



CHIROPRACTIC (GENERAL)

## Keep 'Em Coming Back: How to Promote Patient Loyalty

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Successful chiropractic practices have several things in common, but perhaps the most important is a large and loyal patient base. When talking about techniques to grow the business, we tend to focus on the "large" aspect of the patient base; that is, on strategies to attract new patients. However, it is important to remember that "loyal" is equally, if not more, important. Why? Because in general, acquiring a new customer can cost significantly more than retaining a customer.

### Why Patients Leave

Before discussing techniques to improve patient retention, it is important to understand why patients leave in the first place. Almost always, it comes down to poor service. In fact, as many as eight in 10 consumers stop doing business with a company due to poor customer experience. For chiropractic clinics, common poor customer experiences can include an unpleasant or unknowledgeable doctor, an uncomfortable treatment environment / experience or even an appointment not starting on time.



Once you understand why patients leave, you can focus on how to get them to stay. Here are three ways to maximize patient retention that require nothing more than a review of your practice operations.

#### Provide Superior Service

Clearly, the most important factor in patient retention is [superior service](#). This begins with the necessities: maintaining a highly knowledgeable staff and a focus on friendly, personalized experiences. First, you want to ensure you have created a relaxing, stress-free environment for the patient - hygienic, warm and overall comforting. You want your patient to associate your clinic with relaxation, with pain relief; with a solution for the problem that brought them to your door.

Along with a comfortable environment, you want to offer a highly personalized service. While

clinical basics of personalization involve understanding the patient's source of discomfort, you want to go above and beyond to demonstrate the patient that they are *important to you*. One technique is to include personal notes along with treatment notes so at subsequent visits, you can ask about children, offer their favorite drink when they arrive, wish them a happy birthday or ask about a vacation they recently took. Remembering important people and events can make your patient feel special – a feeling that will keep them coming back.

While personalized service and a comfortable environment are important, often the most frustrating experiences for a patient happen outside of the treatment room. A professional practice will reply to emails and phone calls in a timely manner. Not only is this important for showing the patient you value them, but it is also important for booking appointments. Practices are also trending toward self-serve options such as online appointment scheduling, so the patient can book an appointment online at their own convenience.

Finally, something we have all experienced at one time or another is a prolonged wait in the clinic waiting room. It is important to respect your patient's time and keep your practice operating on schedule.

### Be Proactive With Booking

On top of offering outstanding customer service, a practice should be proactive in booking follow-up appointments. That means not relying on the patient to remember to book their next appointment, but reaching out to them yourself. The best technique for booking additional appointments is to ask the patient to schedule their next visit as they are leaving their appointment. For those who opt not to book right away, many practices make use of recall postcards. Recall cards can be mailed to patients with information on the health benefits of chiropractic care, that they are due for their next appointment, and where they can call or go online to book their next appointment. Some practice-management software automatically keeps track of which patients are due for their next appointments and can even email them on your behalf.

### Stay in Contact

It is also important to stay in contact between appointments. To do this, many practice have adopted the use of social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), etc.), as well as email newsletters. By frequently sharing your expertise, along with relevant and interesting articles and practice promotions, patients receive repeated exposure to your brand, which may lead to increased appointments.

### The Power of Feedback

Finally, it is important to ask for feedback. The only way to really know what you are doing well and what could use improvement is to ask your patients directly. Satisfaction surveys are great at capturing this data, but you also will want to talk directly with your patients (especially the ones who haven't returned).

Lost patients are inevitable, but with a top-to-bottom, practice-wide focus on a great customer experience and integrating smart business practices, you can retain the most patients possible and maximize your practice success.