Customer Service:
Little Things Can Make a Big Difference
Wendy L. Wright, MS, RN, ARNP, FNP, FAANP

Owner: Wright & Associates Family Healthcare and Anderson Family Healthcare, PLLC
Partner – Partners in Healthcare Education, LLC

Objectives
• Upon completion of this workshop, the participant will be able to:
  • Employ active listening skills to clearly understand customer needs
  • Respond constructively to customer needs
  • Interact with empathy toward customers
  • Work as a team when handling customer concerns
  • Practice handling difficult situations
  • More effectively find solutions for dissatisfied customers

Why Am I Here?
• Help you to improve customer service
• Help you to problem solve difficult situations
• Help you to develop ideas to improve on an already excellent practice
  • There is no perfect practice
  • Many things are being done very well in your practice
  • But...there is always room for improvement

Who Are Your Customers?
• External Customers
• Internal Customers

Important
• We need to all be on the same page in terms of customers
  • External
    • Patients
    • Collaborating physicians
    • Nurses and staff in other offices
  • Internal
    • Physicians, NPs, PA’s
    • Colleagues – Front office staff; MA’s, Nurses

Local Survey
• 700 surveys sent out
  • 30% response rate
• Overall – as a whole, the office did well
  • Lowest score
    • Courtesy: 3.88 (1 worst, 5 best)
    • 7.1% of surveys returned gave the office a 2 (fair)
    • 1% - poor (1)
• Goal: Above: 4.16 –
  • This is considered to be a good practice
I Don’t Care About My Customers!!!!

Although We Would Never Say Such a Thing!!

- Often times, our attitudes and mannerisms convey this message without realizing it.

Exercise

- Give me some examples of things that we do that convey the wrong message to our customers.

Comments Made About Local Neurology Practice

- One of my friends mentioned an incident from last week which is a little disturbing. She was in a dental office and commented on the staff being very helpful etc… to which another patient behind her responded…..
  - “It was unlike one of her doctors offices where if the person you need isn’t there then…she had a hard time finding someone to help her.”
  - Sorry to say…the office she was speaking about was … Neurologists

Now…Let’s Identify

- Things we can do to convey a positive message about the practice to the customer
  - List them
Exercise 2

How Long Does It Take….

• For the patient, physician or nurse (customer) to make an assessment of the office?
  • 1. 20 seconds
  • 2. 60 seconds
  • 3. 90 seconds
  • 4. 100 seconds

Given This….

• Think about the first 20 seconds of your interactions with the staff from other offices or other customers….
  • Do you – answer phone with upbeat voice?
  • Do you – introduce yourself when the phone rings?
  • Do you – smile when the customer approaches your desk?

Do You…

• Try to make the customer feel special?
  • Say something sincere such as…nice to see you again
  • How is your granddaughter doing?
  • How was your holiday?

What Do You Like In Offices That You Consider to Be the Best

Now Compare…

• The office that you think highly of and compare it with the Department of Motor Vehicles while renewing your license.
  • Any difference?
Let’s Talk About Some Techniques to Improve Your Service

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Remember…

• Nothing alienates the customer more than feeling uncared for
• Unfortunately, this is very easy in today’s environment
  • Given all of your responsibilities and functions

One of the Best Ways to Build a Relationship

• Step 1
  • Get them on your side
  • List for me – ways that you can do this

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Techniques to Improve Your Skills

• Make eye contact with the customer
• Keep your face warm and friendly
  • Remember, your face is like a billboard
  • Customers do not care if you are busy or had a horrible day
• Body language
  • Don’t sit with your arms folded while talking with the patient
  • Don’t shuffle papers
  • Do…nod and face the customer

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Examples

• Make direct eye contact with them
• Greet them with good morning or good afternoon
• Sound upbeat
• Greet them immediately if they are at your desk – even if you are on the phone, look up and acknowledge them

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Telephone Skills

• Pick up the phone within 3 rings
• Greet the caller
• Give your name
• Ask the customer if you can help
• Ask permission before putting customer on hold
• Helpful to tell them why you are putting them on hold
• Thank them for holding when returning to the line

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Transferring A Call

- Before you transfer a call, tell the customer that this is what you are going to do and make sure that there is someone there to take the call
- Otherwise, tell them that they can leave a message and the call will be returned today

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Statistics

- 55% of what we learn from others comes from body language
- 38% comes from the tone of the voice
- 7% comes from the words he/she says

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Comments Made About Neurology Group

- “What I am sensing is a detachment from the patient, due I suspect, to the pressures of practicing medicine in today’s highly demanding life.”

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Comments Made About Neurology Group

- “I send fewer patients; patients complain about lack of individual attention, voicemail loop, and the “in and out” attitude

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Comments Made About Neurology Group

- “Reception staff is often abrupt and irritable (from personal experience and the experience of my patients)”

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Comments Made About Neurology Group

- “Slow down and listen.”

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Step 2

- Provide them with what they want
  - What do they want?
  1. To be heard
  2. To have the problem solved

Offer Options

- There are many times where the customer can not be given what they are asking for – so….
  - Offer options

Let’s Role Play….

- Hi – I am a patient of Dr. Smith’s. He has asked me to call and make an appointment to be seen for headaches. I was hoping to be seen today as I am very miserable….
  - Are you able to accommodate her today?
  - How do you respond if you can not accommodate her needs?

