

Beyond Service Excellence:

Connecting with the People We Serve

In today's economy it is vital that everyone learns to improve their customer service skills because we all serve somebody. At the top of the list of course are the patients you are trying to attract and retain. But in such a competitive environment if your goal is "satisfaction" – you are aiming too low.

Customers who are simply satisfied with your products or services can easily be swayed to do business elsewhere. In fact studies show that people who are rationally satisfied behave no differently than those who are dissatisfied. The only customers who will keep coming back – and the only patients who will be consistently loyal, and recommend your hospital to others – are those who feel emotionally connected. This requires a working knowledge of the key opportunities to make the connection and the behaviors that weaken or strengthen it.

I. The Impact of Customer and Patient Loyalty on Organizational Success

- Three Types of Customers and Patients:
 - Promoter – emotionally satisfied
 - Customer – rationally satisfied
 - Detractor – emotionally dissatisfied
- Participants are asked to give real life examples of Promoters, Customers and Detractors and then in columns, delineate the different effects each will have on the business.
- Research and case studies from the Gallup Organization are given to support the qualitative difference between emotionally attached customers, rationally satisfied customers and dissatisfied customers.

II. Raising Customer and Patient Loyalty

- The Customer Service and Patient Ladder – to gain a Promoter you must achieve success on all five rungs:
 - Bottom Rung – Procedural Efficiency
 - Second Rung – Technical Excellence
 - Third Rung – Professional Courtesy
 - Fourth Rung – Product Innovation
 - Top Rung – Personal Connection
- Participants are asked to prioritize each rung from the perspective of Senior Leadership; their supervisor; and themselves.
- Participants are asked to grade the success of the hospital; their department; and themselves with respect to all five rungs.

The Four Opportunities to Create an Emotional Connection

III. Opportunity Number One – Attitude

- **Disinterest Creates a Disconnect** – disinterest is when you come across as impersonal, indifferent, rude, or disingenuous.
- Participants are split into small groups and asked to share their own experiences as a customer where they have encountered employees with bad attitudes and how it affected their level of commitment to that place of business.
- A psychological analysis is presented on why some people have a bad attitude at work.
- **Enthusiasm Creates a Connection** – Enthusiasm is when you demonstrate a sincere belief in your product (or service) coupled with a genuine desire to help others.
- Each group is asked to simulate one of the stories of encountering a bad attitude in a role-play; and then to role-play the same situation with an example of positive enthusiasm.
- A psychological analysis is presented on why some people have a good attitude at work.
- The mental technique of developing and maintaining a positive outlook is explained and practiced.

IV. Opportunity Number Two – Communication

- **Self-Centered Communication Creates a Disconnect** – self-centered communication is when you talk more than listen. This includes overemphasis on process, product or personal knowledge (“let me tell you what we can do”).
- Discussion is conducted to determine ways in which customers or patients feel processed rather than served.
- **Altruistic Communication Creates a Connection** – altruistic communication is when you listen more than talk. This includes inquiring, empathizing, and validating their needs (“let me ask you what we can do”).
- Aspects of making a good impression are reviewed. They include:
 - Being Accessible
 - Showing Interest
 - Demonstrating Balance

V. Opportunity Number Three – Performance

- **Unremarkable Performance Creates a Disconnect** – unremarkable performance is a customer or patient experience that is ordinary and the same as they could receive anywhere else.
- Discussion of how easy it is to switch where you do business when service is simply satisfactory.
- **Outstanding Performance Creates a Connection** – outstanding performance is when there is something unique and extraordinary about the service or product experience you offer.
- Participants are asked to share stories about outstanding performance within the organization and to articulate what is unique about the organization (or their department) in comparison to competitors.
- Emphasis is placed on creating a memorable experience rather than simply giving good service. In discussion groups specific action steps are formulated for creating such an experience for customers and patients.

VI. Opportunity Number Four – Service Failures

- **Defensiveness Creates a Disconnect** – defensiveness is when you refuse to admit or correct a service failure.
- Participants share stories of their own experience as a customer where a service failure occurred and the employee, manager or owner was defensive and refused to take responsibility.
- **Taking Ownership Creates a Connection** – taking ownership is when you do everything within your power to completely rectify a service failure in order to win customer and patient loyalty.
- Participants share stories of their own experience as a customer where a service failure occurred and the employee, manager or owner took extraordinary measures to make things right.
- Participants brainstorm about potential frustrations and grievances customers and patients might have and appropriate corrective responses.

VII. You Can't Get Emotionally Engaged Customers or Patients Without Emotionally Engaged Employees

- Review research from Gallup Organization and GPW Institute that demonstrates the link between employee engagement and customer engagement.
- Engaged employees are the by-product of inclusive managers.
- The importance of a climate of positivity. Managers need to communicate positive and affirming messages at a 5:1 ratio to achieve highly engaged employees.

Conclusion

- Participants are paired off with a partner and asked to share a story of when they made a strong emotional connection with a customer or patient. Facilitator debriefs and captures the specific factors involved in winning customer or patient loyalty.
- Participants are asked to complete a personal action plan that articulates ways they can improve on creating emotional connections with customers and patients.