

**Dear Client,**

Mentor Solutions provides Mentor clients with the practice management tools they need to succeed in any economy. For this reason, we are excited to announce the launch of *Mentor Solutions Insight* – our monthly client newsletter dedicated to providing you with information to help you maximize your business through sophisticated practice management techniques, which are proven to be effective in plastic surgery practices.

In this inaugural edition of *Mentor Solutions Insight*, you will find an article entitled ***Beating the Recession***, the first of a three-part series. You will also find useful special service offers and upcoming events – all designed to increase your practice’s performance.

We hope you find this information helpful, and we welcome any questions or feedback.

Regards,  
Layli Sobhani  
Director, Marketing for Mentor Solutions

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## **Beating the Recession, Part 1**

*By Marie Olesen, Executive Consultant, Mentor Solutions  
and Founder of Inform Software*

“Bad things happen because of what we did in good times. Good things happen because of what we did in bad times.”

–Roberto C. Goizueta, Former CEO, Coca-Cola Company

The current economic downtime may have you longing for the not-too-distant past when patients were flocking to our cosmetic and plastic surgery practices. In 2002, *Extreme Makeover* put us in the forefront of the public’s mind. Cosmetic surgery moved into the mainstream and we enjoyed record growth. However, as the global economy has moved into an economic downturn, many practices have experienced a decline in business.

While recessions can be difficult for a business, they can also stimulate positive change. In good times, we rarely question ourselves, and we are often too busy to deal with the nuances that can make our practices more secure. Therefore, while this recession may seem daunting, there is a silver lining. If you find you have extra time in your consult room and in your operating room, use it to discover how to better engage patients, to innovate, to improve patient care and to update patient communication.

To help you strengthen your practice, we will discuss how focusing on what works, training your team, implementing “open door” policies, and battening down the hatches will ultimately help you:

- **Stimulate revenue**
- **Maximize your staff’s effectiveness**
- **Remove barriers to turn calls into consults**
- **Control your costs**



**Training the Team:** Most likely breast augmentation is on your short list, so let's use it as an example. Does your staff know how to handle an incoming breast augmentation caller? Do they know how to minimize no shows? Does your nurse know how to do sizing as a part of your consult? Does your patient coordinator have staff or patients who can talk to prospective patients about breast augmentation? You have the time and the impetus to ensure you can answer "yes" to each of these questions. Use these slower times to develop your staff and maximize their effectiveness in supporting your practice.

**Implementing "Open Door" Policies:** When patients are beating down your door, you can be successful despite having a "closed door" policy. You can charge consult fees or refuse to offer patient financing and still be busy. But these tougher economic times call for changes in your policies. Ask your staff to tell you when practice policies force them to tell prospective patients "no" rather than "yes." Eliminate every possible barrier that prevents prospective patients from scheduling consultations. If prospective patients don't come to your office, you're never going to have the chance to operate on them.

**Battening Down the Hatches:** If you see a decline in practice revenue, your first temptation may be to decrease your costs. While cost control is essential, keep in mind that as you look to decrease costs, there are still essentials in this industry. You still need marketing and other outreach activities to attract patients. Don't get carried away and destroy your core organization by overzealously cutting costs. Instead, make sure staff costs are inline. Keep inventory to a minimum by ordering more frequently. Bring outside services like dictation back in house. Delay equipment purchases. Stop doing marginal things. Subject your expenses to a return on investment analysis.

Roberto C. Goizueta, former CEO of the Coca-Cola Company said it best: "Bad things happen because of what we did in good times. Good things happen because of what we did in bad times." In times of economic downturn, a healthy dose of fear forces us to stop, look at our practices, and re-evaluate how well we are meeting patient needs. To the extent that we don't meet their needs, they either don't buy at all or they buy from someone else.

You want your organization to attract and retain qualified and appropriate candidates for the procedures and services you offer, and we hope that the tips provided in this article, and the additional information to come in the remaining articles in this series, will help you strengthen your practice and position yourself for maximum growth in the future.

To start increasing your team's performance, Mentor Solutions has created special-priced solutions for you.

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## Increasing Performance by 17% in 2 Months: A Case Study

### Situation

In 2008, many practices around the country reported declines in cosmetic surgery revenue. One group practice in the Southern U.S. experienced a 50% decrease in patient activity, compared to 2007. The surgeons in this practice expressed confidence in the quality of their staff, but believed they would benefit from training in new communication styles.

### Enlisting Help from Mentor Solutions

The practice engaged Mentor Solutions. Using data from the Mentor Solutions software offering (INFORM&ENHANCE®), Mentor Solutions consultants diagnosed the practice's performance and determined a large opportunity involved improving their Consult Capture Rate (CCR, i.e., percentage of incoming callers who arrive at consult). The current rate of 58% was far below the Best Practice standard of 81%.

Mentor Solutions consultants analyzed the practice's internal processes and implementation. They conducted a pre-visit telephone survey to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the practice's new patient calls, follow-up materials and protocols. The findings:

- Strengths: The practice had a strong, differentiating message that was featured in first-rate marketing materials.
- Weakness: There was no correlation between the practice's positioning in their written materials and the verbal messaging on actual patient calls.

An on-site visit was scheduled for staff development and skills training, with the following five goals:

- **Educate** the staff about the sequential patient decision-making processes
- **Empower** the staff so they understood how much they can influence the patient's decision to choose their practice
- **Review** practice goals and update the internal strategy necessary to meet these goals
- **Enhance** their current verbal messaging to differentiate their practice
- **Establish** measurable short and long-term goals to evaluate improvements in the CCR using benchmarks to determine the effectiveness of implementation

At the training, the Mentor Solutions consultant segmented the series of yes/no decisions that patients make prior to committing to surgery. To impact the CCR, the consultant placed tremendous emphasis on the patient's initial phone call. The consultant elicited positive comments about the practice that the staff could share with potential patients. The consultant then integrated staff comments into the practice's defined messaging. The staff engaged in an interactive training session that included theory and role play opportunities.

## The Results

Subsequently, the practice experienced many positive benefits from the training and their own measurement of performance to goals. Many of the staff members applied a new, more entrepreneurial style to their jobs. They reported:

- Interactions with patients improved as they took a more in-depth approach
- They sought alternative options to attract and keep patients in the practice

The team's telephone interactions with patients showed marked improvement. The office's CCR increased 17% in only two months.

Prior to the training, the practice was facing an annual revenue decline in the mid teens. Their improvement in performance helped them finish 2008 with minimal revenue decline.