

SPEAR

STUDY CLUB PROFILES IN SUCCESS

“THERE ARE SO MANY POSITIVES THAT COME OUT OF IT.”

THE MISSING PIECE...

I just felt that something was missing, as far as what I could be doing to improve my relationships with referrers and to improve my skills. I think I'm a

very good practitioner but I know there is always room for improvement. For years, I would take referring dentists with me to courses, and it did help establish some good ties. What I realized is that you can read the articles and go to

courses, but it's not the same as focused group learning. So I was looking for something more.

HOW IT ALL STARTED WITH SPEAR...

My Straumann rep, Kevin Norman, talked me into going to the Specialist Conference in Scottsdale, and when I got there I realized this was the kind of course I should have been bringing other dentists to. I'd heard others speak on these topics in the past but I'd never heard Frank Spear before and I was just blown away. When I got back, I said to Kevin, "You were right." That's when I said, "Let's get this study club going". And once that decision was made it was really easy to get started. Then when the first one was so successful, I decided I had to start a second club for our other location as well.

WHY THE SPEAR MODEL WORKS...

A few of us in the group have been involved in another, larger, local study club. The problem there is that it is a group of 30 to 35 dentists, and we sit at different tables, and all you end up doing is dividing into cliques. Some are talking about the football game, some are talking about their vacation. It's just hard to get 35 people to focus on one thing. The Spear club gives us a chance to sit down in a more intimate setting and talk about a specific subject. We get more in-depth and we bounce ideas off each other. It's much more focused and collaborative.

Three of the guys in our group were with another study club in the past where



Dr. Neil Sundheimer
ORAL SURGEON
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Dr. Neil Sundheimer is an oral surgeon (and M.D.) who has been part of a two-location group practice since 1995. Over the years, he has been involved in a number of efforts to learn and grow with his referring dentists, but nothing has really delivered results the way his Spear Study Club has. Here he explains why...

everyone was charged with bringing in a case, photographs, x-rays, perio charting, mounted models. A lot of guys weren't doing those cases—they just didn't have the time for all that preparation—and the club broke up. The Spear model is nice because participants don't have to put a lot of time and energy into putting together a case, and they really appreciate that. But it's interesting—what's happened now is sometimes we end up going long in our meetings because what we are learning will inspire people to bring in a case of their own and they'll say to the group, "Do you mind if I present this case of mine?" We've been able to develop a real camaraderie where people start bringing in their own stuff because they *want* to. They want to hear the opinions of others in the group. That's been a really nice part of it.

ON THE GROUP EXPERIENCE IN SCOTTSDALE...

That was really worthwhile. Everyone enjoyed the course and was really quite impressed with the material. What also helped is that we all stayed in one of the quads at the Xona Resort, which is great because you retire to your separate rooms, then you come out in the morning and you all have coffee together. Or at night after dinner you all convene for awhile, and you really just feel that group spirit when you are basically living in close proximity to each other for that time. It was an invaluable bonding experience. I've always thought that the thing with making a good referrer was establishing a true relationship. Those are always more stable than the ones where someone starts referring to you and then maybe a patient has a problem with a fee or something and suddenly you don't see a patient from them for two months. I think if you have that true relationship, if there is a glitch along the road, it's a lot easier to manage.

"I'M SEEING A DEFINITE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF COMPLEX CASES."

A NEW LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION WITH REFERRERS...

I'm seeing a definite increase in the number of complex cases coming my way. Instead of an overdenture, for instance, now maybe we do a couple of posterior bridges. The expectations have grown and the type of cases I am seeing has changed over time. After three years now I can see how these dentists are starting to change and think differently. With an anterior tooth they are asking what is the bio type? Is there a high smile line? In other words they are looking at the same things I'm looking at now. It's not just a matter of me reporting back to them like it was before. Now they are making the diagnosis too and the patients are coming to me much better informed about what to expect. And I think it's really attributable to what we have been learning together in the Spear study club over these last three years.

WHAT IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT...

It isn't just about me getting more business; it's about doing great interdisciplinary dentistry together with my colleagues. It's about going deeper with treatment planning and case acceptance strategies so we can all provide great dentistry for our patients. It's more than just a study club really—it's a complete system for success for specialists and their referring dentists.

ADVICE TO OTHER SPECIALISTS...

Do it. There are so many positives that come out of it. You can build a lot of deeper relationships with both referring and non-referring GPs. You can develop a closer bond and discuss more advanced cases. Personally, I don't look at it as just a marketing tool—I look at it as a learning tool and a relationship-building tool. I see the way I am interacting with these GPs and it improves the way I interact with other GPs as well. That's exactly what I was hoping for when I started it.

"Spear Study Club fuels my passion for advanced dentistry. The experience has given me the opportunity to discuss with my colleagues multi-factorial complex cases. I now "speak dentistry" at a higher level with colleagues who also share a passion for advanced learning, and it's making a big difference in my practice."

— DR. ROBERT DEMBOSKI, STUDY CLUB MEMBER

SPEAR

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