Here is a Good Approach

- Let’s assume you have no appointments today
  - Mrs. Smith…it sounds as if your headaches are really bothering you….. Let’s see what we can do to get you seen as soon as possible.
  - Dr. ______ will be happy to see you tomorrow at 9:00am. Will that work for your schedule?

What Did I Do?

- Validated that I heard her!
- Told her the positive response first – not what I don’t have
- By telling her the negative first – such as I don’t have any appointments, I have immediately put her on the defensive

Step 3

- Walk in the patient’s shoes
  - What do I mean by this?
**Large Office Survey**

- Patients were surveyed regarding the service offered at a large practice
- Survey showed that the service was perceived as good
- New practice opened 5 miles down the road and 1/3 of the patients transferred out
- When asked why?...their service was excellent

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**Create a Customer Friendly Attitude by Remembering…**

**The Customer is Your Job!**

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**Unfortunately…**

- The ringing phone
- The patient checking in
- The individual who wants an appointment…

- Becomes perceived as a disruption to your job…
  
  But these ARE your job!!!

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**In Turn, Customers Perceive**

- That they are an interruption to your job
- Makes them feel unimportant
- Makes them feel like the office (as a whole) has no regard for their needs

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**Frequently Heard Comment:**

**Creating a Relationship with a Customer Takes Too Much Time!**

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**It Takes More Time…**

- To solve a problem with an adversary than it does with a friend or colleague
- 98% of customer interactions were faster and more efficient when the individual took the time to establish a relationship and a rapport with the customer

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It Pays to Please

- People spend 10% more for the same product with better services
- People who receive good service tell 9 – 12 people
- People who receive poor service tell 20 people
- If service is poor – 91% chance that customers won’t return for care

Customers Carry Around a Report Card in Their Head

- Evaluating you on:
  - Friendliness
  - Most important need
  - Understanding and empathy
    - Customer needs to feel that you are responsive and empathetic
  - Fairness
    - Need to be treated fairly is very high on the customer priority list

Customers Carry Around a Report Card in Their Head

- Evaluating you on:
  - Control
    - Customer needs to feel that they have an impact on the way things turn out
  - Options and alternatives
    - Need to be given options
  - Information
    - Need to be informed about office, directions, appointment time etc.

Challenging Customer

What Techniques Do You Use to Deal with the Challenging Customer?

- List them

Give Me An Example of A Challenging Customer Encounter
Challenging Patient

1. Let the customer say what needs to be said
   - When a customer is upset – he wants to express his feelings and wants the problem resolved
   - Don’t say a word – let him tell you what is going on
   - Just nod to show you are listening or if it is over the phone – say okay or yes
   - Don’t take it personally
   - Don’t try to placate them by saying
     - Calm down, It’s not our policy, We can’t

2. Express empathy
   - I can see why you feel that way
   - I see what you mean
   - That must be very upsetting
   - I hear how frustrating this might be
   - I am really sorry

3. Begin problem solving
   - Gather additional information as they often leave it out when they are angry
   - Double check your facts

4. Mutually agree on a solution
   - Ask if this is acceptable
   - Don’t make promises you can’t keep
   - Under-promise and Over-deliver

5. Follow-up to make sure the situation is being taken care of appropriately

Dealing with The Challenging Patient or Customer

- Use "I" messages
  - I really need your help – can you tell me one more time what happened
  - I want to help you
  - Rather than...
  - You are being rude
  - You are not being helpful

The Customer Who is Yelling

- I really want to help you – I can’t understand you with the yelling. Could you please tell me what’s going on so I can help you with the situation.

Example

- Mr. Thomas calls in wishing to speak with Dr. _____. Dr. _____ is away for the day. Patient really wishes to speak with him.
  - What do you normally say?
  - What can you say now?
Let's Change the Approach

• The following techniques will work with all but 1% of customers
  • What I will do is…
  • What you can do is…

Answer

• What I can do is ask the physician on call today to give you a call back. In the mean time…what you can do is give me the number where he/she can reach you today.

Statements That Drive the Customer Mad

• That's not our policy
• That is not my job
• I am not allowed to do that
• I have no idea

Examples of Poor Customer Service

• Not returning a phone call in a timely manner
• Not doing what you promised

Major Do Nots and Do’s of Customer Service

• “I don’t know.”
  • I’ll find out for you.
• “No”
  • What I can do is….
• That's not my job.
  • This is who can help you.

Major Do Nots

• That's not my fault.
  • Let’s see what we can do about this
• Calm down.
  • I’m sorry
• I’m busy right now.
  • I’ll be with you in just a moment
• You want it when?
  • I’ll try my best
Most Important Part of What You Do!!

- Communicating with people
- Developing relationships
- One cannot happen without the other

Wrapping Up

- Most important take home messages of this session
  - Follow-up on your promises
  - Under-promise and Over-deliver
  - Go the extra mile
  - Offer the customer options
  - Express empathy
  - Treat your customers as the most important part of the job
  - Smile
  - Make the customer feel special

Wendy L. Wright, MS, RN, ARNP, FNP, FAANP
Adult/Family Nurse Practitioner
(Phone) 603-472-7097
(Fax) 603-472-2597
WendyARNP@aol.com
website: www.4healtheducation.com