

Creating a "Wow" Experience for Your Patients, Part 2

Michelle Geller-Vino, CA

Editor's note: Part 1 of this article appeared in [the July 1 issue](#).

Quality Control

Another great way of creating a "wow" experience in the office is a patient survey. This can be mailed out with a stamped, return-addressed envelope or given to patients when they leave your office. Ask patients to take a few minutes of their time to answer a few questions regarding the care they received at your practice/office. Make sure they know responses will be kept confidential and their name is not required. Also leave room for additional comments. Patients should give each question a rating, i.e., 1=poor, 2=average, 3=good and 4=outstanding.

Quality control can be done via the telephone as well. After a patient comes in for a complimentary scan, consultation or evaluation, someone from the team can make a call to that individual and ask them the survey questions directly. Using this system makes patients feel special and believe that we take their opinions to heart.

There are numerous other ways to make patients feel special. One idea to consider is having a Patient of the Month. Honor a patient who keeps their appointments, complies with care, refers others and pays on a consistent basis. Some offices post a picture of the patient of the month so it is easily visible and the patient is awarded a gift, such as movie tickets or a gift certificate for lunch or dinner. It's always important to reward the behavior we want, so set an example for all of your patients and make your patient of the month feel special.

This type of patient recognition can also be done in the form of a newsletter. If your office sends one out each month, a patient's story can be told. From a marketing standpoint, newsletters should go out to all patients. Newsletters can even be sent out to primary care physicians and other health care professionals in the community to keep them in the loop with everything going on in your practice.

Sample Survey Questions to Ask Patients (written or phone survey)

- Did the doctor see you at your scheduled appointment time?
- Was the staff friendly and courteous?
- Did the doctor seem concerned and show interest about your problem?
- Did the doctor explain your problem to you in a way that you understood?
- Did the doctor spend enough time with you?
- Was your doctor professional?
- Was the office staff friendly, helpful and efficient?
- Was the atmosphere of the office pleasant, clean and comfortable?
- Were you pleased with how your paperwork was handled?
- Did the doctor explain the treatment procedure to your satisfaction?
- Were you able to get appointment times that were convenient?
- Did you feel our fees were reasonable?
- Would you recommend our office to others? (If so, please tell us why.)
- Is there anyone on our staff who deserves special recognition?
- What did you like most about our office?
- What did you like least?

Low Practice Stress

One of the most important ingredients to maintaining a low stress level in the office is excellent communication. That means weekly staff meetings must take place on the same day and at the same time each and every week to ensure challenges are discussed, strategies are brainstormed and distinctions are made from the everyday activity that takes place in the office. Staff meetings are also a great time to acknowledge team members for the good things they have accomplished.

Another key ingredient is making sure your office has a mission - why you and your practice are there in the first place and what it is that you wish to accomplish as a team. Creating a mission statement is easy and actually fun to do as a team.

Balance in the practice and with team members is certainly an ingredient that helps to keep stress levels low. Teams achieve balance when individual team members rotate to handle various duties, rather than getting stuck doing the same tasks repeatedly. Crosstraining is a great way to maintain balance in the office - this way everyone on the team knows everyone else's position and can take over when help is needed.

For instance, if the front-desk CA is on maternity leave and the back-office CA has been crosstrained, they can jump right in and take over without any additional training. Or if the insurance CA is out on vacation and the front-desk CA has been crosstrained (or even has some experience with insurance), then they can fill in for the short time the insurance CA is out.

Another form of balance is understanding personality types. Hiring the right personality type for the right position in the office is extremely important in maintaining office synergy and balance. This will allow you to work more effectively as a team. It is also important to understand that no one personality type is better than any other. They all bring something different to the practice. However, if the basic personality types are understood, it becomes easier to strategically place the correct staff members with the proper tasks in order to ensure the team players will be most effective. In so doing, the practice will run at its optimal potential and balance will naturally occur.

Commit to the Practice

Thirty-three percent of a person's life is spent in the workplace. If you don't work in a fun environment, you are resigning yourself to a boring one-third of your life. Employees who are committed to each other are committed to the patients and the practice. If you don't walk the talk, why should our patients follow? Remember, it is easier to build commitment if you start with a strong foundation. It is better to have two people working with us on our team than having five people working against us. It is tough to be committed when you are stressed out. It is easy to be committed when it is something you helped create.

JULY 2009