

Providing Exemplary Customer Service in Today's Forward-Thinking Practice

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What is Customer Service?

"The provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase; going above and beyond to keep the customer happy; the top priority, and hopefully creating loyal, returning customers?"

In today's fast-paced world, we hear the phrase providing excellent customer service quite often. Is it something we print out and hang up in our reception room; declare it on your website, and promote it on all of your educational materials? Or is it something that exudes from your practice on a day-to-day basis?

What Makes Our Customers (Patients/Parents) Happy?

People Buy Two Things:

1. A solution to a problem
2. A good feeling (emotional investment)

What solutions do you provide for your patients?

What good feelings do you provide for your patients?

Building Value in Your Practice

"Customers (patients/parents, peers/referral sources) measure the quality of a company/business by the quality of service. In a highly competitive marketplace, customers are won or lost by employees (team members) and the interaction they have. Doctors and team members need tools to compete for customers who vote every day with their money."

Defining VALUE –

1. The regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something
2. A person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life
3. Estimate the monetary worth of something
4. Consider someone or something to be important or beneficial; have a high opinion of

Define Value from your perspective -

What defines Value from your Patient/Parent point of view –

What defines Value from your Peers/Referral Sources –

What defines Value from your Community Involvement/Support –

How do you avoid the following “Value-Stealers” from your practice?

- Being sent late for an appointment without being told why or being given the opportunity to reschedule
- Getting lip service – i.e. when printed materials from your office announce, “We care about our patients” and then no one is available after hours to handle an emergency
- Receiving a bill before being informed about it
- Clear, concise explanation of services, fees, and payment plans
- Receiving treatment of any kind without prior information
- Lack of feedback – keep the patient/parent updated about treatment status/progress, explain each procedure of what to expect, post-treatment instructions, etc.
- Inadequate emergency services
- Cold, indifferent or condescending attitudes (each team member is a reflection of the doctor and the practice)
- Inability to listen to the patient’s/parent’s concerns; make time to listen to their questions, needs, and expectations
- Failure or delay in returning phone calls, emails, or letter
- Lack of available appointment time; no flexibility for working parents/school-age children. Consider your “primetime” appointments when creating a scheduling template; offer early mornings, late evenings, note school holidays/early release days
- Feeling rushed during the appointment; if your schedule is rushed, don’t create panic and take on that rushed feeling (body language, actions, or comments)
- Inadequate phone lines and proper training for all team members answering the phone
- Failure to respond to an insurance company’s request for information
- Delay in generating letters on the patient’s behalf
- Failure to provide requested x-rays or information to other dentists, specialists, etc.

Review Associated Value in Your Practice (key areas to apply value) -

- Website (visually appealing, educational, informative, NP welcome, online forms)

Areas to improve on:

- Referral Relationships (maintaining relationships w/referrals, tracking referrals)

Areas to improve on:

- Yelp/Google Reviews (asking for reviews)

Areas to improve on:

- Initial Phone Call (first chance to get them to say Yes to you and your practice)

Areas to improve on:

- Initial Consultation (parking lot/building, front desk greeting, TC/Dr. interaction)

Areas to improve on:

- Practice Promotion & Education

Areas to improve on:

- Providing the “WOW” experience (Make Me Feel Important)

Areas to improve on:

- Walk away materials/items (support materials, next steps to begin)

- Follow-up post visit/pending protocols

Areas to improve on:

Building Value at each Presentation –

- Do you, your practice, and your team represent the average fees charged in your practice? Do you look like a \$2-5,000 package?
- Do you make eye contact with both patients and parents when discussing treatment?
- Do you utilize the patient's/parent's name during discussions about treatment?
- Have you identified the chief concern and goals of the patient/parent?
- Have you asked the 5 Key Questions about treatment?
 1. Do I or does my child need treatment and if so, what does it involve?
 2. How long will the treatment take and what does the process look like?
 3. How will this alter my lifestyle? (habits, dietary changes, scheduling, time)
 4. How much will this cost?
 5. How flexible are you in working out payment plans?
- Have you identified any limitations/concerns about moving forward with treatment?
- Have you identified the best timing for getting started with treatment?

