people. Hire team members with the experience and qualifications to be successful in the role.

Do they have the "it" factor? You can teach a product, technology, or disease state. What you can't teach is drive, a positive attitude, the ability to bounce back from rejection, or work ethic to name a few.

Train well

According to Forbes, 55% of salespeople lack sales skills.

Offer an initial training program to get your liaison ramped up quickly. Then continue to supply ongoing training to keep skills sharp and prevent slipping into bad habits.

Investing in your team's professional development is a solid return on investment and can truly set your practice apart from the competition.

Lead well

How do you lead your physician liaison team well?

Focus on results and the behaviors and strategies that drive those results.

Strike a balance between total <u>hands-off leadership</u> and <u>micromanagement</u> with lots of good communication.

Which... Leads us to the next step in building a strong liaison team...

Communicate well

A lot can happen within the practice when the liaison is out during the day. Decisions get made or processes get updated. When this doesn't get communicated, it can leave the liaison feeling frustrated, confused, or isolated.

It's easy to assume team members know what's happening or what you expect, but they have no way of knowing unless they are told.

Clearly communicate these changes, expectations, or KPIs with the team. Meet weekly with team members to review results, discuss sales strategy, and offer support.

Ensure that your liaison team has clear direction while keeping them informed of changes or pertinent updates. This signals that you support their efforts and minimizes the potential for confusion or mixed messages.

Compensate well

A competitive and rewarding comp plan is motivating for a liaison and self-funding for the practice. In other words, a good comp plan pays for itself.

The liaison is paid for their performance and results. The more patients they bring into the practice, the more they have the potential to earn. As a practice, you only pay more when you see more patients.

It's a win/win for everyone.



Imagine setting out on a trip without a map. You have no idea how to get there or what direction you're going. You're going to be doing a lot of driving in a lot of different directions before you finally reach your destination, if ever.

Nine times out of ten, when a solid rep with a good work ethic has flatline numbers, it's because they are not following an effective call plan.

All too often, I will ask a practice where their liaison is going and how they are spending their time and the answer is, "Uh, I don't know?"

Or... I will ask a liaison what their plan is and the answer is, "I just drive around and see some offices."

No plan. No strategy. Just fingers crossed hoping they are spending the right amount of time in the right places.

Without a plan, you are losing valuable time driving around trying to figure out where to go next.

Maximize your time. Decide in advance who you are going to see. Map out where you are going to go and the best route to get there.



If you've gotten off track, never had a plan, or gone on autopilot, don't beat yourself up. Just set aside some time this week to get back on track.

It's worth a few minutes of your time to decide where you're going, when you're going, who you're going to see, and what you're going to say. It's a simple but important step that allows you to take better care of more customers.

And that's the goal... Better care of more customers.

So how will you plan your day, week, month?



Ready... Aim... Hit Your Target

Imagine what would happen if professional athletes didn't bother to aim before taking their shot.

It would be a disaster.

And yet, this happens all the time in the physician referral network.

Referral network success requires you to aim if you want to hit your target. We call this customer targeting, which is just a fancy way of saying that you know which customers to see and how much time to spend with each customer.

Here are the answers to the most commonly asked customer targeting questions:

How do I know who to call on?

Start with what you know.

- Who is already referring to you?
- Who has expressed an interest in referring?
- Who is nearby?

How often should I visit?

Visit referring practices every three to four weeks; just often enough to stay top of mind without being annoying.

How do I know when to visit a customer?

Following a consistent call plan (<u>#5 Key Driver of Exponential Referral Network</u> <u>Growth</u>) will help you know when it's time to see referring offices.

Where should I focus my time and energy?

Spend the majority of your time where there is the most opportunity for relationship development and referral growth. For example, someone who is BFF's with your competitor isn't going to be as likely to change their referral habits quickly.

But...

Persistence pays and you never know when something might change. Eventually, you may win that non-referring practice over.

That is the goal after all... Winning the hearts of referring partners and their patients.

But to do that, you first have to know when and where to aim.



I'm going to let you in on one of the top secrets to getting more referrals and generating more revenue.

I speak with practices every week who have a tedious referral process that requires filling out and faxing multiple or complicated forms. Not only is this an unnecessary burden on referring practices, it's repetitive and complicated for the specialty practice as well.

Or...

What about when a new referral sits on the fax machine for days? Yikes!

The world has gone digital. So why are you still faxing?

Enter the **online referral tool.**

All of my clients who use an online referral tool have seen an increase in patient referral volume.

Why? Because simplicity and convenience win the day and an online referral page can be filled out and sent by a referring practice in one minute or less.

No scanning. No faxing. No extra time away from patients.

It's a quick and easy way to refer patients and drive referral volume.

If you're not making it simple to refer patients, someone else in your market will. Because...

