

# **How To Exceed Patient Expectations**

*By Roger P. Levin, DDS*

## **Introduction**

Customer service might be the most important system in your dental practice. Why? Because it directly affects every other practice system.

Exceeding patient expectations is the key to “WOW” customer service. This occurs when every interaction has been exceptional, causing patients to be amazed at the level of customer service, making them say “WOW” as they leave the office.

Most dental practices provide good customer service, but that may not be good enough in today’s competitive environment. It is only the “WOW” level experience that motivates the patient to come back for more procedures, say positive things about your practice, and refer others. Patients should be so impressed by the service they receive at every level that they could not imagine going elsewhere for their dental needs.

Here are four tips to enhance customer service:

1. Script every patient interaction
2. Treat every patient like a VIP
3. Upgrade practice appearance
4. Go the extra mile

## **1. Script every patient interaction**

Scripting is an excellent training technique. Every routine conversation in the practice should follow a written training script. Scripting trains the dental team on what to say while providing patients the information they need to know about the practice’s services. Recognize that training will be continuous. Set time aside for specific training, out-of-office activities and performance discussions.

## **2. Treat every patient like a VIP**

The key to exceptional customer service is an educated and professional dental team that treats every patient like a VIP. Imagine your favorite public figure as your dental patient. How would you and your team treat VIPs upon arrival at your office?

- Would you greet that person differently than other patients?
- Would you prepare for that person?
- Would your staff look out the window, anticipating that person’s arrival?
- If that person was considering treatment, would you guarantee personalized, outstanding service?

Always consider every patient a VIP. You never know who will accept significant care and refer patients to your dental practice.

### **3. Upgrade practice appearance**

To achieve “WOW” customer service, dentists and their team members need to look at their practices through the eyes of their patients. How does the practice look from the outside? Is the building inviting? Is it landscaped and well-maintained? Is the carpeting in the reception area in good shape? Is the furniture attractive and comfortable? Appearance matters. The more attractive your office, the better the impression you make on patients.

### **4. Go the extra mile**

Many practices with superior customer service provide “extras” to patients. Some have refreshments in the reception area, so that patients and guests — parents, spouses, and neighbors who came with the patient — can relax and enjoy themselves. It’s amazing what a seemingly small thing like that can mean to patients.

Another *extra* is the dispensing of oral health products in the office. Patients appreciate the convenience and the reduced cost of purchasing a product in the office. They are also more likely to use the product when it is recommended and demonstrated by someone on their dental team.

One such product that enhances at-home care is the Waterpik dental water jet. While flossing is recommended by dentists, most patients do not regularly floss at home. The Waterpik is perfect for these patients. It effectively cleans interproximal and subgingival areas. In fact, many patients prefer the ease and convenience of the Waterpik compared to flossing.

Dispensing quality products such as the Waterpik is a win-win for both patients and practices. Patients can buy a product that improves their oral health without having to drive somewhere else. Dentists benefit by ensuring better at-home care for their patients while also proving “WOW” customer service.

### **Conclusion**

As author Nelson Boswell has said about customer service, “Here is a simple but powerful rule: always give people more than what they expect to get.” Successful practices find ways to exceed patient expectations. In today’s competitive environment, patients will look for practices that provide the “WOW” factor. These four action steps can help you achieve exceptional customer service.