

The Secret to Positive Patient Experience

by Jessica Petty

More and more consumers in the health care industry have a negative association in their minds of health care systems and health care providers. Much of this can be thanked to the media outlets for supplying consumers with negative headlines focusing on physician wrongdoings and the political war of improving our health care system.

With this said, how can we improve our patients perceptions of us? How can we change their minds so that we aren't the bad guys?

The secret to solving this dilemma is through team engagement. Seriously. The secret to making your patients happy is by making your employees engaged in their work.

When your team is engaged in your organization's mission and has the same goals and values, and most importantly, feels appreciated by their employer, amazing things happen! For the majority of us, when we feel appreciated and taken care of by our employer and team, we in turn will make our customers feel appreciated and taken care of. When we appreciate and take care of our patients and their families, their patient experience increases dramatically.

When patients come for an office visit with their practitioner, they expect and believe that their practitioner has all the knowledge and skillsets necessary to provide them with care. They are not educated on the various diagnoses and treatments available to them, so they base their experience on the customer service they received while in your office, not necessarily on your knowledge for treating them.

Think about it, what is the number one common complaint and number one appreciation that consumers leave about businesses? Customer service.

"The girl at the front desk was rude and didn't acknowledge my presence for at least 10 minutes. I won't be going back."

OR

"Each staff member had a friendly smile on their face and made me feel so comfortable during my time with Dr. Smith! The staff took the time to listen to my concerns and answered all my questions thoroughly! I will definitely be going back and recommending this office to everyone I know!"

Quality customer service is key across all industries, including health care; we just call it patient experience. During one of my first jobs in health care my employer made the investment in me to educate me, provide me with resources, and to make sure I was in line with the organization's mission and goals. This same experience was provided for each employee.

I was presented with the mentorship that the second I put my name tag on in the morning, I was no longer just me, I was in a role where my first priority was the patient and their family. That meant that each patient and visitor was greeted with a friendly smile and that each phone call was answered with a warm, welcoming voice. During my time in that position, I never felt any hesitation to treat our patients and guests with appreciation and kindness, because I was always treated with appreciation and kindness by my employer. Yes, we were a very busy practice and at times team members were overwhelmed and we were challenged with new goals and outside pressures. What made the difference and kept our patients happy was that our team was still engaged – we were working toward a common goal, and we each appreciated each others efforts.

The secret is team engagement.