Simplicity wins.

Use This "Glue" To Hold Your Referral Network Program Together



Not too long ago, one of my kids broke something in our home that needed to be glued back together.

We couldn't use just any glue, we had to use the **right kind of glue** in the right places to fix the item.

A physician referral network is no different.

You need to use the right kind of "glue" in the right places to hold the program together, keep referrals flowing, and stop **Leaky Referral Syndrome**.

So what is this "glue" that holds a referral network program together and how should you use it?

The Collaborative Care Coordinator is the "glue" and they support field efforts by scheduling referred patients and maintaining internal communications between a practice and its referral partners.

When we talk about referral network programs, we talk a lot about the physician liaison. The Collaborative Care Coordinator is equally important to the program because they are the "glue" that holds the entire program together.

In most practices, there are multiple people handling multiple pieces of the process. One person receives the referral, another calls the patient, another enters the demographics, another faxes the exam report back to the referring doctor, and yet another schedules the patient's follow-up appointment with the referring doctor.

Whew! That's a lot of people and a lot of margin for error.

If you're exhausted just reading about it, imagine how a referring doctor's office feels being bounced around from person to person.

This is why a Collaborative Care Coordinator is so valuable to your referral network program.

3 key ways a Collaborative Care Coordinator can increase practice referrals:

Streamlined processes.

Referring offices will seek out specialty practices with a simple referral process.

Just this week, one of my clients learned that a referring office had stopped sending to them because they were bounced around to multiple people when they called making it too difficult to schedule a patient. In our society of convenience, the last thing a referring office wants is to be placed on hold and bounced around to refer a patient.

Improved communications.

A dedicated Collaborative Care Coordinator offers referring practices a single point of contact they can get to know and trust.

Just like when my husband goes to the same coffee shop every single morning for his large latte with an extra shot. There are lots of places he could go to get overpriced coffee. He goes there because they know him when he walks in the door. They see him coming and start his order, and he trusts them to get it right.

We do business with the people we know, like, and trust. The relationship goes a long way and a dedicated Collaborative Care Coordinator helps to build that trust and relationship.

Empowered practice liaison.

Having an internal Collaborative Care Coordinator frees up the practice liaison to do what they do best... *Grow the business.*

The liaison doesn't have to use their time to verify that patients were scheduled properly and can focus 100% of their energy on field efforts. This has allowed our clients to grow referral volume by 25% within 90 days of establishing a Collaborative Care Coordinator.

Having a dedicated Coordinator doesn't mean that you have to rush out and hire a new person. Chances are, this person is already in your practice doing a great job and ready for the next challenge.

Put the pieces of your physician referral network together using the right kind of "glue".

MEASURE WHAT YOU TREASURE



Not tracking referral volume is like watching a game with no scoreboard.

Who's up? Who's down? Who's ahead?

It's impossible to know where you have been, where you are headed, and what your return on investment is without comprehensive data.

The conversation usually goes something like this:

Me: How are you tracking your physician referrals and referred procedure volume?

Practice: Oh, we don't really have a report for that but we "feel" like we're doing OK. We did more procedures this year than last year.

Me: That's great. Do you know where those procedures came from?

Practice:

Crickets...

3 roadblocks to great data (and how to overcome them):

COMPREHENSIVE CRM (CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANGEMENT) SYSTEM



Roadblock #1:

"It *feels* like things are moving in the right direction, so why should we invest in this?"

It's easy to *feel* like things are headed in one direction or another, but the numbers don't lie.

During a one-on-one coaching session with a physician liaison, I noticed that referrals from her top two referring practices had significantly dropped off. She had great relationships in both practices and was well-liked, so she *felt* like everything was just fine. It was an eye-opener to learn that things weren't fine and the loss of referral volume had a significant impact on her territory.

She hadn't been paying attention. While she was coasting on autopilot, her competitors swooped in and stole two of her key accounts.

Yes, sometimes our feelings can get the best of us, so we must rely on dependable data to track progress.

Roadblock #2:

"We've managed this far without a CRM and seem to be doing OK."

If you're fine with OK and maintaining the status quo, then keep doing what you've been doing. You'll keep getting what you've been getting.

But...

If you want to be better than OK, impact more patients and referring doctors than ever before, and increase your practice revenue... Invest in the data and a good CRM.

Think of the data as your scorecard. It tells you how you're doing and where you can improve.

Roadblock #3:

"I can't afford to invest in a CRM right now."

Here's the irony...

Practices who aren't using a CRM typically have three or four people doing manual data entry and no solid reporting system to track the return on investment of their referral relationships.

One good CRM could handle all of the data entry and reporting, and would more than pay for itself in manpower hours, data, guidance, and opportunity cost.

