

Speaking of Customer Service for Your Dental Patients

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

Unfortunately, excellent dentistry alone does not guarantee that your practice will succeed, because patients tend to think that all dentists have comparable clinical knowledge and skills. To set your practice apart—cementing relationships with existing patients and appealing to prospective new patients—you and your staff need outstanding customer service skills. Specifically, you need to say the right things to patients, not only to motivate them but also to convey that you care personally about them and their oral health. Scripting will enable you to do this consistently.

The Initial Call from Prospective Patients

The first and therefore most important usage of scripting for customer service occurs even before a person has become your “customer,” or patient. When your front desk coordinator answers the phone and hears that the caller wants to discuss coming to your practice, she should get on script immediately. This phone conversation is critical for three reasons. First, a considerable amount of information must be exchanged in just a few minutes. Second, this being the classic “first impression,” you also want the call to start building value and convey energy, enthusiasm and likability. Finally, of course, your front desk needs to appoint the caller. Scripting is how you orchestrate so many different elements smoothly.

The New Patient Experience... and Beyond

Patients’ first visit represents another prime opportunity for scripting. From warm welcome to cheerful checkout, every interaction with every team member (including you) should reinforce the sense that your practice knows how to deliver first-class customer service.

One of many scripted elements you should include in the first and subsequent visits is what I call “The Golden 10.” Through conversations you and your staff have with patients, you should use scripting to learn at least 10 personal facts (hobbies, favorite music, vacation plans, etc.) about them. Shared with the team, these facts will serve as a foundation for an ongoing patient-practice relationship—a hallmark of strong customer service.

Providing superior customer service has as much to do with what you say as what you do. Scripting enables you to clearly and consistently express your practice’s commitment to meeting patients’ needs and exceeding their expectations.

Author



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