

Rate Your Customer Service Program

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As I travel all over the country working with practices in the areas of customer service and marketing, I am often surprised at how few practices have a formal customer service program. Not as surprising, however, is the fact that practices with a customer service training program are usually quite successful.

I have developed a short questionnaire for physicians and practice managers to complete in order to rate their customer service program and identify areas in which they need to improve. Take a few minutes to fill this out and see how your practice rates!

Circle the score that applies to your response:

1. Every practice should have a formal customer service program and each staff member should be trained in this area.

- 3** Yes, our customer service program is part of our training.
- 2** We discuss customer service in our meetings, but do not have a program.
- 1** Our customer service approach is just "try to be nice to patients."
- 0** We do not have an identifiable customer service program.

2. A survey or "mystery shopper" are good ways to gauge how our Customer Service stacks up.

- 3** We survey our patients regularly, or hire a "mystery shopper" to perform an evaluation.
- 2** Our practice has done a survey before, but we haven't conducted one in the last two years.

- 1** We have a comment/complaint box in our lobby.
- 0** Our practice has never conducted a patient satisfaction survey of any type.

3. All practice staff, physicians, and extenders should know how to handle difficult situations.

- 3** Our staff has been formally trained in handling difficult situations.
- 2** We pass all difficult situations on to the office manager.
- 1** We try to ignore difficult situations unless they get out of hand. Then the physicians step in.
- 0** We have no training in the area of handling difficult situations.

4. A referral generation and tracking program is vital to building and maintaining a good, healthy practice.

- 3** We have set up a tracking system and reward our patients at certain threshold levels.
- 2** We try to remember to thank our referral sources, but have no formal system.
- 1** We keep up with professional referrals, but not patient referrals.
- 0** We have no idea which patients are sending us business.

5. The best measure of your customer service skills is the retention rate of your practice.

- 3** Our retention rate is above 85%.
- 2** Our retention rate is around 75%.
- 1** Our retention rate is below 75%.

- 0** We do not know our office retention rate percentage.

SCORING:

- 14-15** Congratulations! Your customer service program is well developed.
- 11-13** Well, you are trying. Your program is probably not hurting you, but you could be using it more to develop your practice.
- 6-10** You are on the fence. You are making a half-effort, but probably are not reaping much benefit.
- 0-5** Don't waste time! Your practice needs help. Begin developing a customer service program ASAP! ■

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