The truth is you can't afford not to have a CRM.

CUSTOMER ADVISORY BOARD







The Customer Advisory Board is the Key Growth Driver practices blow off more than any other.

And it isn't an original idea.

In fact, I "borrowed" the idea from another successful practice and they likely got the idea from someone else.

Why? Because it works.

The Customer Advisory Board driver is a gem, not only because it works.....

But also because almost no one does this.

Your competitors aren't doing this for any number of reasons:

- They don't see the value
- They believe they are too busy

Chances are, you may have had similar thoughts. Which is why...

Starting a Customer Advisory Board is a great way to set yourself apart from the competition and boost referral volume.

Frequently asked questions about a customer advisory board:

What exactly is a Customer Advisory Board?

A group of referring or potentially referring doctors who meet with their specialty healthcare providers to share best practices.

What does a Customer Advisory Board do?

- Share best practices, offer feedback, and test new ideas
- Provide valuable competitive and market insights
- Give an insider's perspective of the referral process and patient experience
- Serve as ambassadors to the greater referral community

Who should be on the Advisory Board?

The Advisory Board should be a good mix of referring and non-referring doctors who have an understanding of the market and are willing to share their experience with you.

How often should a Customer Advisory Board meet?

A Customer Advisory Board typically meets two to four times per year.

What should we talk about?

An Advisory Board Meeting doesn't require a formal agenda but does prepare a list of questions to ask or topics to discuss. Open with a welcome message and overview of any new updates, changes, or technologies. Once the conversation gets started, ask questions or present topics you would like to gather feedback on.

Some of the greatest ideas of how to better serve your customers come out of these discussions.

How does an Advisory Board bring value to our practice, patients, and referring doctors?

- Offers real-world feedback about what's working and how your program can be improved
- Provides insight into market trends and competitive activity
- Demonstrates a commitment to referral partners and their patients
- Positions your practice as a valued partner in the shared care of referred patients

If you're looking to...

- Strengthen referral relationships
- Do something in your market that competitors are not
- Grow referrals

Develop a Customer Advisory Panel.

Just to recap...

Ten Key Drivers of Exponential Referral Network Growth

Imagine each key driver is a lever that can be pulled for exponential growth. If you pull on the lever a little, you get a little success. If you go full throttle, it will catapult you into greater success more quickly.

1. Clinical Excellence

A successful program is not possible if patient care is not top priority.

2. Solid Referral Process

Ensure the referral process is simple and seamless for patients and referring partners.

3. Seamless Communication

Provide excellent communication with referring doctors and keep them well informed of their patients' care.

4. Strong Physician Liaison Sales Team

The sales team is the face of the organization. They must be well-trained and equipped to tell the practice story and increase referral volume.

5. Consistent Call Plan

Know where to go, when to go there, and how to make the most of the time.

6. Customer Trageting

Know which customers to call on and how much time to spend with each customer.

7. Online Referral Portal

The simple and seamless way to refer a patient that drives referral volume.

8. Dedicated Collaborative Care Coordinator

The "glue" that holds the program together, maintains internal communications, and supports field efforts.

9. Comprehensive CRM

Measure what you treasure. It's impossible to know what the ROI of your program is without comprehensive data.

10. Customer Advisory Board

Partner with Key Opinion Leaders to gain market insights for development and ongoing refinement of the program.

IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Real results from real clients:

- Seven-figure month-over-month revenue increases
- 90 new referrals in 90 days for a single practice
- 112% monthly increase in elective surgical volume
- \$1.2 million in additional annual revenue for a single practice



Founder, LB Solutions, LLC Lanissa Brantley

Hi! I'm Lanissa

Practice Growth Guide I Physician Referral Network Queen Collaborative Care Coach

Do you want to know what all of these titles have in common? The desire to help specialty healthcare practices attract the referring doctors (and patients) they *actually* want to partner with, the skills and experience to make it happen, and the drive to get the job done.

My Story...

After years of trial and error working as a physician liaison, business development director, and sales and marketing executive building some of the largest physician referral networks in the country, I've developed the "secret sauce" for generating physician referrals and building referral networks.

Now, I am sharing the secrets of referral network success to help you create your very own referral-generating "secret sauce".

Work With Me

Looking to learn more?...



Tune in to the <u>Blueprint to a Successful Referral Network Webinar</u> to learn more about:

- How to establish a physician referral network marketing strategy
- How to hire and support a physician liaison
- Tools to manage your referrals and build your program

<u>View the Webinar</u>

Bonus Reading

- <u>5 Things You Can Do Today To Attract Referring Doctors</u>
- The Super Simple Way To Get More Referrals
- What Is A Physician Liaison?
- The Goal Is Not To Get Everyone
- What Not Having A Physician Liaison Is Costing You

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