



BusinessBite

Practice Management Information for Implant Dentists

Telephone Doctor's Six Cardinal Rules of Customer Service

By Nancy Friedman, The Telephone Doctor

There are a lot of "rules" in customer service, but few more important than the six we've listed here from our newly reproduced DVD ***Six Cardinal Rules of Customer Service***. Each makes a valid statement and will increase the satisfaction of your patients.

Cardinal Rule #1 - *Personal Responsibility/Accountability: Don't Pass the Buck*

One of the most important attributes the doctor or staff member can have is personal responsibility - personal accountability. Those that have it refuse to accuse, blame and complain. Those that do accuse, blame and complain break one of the most important cardinal rules. "Who" statements accuse and blame. "Who took my stapler?" We should use a more positive manner and take personal responsibility by saying, "I seem to have misplaced my stapler; has anyone seen it?" Remember to take full responsibility with the patient as well. The patient doesn't like to hear accusing, blaming and complaining statements. They know when you're passing the buck!

Cardinal Rule #2 - *People before Paperwork*

When someone walks into your practice or calls you while you're working on something, Cardinal Rule #2 says drop everything. Attend to that person. Remember, paper and other tasks can wait, people should not. We've all been ignored when we go into an office because the staffer is doing something else. Or how often do we get the message on the phone stating "Your call is very important to us. We'll be with you shortly." After that message has looped more than twice, it is more than annoying. It is just a flat out lie. You are telling the patient - current or prospective that their call isn't that important to you. Let's not abuse our own patients. Remember: People before paperwork.

Cardinal Rule #3 - *Don't RUSH Your Patients*

Sure, you may understand something very quickly, but rushing the patient along will only lead to them feeling intimidated. Remember to mirror their speed. Many patients for implants are senior citizens whose hearing may not be the best. Trying to be "done" with a patient as quickly as possible is seen as being rude

and uncaring. Rushing threatens patients. Take your time with each and every contact.

Cardinal Rule #4 - Jargon

Ever get a report from a company and not understand it? Some professions, especially dentistry and medicine, have jargon that makes the CIA wonder what's up. Be very careful not to assume that your shorthand or jargon is understood by your patients. You and your employees may understand it very well, but the patient may not. And you'll only cause a lot of unnecessary confusion. Spell things out for your patients. Use easy words. Try not to abbreviate. Remember, don't use military language on civilians.

Cardinal Rule #5 - Don't Be Too Busy To Be Nice

Hey, everyone's busy! That's what it's all about. Being busy does not give you carte blanche to be rude. Remember, you meet the same people going down as you do going up. They'll remember you. (What's worse than being busy? NOT being busy.)

Cardinal Rule # 6 - Be Friendly BEFORE You Know Who It Is

There's a good lesson to be learned here. One Telephone Doctor saying is: Smile BEFORE you know who it is. Often times it's too late. Being friendly before you know who it is will earn you classic customer service points. The patient needs to know you want to work with them, no matter who they are. Remember, sometimes it's way too late to smile and be friendly after you know who it is.

Any one of these tips can boost your customer service and patient retention!

Nancy Friedman is a featured speaker at association and corporate meetings around the world. She has appeared on OPRAH, The Today Show, CNN, Good Morning America and CBS This Morning. Her articles have been published in the Wall Street Journal, USA TODAY, as well as hundreds of other print outlets. She is also the author of six best selling books. For more information, log onto the Telephone Doctor website at www.telephonedoctor.com or call 314.291.1012.