

**Dear Client,**

Mentor Solutions delivers practice management tools our clients need to thrive in any economy. To this end, we are pleased to provide you with another edition of *Mentor Solutions Insight*. Each month we are committed to bringing you information that can help your business grow through leading-edge practice management techniques that have proven to be successful for many cosmetic surgery practices.

In this edition of *Mentor Solutions Insight*, we continue with part two of our three-part series, ***Beating the Recession***. You'll also learn about upcoming events and current promotions that will give you new tools to help your practice achieve its long-term goals.

We hope you gain valuable insights from this information, and we always welcome your questions and feedback.

Regards,  
Layli Sobhani  
Director, Marketing for Mentor Solutions

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## **Beating the Recession, Part 2**

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

In good times and bad, you may find your practice needs more new patient activity to increase surgical volumes. The most common answer to lower patient activity is to presume you need additional marketing.

However, in our experience, low surgical revenue is often a symptom of a greater problem, such as your inability to move prospective patients through a cosmetic surgery decision cycle. If your practice can't predictably move candidates from initial call to surgery, then why spend money to generate callers?

Since the mid-90's, Mentor Solutions consultants have demonstrated that focusing on infrastructure, such as patient acquisition and retention systems, drives practice success. Normally, the majority of our clients can fill their operating rooms from their current activity. In tough times, fixing infrastructure first enables practices to maximize their marketing investments.

In this article, we'll focus on the four key elements of effective infrastructure: be consumer-driven; differentiate your practice; update your patient interface; and confirm patient satisfaction.

**Be consumer driven/meet consumer expectations:** This requires that you try to think like a patient. Prospective patients move through a series of decision points called a Customer Relationship Lifecycle. They go from considering your practice to having surgery, and then on to retention and referral. By meeting their needs at a given step in the buying process, fewer patients leave your practice, and more move forward to build a relationship. Do you have photographs on your web site? Consumers search for them and exit a site when they are not available. Do you charge



for consultations? In most markets, consumers, particularly augmentation buyers, expect complimentary consultations. Do you have knowledgeable staff with the time to talk to callers? If not, prospective patients keep calling practices until they find what they are looking for. Have you adapted your consultation to meet cosmetic patient needs and expectations? If not, you need to.

**Differentiate your practice/tell your story:** Whether you realize it or not, your prospective patients are asking, “Who are you? Why should I buy from you?” If you only answer, “I’m a board-certified plastic surgeon who operates in a certified facility,” you’re missing an opportunity. Because in competitive markets, that’s the same answer people hear from other plastic surgeons. If you want people to choose you, they must understand how you’re different and why you’re a better option. Are you especially well trained? Are you highly experienced? Do you have a great bedside manner? Do you use a team approach? Is your practice committed to patient education? You and your staff must be ready to communicate your differentiators to patients. And, always deliver a consistent message in your marketing communications and in your words and actions.

**Develop a metric-based patient interface:** As much as we might like to prescribe it, patients tend to define their own surgical-decision process. Your response must be to develop a corresponding selling process that matches your medical ethics and meets the needs of appropriate surgical candidates. To do this, you need specific strategies to communicate and care for patients at each decision cycle stage. Mentor Solutions developed metrics to measure patient movement through the decision process, and to then benchmark practice performance against known best practice standards. If you implement this system, you’ll perform more surgeries from existing activities - in good times and bad.

**Confirm patient satisfaction:** There is a known correlation between customer satisfaction and profitability. Practices with high levels of patient satisfaction have higher patient retention rates and earn more referrals. They have less litigation, and staffs are happier working in environments where patient care is a priority. This was reported 20 years ago in *Patient Satisfaction Pays*, and it is just as true now. Given the many benefits of having satisfied patients, you need an ongoing method to ensure your patients are happy. If you are not routinely surveying patients, you need to. Patient surveys provide the best confirmation of quality and provide insights into where change is needed to meet consumer expectations.

Is your practice feeling the economic crunch? Do you have time on your hands? We encourage you to work on infrastructure issues that can help you now and make your practice stronger in the future.

Being customer oriented and having effective infrastructure provides a strong foundation and makes you more resilient during economic volatility. You will also be more ready to bounce back faster as the economy improves. (We refer to this as being “last in – first out.”)

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

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## Performing More Surgeries Out of Less Consults: A Case Study

### Situation

This case study centers on a practice that wanted to improve their environment for patients. In addition, they needed to set up a system to monitor their internal patient communication systems. They wanted to turn more consultations into surgeries.

### Enlisting Help from Mentor Solutions

The practice engaged Mentor Solutions. The first action item was to install *INFORM&ENHANCE*® software. Using this powerful tool, our consultants helped develop and implement the practice’s internal processes. This enabled the

staff to be more efficient and develop a better system for staying in touch with their current and potential patients. *INFORM&ENHANCE* processes also helped them create a bond with their patients and obtain more practice accountability through reporting.

The next step was staff skills training, which is an important part of the patient experience. Many times a staff is expected to know what to say on the phone without any training. Surgeons are often perplexed as to why patients don't show for their appointments or schedule surgery after their consultations. Staff training is important in delivering:

- Consistency: A consistent message every time the phone rings, and every time patients come for consultations improves their likelihood of scheduling surgery.
- Team Work: Every staff member plays an important role in providing an exceptional patient experience. Some may not understand what their role is in the process.
- Communication: Builds a stronger patient bond.
- Goal Sharing: Staff members need to understand the physicians' goals.

During skills training, the Mentor Solutions consultant taught staff members their important role in bonding with potential patients, which is vital to an exceptional experience and raising conversion rates. These techniques were taught through interactive discussions and role playing. Receiving incoming calls was practiced, as was the use of our "Telephone Intake Record." A different way to view confirmation calls was introduced, and we reviewed quoting and setting patient expectations for follow up. When combined, these tools lead to a better patient experience and higher staff morale - another key element to a more profitable practice.

## **The Results**

The results this practice achieved using Mentor Solutions have truly been impressive. In a year-to-year comparison that measured the quarter ending in March 08 versus the quarter ending in March 09, this practice saw a 26% rise in consultations to scheduled surgeries. This same time frame comparison also showed they scheduled more surgeries from less consultations. Put in statistical terms, their Net Scheduling Rate - consultation to surgery completed - went up 23%!

## **Feedback**

Since incorporating Mentor Solutions programs, the practice has received positive feedback from patients. One patient reported that staff members were welcoming, friendly, and knowledgeable - and from the moment she called she knew their practice was going to be where she would have her surgery. A long time staff member also felt the difference in office morale, since working with Mentor Solutions, saying, "It is actually fun and rewarding to come to work."

Through Mentor Solutions, your practice really can become what you've imagined it can be.