

Ten First Phone Call Essentials

All ten of these should occur during the first phone conversation between the practice's representative and a potential patient.

- 1. Answer the phone within the first three rings.** Have the person who is the best at getting callers in the door answer the phone. If she is busy, have the next best person answer the phone. If the phone isn't answered within the first three rings, have a message that says, "Thanks for calling. We're presently serving other patients. Please leave your name and phone number. We will call you back within 30 minutes." And then follow through on that promise.
- 2. Write the caller's name the first time you hear it.** If necessary, have the callers repeat and/or spell their names. Mention the caller's first name two or three times on the call.
- 3. Get them in the door.** Don't screen the calls by trying to analyze who will or won't be a "good" patient. We've all had patients whom we believed would accept comprehensive dentistry and didn't. Conversely, we've all had patients we didn't think would accept our comprehensive implant treatment plans but who eagerly did, and paid with cash. Please resist the strong temptation to "weed out" the "bad" ones on the phone. Get people in the door so they can make the decision to accept your high quality implant dentistry treatment plans.
- 4. Tell them you can give them their desires.** If they ask about anything within your scope of services, reply with, "I'm so glad you called us. That's one of the things we focus on in our office."
- 5. Capture all their contact information.** In addition to capturing their first and last names, get their home, office, and cell numbers; mailing address; and e-mail address.
- 6. Ask who you may thank for referring them.** If they answer, "My neighbor, Julie Garcia," ask them, "What did Julie say about us that prompted you to call?" If they say, "Julie had some implants done in your office," reply with, "That's right. She did. Are implants something a member of your family or you might be interested in, too?" If they answer, "Yes," they've taken one small step toward case acceptance.
- 7. Establish commonality.** Discover something you have in common with the caller and talk about that for a short time. The commonality could be the referring person, familiarity with their area of town, someone you know at their workplace, or kids.
- 8. Invite them to the practice.** Ask invitation questions that have two possible answers. Here are two examples:
 - "Your problem sounds like something doctor would want to check out right away. Does this Tuesday in the afternoon or Wednesday in the morning work best for you?"
 - "We reserve time for new patients so you don't have to wait long to get in. Do you prefer something the end of this week or the beginning of next week?"
- 9. Welcome them to the practice and ask a caring question.** After they have scheduled the visit, say the following, "Let me be the first to welcome you to our office. You're going to love Dr. Johnson and our entire team. Is there anything you would like to share with us that will help make your visit more comfortable?" About 80 percent of the time, they will answer, "I can't think of anything." This is fine. Just asking the question lets them know you care. About 15 percent of the time, they will mention that either they—or the person they're scheduling the visit for—have an extreme fear of dentistry, to which you answer, "I'm so glad you let us know about that. I'll let the whole team know about it, and we'll take extra special good care of you." About 5 percent of the time, they will give a variety of other answers.
- 10. Preview the visit.** Briefly, let them know what is going to happen during the first visit. Then refer them to your website for directions to the office; health and dental history questionnaires they can download and complete; before and after photos of cases you've done that may be relevant to them; and/or pertinent educational material. End the call with, "We're looking forward to seeing you next Tuesday at 10 am."