



Customer Service in the Dental Practice

A Special Report by Debra Moorhead
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Sam Walton said, “There is only one boss – the customer.”

The dental practice itself has no money whatsoever. The practice is simply a funnel from the customer (patients) to us by means of a paycheck. Want bigger paychecks? Be nicer to your real boss – your patients. Sometimes when I say this to a team I will get the response, “But Debra, we couldn’t be nicer to our patients.” My response is always, “Really? So you never have any patient complaints? All of your patients pay their bill prior to or at the time of service? All of your patients refer all of their friends and family into the practice to the point that you have to turn people away? This is reality for this practice?” What I usually get in return is something like, “No, I mean, we are as nice as we can be but our patients just don’t appreciate all we do for them.”

I am going to challenge you now by saying that if you feel your patients don’t appreciate you, your patients probably feel the same toward you. Ouch! That hurt didn’t it? I know. But we can’t deal with it unless we own up to it and commit to change.

Another question I’m often asked is, “what do you mean by excellent customer service?” Well, how would you want to be treated while in the dental chair? How would you want your friends and family to be treated? Do you treat your patients as if they are family? You should. Everyone deserves to have the best dentistry they can afford and everyone deserves to be treated with the utmost respect.

The team has to be present – physically and emotionally while the patient is in the practice. And I mean everywhere from the reception area to the clinical area, from the first person they see to the last. If a patient is kept waiting longer than 10 minutes, let them know why and when they can expect to be taken back. Let them know exactly what is going on. Not just a “we’ll be with you just as soon as we can” approach. Say, “Mrs. Smith, the assistants are sterilizing your room from the last patient and setting up for your procedure right now. It will be about 5 minutes. Would you like something to drink while you wait?” Or whatever the reason is – say it in as much detail and in as positive a way as you possibly can and let them know you are aware of the situation. There is nothing worse than sitting in a reception area thinking that the staff doesn’t even know you exist. It makes me wonder if anyone in the practice knows what they are doing and certainly does not make me feel like I am going to be well taken care of.

Sometimes, we just need to remember to think friendly customer thoughts. How many times have we been having a good morning until time to start patients! Oh, boy, here they come! Hey, I know – we’ve all been there. Sometimes we can’t help but see our patients as hassles or “necessary evils.” However, remember back to when you had a very good day. Maybe you got some good news or everything just felt right with the world. How difficult were your patients that day? You see, often times, our patients pick up on our attitudes. We think of them as annoying and so, they become annoying. What if we thought of them as delightful? Even the most difficult ones? Try that and let me know how it works. If nothing else, you owe it to yourself to feel good and be in a good mood. So take control of your attitude now by deciding to appreciate every patient. After all, every vacation we take, every piece of furniture we buy, and every opportunity we have to give to our children comes directly from them.

I hope you have enjoyed my article. What you have read is just a small part of the advice I give in my work consulting individual Dentists and their teams.

If you believe you are having trouble with customer service in your dental practice, you may be in the situation where you qualify to be one of the handful of new clients I will work with in the next 12 months.

But I’ve found through experience that there’s only one way to be sure, and that is to have a short conversation on the phone.

In our conversation, I would ask you to tell me about your practice goals and experience, so I can assess whether this training is appropriate for you and your practice.

The initial conversation is no charge.

Just like you, my time is limited, but I would enjoy discovering if my advice can help you accomplish your goals and have the impact it has for my clients.

To find out about my availability for a no-charge, no-obligation conversation, please call my office at (606) 748-1570, or send me a short email at Debra_M@alltel.net

Thank you . . . I am looking forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Maxhead". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.