

# SPEAR

STUDY CLUB PROFILES IN SUCCESS

“I LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY IT GIVES ME TO BE A LEADER IN THE DENTAL COMMUNITY.”

## THE DEEPER MEANING OF HOSTING A STUDY CLUB...

As a specialist, you do things like this to increase referrals, of course, but that's just one reason. The fact is, you can do

a number of things to increase referrals. What I like about the study club idea is that it also helps me achieve a greater goal, which is to elevate the standard of care in our community. The way you do that is through good continuing

education, and the Spear Study Club content is the best I've found. I also like the opportunity it gives me to be a leader in the dental community in my area.

## THE OLD SCHOOL APPROACH JUST WASN'T WORKING...

I started out years ago doing study club meetings all on my own, and they were kind of hit-or-miss. Sometimes I'd bring in someone from the dental school for a little talk, but 99% of it was through me, which is a lot of work, and it just wasn't very structured. Then I got involved with another popular study club and it was certainly more organized and structured—they wanted you to prepare all your sessions a year in advance so you could book speakers to come in—but it was still a lot of work, and I felt there just wasn't the sense of continuity or flow from session to session. Maybe it's me—I know some people do manage to build around a theme each year—but it just didn't feel like we were advancing level to level in any recognizable way or building on previous learning.

## WHAT MAKES THE SPEAR STUDY CLUB DIFFERENT...

What I really like about it is how focused it is on actual cases and actual treatment techniques. Instead of having a speaker come in and talk about one isolated subject, where you learn in a sort of abstract way about one thing, you're learning about real therapy options and how to apply them. And I'm very impressed with how current the material is. They present the best approaches based on the best treatment options



**Dr. Greg Phillips**  
PERIODONTIST  
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*Dr. Greg Phillips is one of only two periodontists in Columbus, a community of about 38,000, forty-five minutes outside of Indianapolis. He opened his specialty practice in 1992 (he had previously practiced for 5 years as a GP), and over the years he's come to some interesting conclusions about what makes for an effective study club. Here, he explains how the Spear model fits his philosophy, and how it has transformed his relationships with his referring GPs.*

available right now. Not every study club is that up to date with their material. I also love how there is input from various clinicians, which you gives you a variety of insights, but at the same time there is a consistency and continuity, so you can really follow through on individual case studies.

### **THE SIMPLICITY OF GETTING STARTED...**

They call it “Study Club in a box” and they really give you everything—the letters to send out, advice on how to hold your introductory meeting, everything you can think of. Or everything you might not think of. Then there is the website support, where I go to print things out before the meetings, and where the members can look at pre-treatment stuff before they come in. It’s just a wonderful format, it’s very well organized. All you need is a room, a DVD player and a computer and you’re ready to go.

### **THE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES...**

The number of referrals and, more importantly, the quality of referrals I get from the members of this group have certainly improved. I get larger cases and have higher acceptance rates with the referrals I get from these dentists. Often, I get patients in the chair who say, “I don’t even know why I’m here.” But the patients I get from my study club referrers have already heard most of what I am going to tell them, so there is a very high acceptance rate.

I think this is due to three things—the dentists are recognizing the treatment needs in their patients, they are not afraid to treatment plan the larger cases, and they are becoming better at communicating the patients’ needs to them. I think they also are seeing what can happen if a case is not treated comprehensively and are not afraid

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to say no to simply patching things up; in other words they are refusing to treat cases that do not commit to comprehensive care.

### **A HIGHER LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION...**

The best thing about this is that we are looking at the cases the same way and are gathering the same information. We are communicating between each other at a higher level. Especially when it’s things like esthetics and implant positions—I don’t have to spend a lot of time explaining things.

### **A SPECIAL GROUP DYNAMIC THAT INVITES DISCUSSION...**

There is a unique camaraderie with this group during our meetings, with everyone participating and not being afraid to question one another. Often, I have to ask them to finish up what they are discussing so I can go home! It is not uncommon for me to find two or three members standing in my parking lot talking after I have cleaned up and am leaving. Another significant change I have noticed in the years we have been doing this is that now we move through the assigned material for each session more quickly, and then we use the extra time to treatment plan one or two cases that have been brought in by the members. It’s like the Spear

material is a launching pad and then we take it from there. Everyone comes in eager to learn, but also eager to share and contribute and that makes for a very inspiring atmosphere.

### **IT GOES BEYOND THE CLUB MEETINGS...**

After three years, we are still meeting regularly every month, but we explore other learning opportunities together too. We have been to the Facially Generated Treatment Planning and Occlusion workshops together, as well as most of the Spear seminars. We have travelled to other events together, too. Most the GPs in this club are Spear Faculty Club members and we are all looking forward to attending this year’s meeting. Whenever we share an experience like that it seems to take things to the next level. There is no doubt that there has been a special bonding between the members of this club. We keep reaching new levels as a group, and that is really rewarding and motivating.

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