

## Are You Creating Loyal Patients?

I know of a tire shop what when a female customer picks up her car, she'll find a fresh, long-stem rose lying on the dashboard or driver's seat. I bet when she sees it, she says "Wow! I never expected *that*." If you can elicit that same kind of response from your patients, you can build an army of loyal patients who will be more than willing to tell others about your practice. This is the essence of customer service – giving patients a WOW experience.

Among the patients who see you, I bet you can find those who need — or will especially appreciate — a little something extra from you and your staff. Here is an example of two groups of these "key" patients that might be in your practice:

- recently discharged hospital patients (including outpatient-procedure patients)
- patients with a new diagnosis or significant medical problem

Patients in both groups share a similar need: They have questions — lots of them. A recently discharged hospital patient often has difficulty comprehending discharge instructions, and medications. They're unsure under what conditions they should contact the doctor and they may wonder when to make a follow-up appointment.

Despite your best efforts to provide good, thorough patient education, a patient with a new diagnosis — and especially one with a significant problem -- often leaves your office with many unanswered questions and troubling fears. Often they think of something else after they get home, or a caring family member may come up with further questions.

So first understand these key patients' needs and vulnerabilities and then “go the second mile” to meet those needs. Think about how a person feels when their doctor calls them at home to check on their conditions. The patients absolutely cannot believe that their doctor to the time to actually call them at home. Amazed by this touch of personal service, they tell dozens of friends about their "Wow!" experience. With this little extra effort, you can develop a positive reputation which is being promoted by your own patients.

You don't have to spend big bucks to market your practice. You don't have to engage in activities that might make you uncomfortable like giving speech and buying TV, billboard or newspaper advertising. All you need to do is provide a truly needed, first class service to your patients — like answering questions and calming fears. Look at your own practice — your specialty and patient mix — and figure out which patients need something extra from you and your staff. What can you do to impress them with your caring, commitment and service? If you can surprise them with outstanding experiences, they'll tell friends, family, and coworkers to the point where you'll become known as the doctor who makes patients say "Wow!"

Sometimes marketing is that simple my friends. Unfortunately first class patient service is the exception and not the norm today. So take a hard look at your practice and begin to do what is necessary to give your patients that WOW experience.

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