

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## Who Are Your Customers?

- External Customers
  
- Internal Customers

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

# I Don't Care About My Customers!!!!

Wright, 2011

## Although We Would Never Say Such a Thing!!

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

Wright, 2011

## Exercise

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

Wright, 2011

## List Them

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## Now...Let's Identify

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

Wright, 2011

## Exercise 2

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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?

Wright, 2011

## 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?

Wright, 2011

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

Wright, 2011

## Now Compare...

- The office that you think highly of and compare it with the Department of Motor Vehicles while renewing your license.
- Any difference?

Wright, 2011

## Let's Talk About Some Techniques to Improve Your Service

Wright, 2011

### 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

Wright, 2011

### 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

Wright, 2011

### 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

Wright, 2011

### 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

Wright, 2011

### 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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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.”

Wright, 2011

## Comments Made About Neurology Group

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

Wright, 2011

## Comments Made About Neurology Group

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

Wright, 2011

## Comments Made About Neurology Group

- “Slow down and listen.”

Wright, 2011

## Step 2

- Provide them with what they want
  - What do they want?

1. To be heard
2. To have the problem solved

Wright, 2011

## Offer Options

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

Wright, 2011

## 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?

Wright, 2011

## 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?

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## Step 3

- Walk in the patient's shoes
  - What do I mean by this?

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## Create a Customer Friendly Attitude by Remembering... The Customer is Your Job!

Wright, 2011

## 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!!!

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## Frequently Heard Comment:

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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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.

Wright, 2011

## Challenging Customer

Wright, 2011

## Give Me An Example of A Challenging Customer Encounter

Wright, 2011

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

- List them

Wright, 2011



## 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

Wright, 2011

## Challenging Patient

- 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

Wright, 2011

## Challenging Patient

- 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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## 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.

Wright, 2011

## 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?

Wright, 2011

## 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...

Wright, 2011

## 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.

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## Examples of Poor Customer Service

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

Wright, 2011

## 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.

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

## Most Important Part of What You Do!!

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

Wright, 2011

## 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

Wright, 2011

Wendy L. Wright, MS, RN, ARNP, FNP, FAANP

Adult/Family Nurse Practitioner  
(Phone) 603-472-7097  
(Fax) 603-472-2597  
[WendyARNP@aol.com](mailto:WendyARNP@aol.com)  
website: [www.4healtheducation.com](http://www.4healtheducation.com)

Wright, 2011