Key Verbal Skills to Utilize – Positive, Promotional, & Pro-Active

- Long-term or life-long benefits
- You'll appreciate....
- What a wonderful gift you are giving yourself or giving your children
- A lifetime investment for overall dental health, investing in self-esteem, confidence, etc.
- Present benefit statements
- My pleasure OR I'd be happy to

Summary: Five Key Areas to Focus on –

1. Identify what you sell and market it –
 - What do you sell or provide? What don't you sell or provide?
 - Who is your competition?
2. Promote your specific practice message
 - What is the message you send to your patients/parents?
 - What are your practice strengths/unique qualities to build on?
3. Ask for referrals from Day 1
 - Ask for referrals during the NP phone call, NP Consult, and during TX
 - Track & Acknowledge all your referrals
4. Establish Patient/Parent Relationship –
 - Create a Partnership with your Patients/Parents
 - Meet and exceed patient/parent expectations
5. Streamline your NP Process
 - Combine key appointments for efficiency
 - Provide detailed information

The Power of Positive Language

- Affirmative, or positive, language has a great impact on how the patient perceives service
- Changing your word choice from negative to positive has a huge effect

Switch Negative words to Positive words for greater impact

Negative

Positive

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| ○ No Problem/No Worries | You're Welcome/My pleasure |
| ○ No/Unfortunately | Our next available/What we can do |
| ○ I don't know | Great question, let me check on that |
| ○ I can't | Let's try this/What we can do is |
| ○ You'll have to | Would you mind/In order to achieve your goal |
| ○ Don't Forget | Please remember |
| ○ We close at 5:00 | We are open until 5:00 |
| ○ Do you have any questions? | What questions do you have? |
| ○ Only/Just | Leave out, it devalues anything said |

In the event of a breakdown in communication, ask, "Would you mind telling what happened?" OR

"I'm sorry, but I'm not clear. Would you mind telling me..."

"There appears to be a misunderstanding"

- "I'll try" becomes "I will"
- "Would you please" instead of "Could you"
- "May I" rather than "Can or What"
- Rather than "here's the problem" use "here is the challenge"

Communication Guidelines – Use the 3 P’s

Positive: Positive words = Positive results

Proactive: Assuming they have already said “Yes”! Guide them to the ideal place

Promotional: Speaking highly of your doctor, team & services

The 10 Most Important Words

“I apologize for this mistake. Let me make it right”

- Miscommunications
- Error in scheduling
- Billed without prior knowledge
- Treatment before prior discussion

The 9 Most Important Words

“Thank you for your business. Please call us again”

- Be easy to do business with; people have a choice
- Satisfied patients/parents are your biggest referrals
- Yelp/Google reviews

The 8 Most Important Words

“I’m not sure, however, let me find out”

- Don’t guess if you don’t know the answer
- Refer to someone who can give the correct answer
- Thank the patient/parent for inquiring
- Provide prompt feedback

The 7 Most Important Words

“What else can I do for you?”

- Go the extra mile
- Provide exemplary customer service
- Remember, the patients & parents provide you with a paycheck
- Learn to love the “unlovable”

The 6 Most Important Words

“What is most convenient for you?”

- Give options with your preset guidelines
- Have set times for set procedures
- Provide flexible scheduling and hours

The 5 Most Important Words

“How may I serve you?”

- Create a “Patient-Centered” practice
- Provide exemplary customer service
- Offer the unexpected to your dental guests

The 4 Most Important Words

“How did we do?”

- Ask for feedback, referrals & reviews
- Follow-up on requests for change
- Create systems for those things working well
- Find ways to improve areas that need fixing

The 3 Most Important Words

“Glad you called?”

- Do you sound like you are glad they called?
- Provide proper telephone training
- Work with your team on Positive, Pro-active & Promotional verbal skills

The 2 Most Important Words

“Thank you”

- Show appreciation to your patients/parents
- Thank them for their choice of doing business with you
- Instill a Patient Appreciation contest and/or event
- Have a Parent Appreciation quarterly drawing

The #1 Most Important Word

“Yes”

- **Get them to say “Yes” to your practice**
- **Focus on the needs of the patient and parent**
- **Build a relationship based on personal interests**
- **Create a “Partnership” with your patients and parents**

Creating Memorable Experiences with your Patients/Parents:

- Create a friendly, caring team focused on Customer Service
- Hire a “Concierge” for your front office team
- Have a beverage station with custom logo coffee cups (earth-friendly)
- Provide a filtered water delivery system replacing all those plastic bottles
- Utilize seasonal beverage napkins and special Anniversary napkins when you are celebrating 5, 10, 15, or 20 years of work in your community
- Set up charging stations and easy to use Wi-Fi
- Provide educational materials/articles relevant to your audience
- Post team photos on your reception room monitor and/or on the walls
- Have a Parent Appreciation Contest (quarterly contest for all parents to enter as a way of saying thanks for choosing our office, thanks for your support at home, thanks for your kind reviews, and thanks for your ongoing referrals)
- Have on-going Patient Contests & Interactive Opportunities
- Create a tangible reminder of the NP Experience thru walk out gifts
- Provide consistent follow-up with email or text after all appointments
- Work with your community in supporting any children’s activities and adventures
- Support the schools, fundraisers, etc.

**Summary of Presentation: Use Your Communication Tools for Success –
Practice Active Listening, Use Your Words Wisely, and Remember,
Silence is Golden!**