

## Building a Referral Engine for Your Practice

Even in the 21st century, referral marketing still comes down to one essential thing: word-of-mouth. The technology that generates this word-of-mouth may have changed, but the principle is the same. If you do good work, patients tell others, and your reputation grows. Plastic surgery isn't the kind of service that can be "sold" through traditional marketing practices, but there are still some strategies that you can adapt to build a system of referrals that keep multiplying.

1. Your professional blog and social media accounts should regularly post "shareable" content. People are especially fond of sharing images, so including one or two in each post will help boost the number of people who see it. They, in turn, pass it on to others, and your network of contacts keeps growing.
2. Exchange referrals with partners. You can reach out credible businesses and medical institutions that may have clients who need your services – to form partnerships where each of you recommend the other's services.
3. Remind your patients regularly in email list messages, in newsletters, at the bottom of invoices. Once a patient is completely satisfied with the results of his or her surgery, you can ask during a follow-up visit if he or she would be willing to refer your services. One plastic surgeon sends his patients handwritten notes twice a year, thanking them for their business and asking them to refer to him to anyone who may want his services.
4. Use your media platforms to offer incentives for referrals. A discount, a consultation fee waiver, or a free sample of a product is good way to express appreciation for patients who recommend your services.
5. Don't overdo it. Ask each patient once, and mention your gratitude; don't place too large a burden on any one patient. Focus on expanding your network of potential referrals so you always have new contacts.
6. Do GREAT work. A reputation for excellence is the best way to grow your network. Take the time to develop a doctor-patient bond of trust with each and every patient. You can also offer patient satisfaction surveys in order to have a better idea of why your patients chose you and what makes them happy, as well as which areas of the patients' experiences you can work to make even better.
7. Doing great work also means offering excellent customer service. A cheerful, well-trained, well-supported staff is essential to making sure the patient's every contact with your practice is a positive one. Even small gestures, such as treating your staff to lunch or awarding certificates of recognition for great work, can help bolster a positive, productive working environment.

You can adopt any combination of these strategies to grow your referral network and keep your practice growing at a healthy rate. People seeking plastic surgery are looking for more than just a physical change; they are emotionally invested as well, and want a surgeon who understands this. If you're consistently delivering the highest quality of skill and care at every step of the patient experience, you'll stand out from your competition. After all, "Nothing succeeds like success!"