



CUSTOMER SERVICE MUST HAVE SKILLS FOR EVERY STAFF MEMBER

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In today's marketplace what sets a business apart? I believe it is customer service; it's just not out there anymore. Can you recall the last time you had an experience at a restaurant, store or bank that really impressed you? How did you feel afterward? If you can remember, you probably felt great; you had a smile on your face and felt good about that company. The goal of this article is to give a basic list of staff attribute that will leave your patient's feeling good about their experience and your practice.

Set these skills as basic expectations for your staff and review them at staff meetings, pointing out superstars who exemplify them and then meeting one-on-one with those who need additional training and development

Skill 1

TOLERANCE

This has got to be at the top of your abilities...or you must have the ability to fake it. No one on staff should show exasperation or annoyance to a patient. What we might feel later in private is another thing but no patient should ever know if your patience is being tried.

Skill 2

ATTENTIVENESS

What do you see? Take the time to really look at the patient, what do you see that is unique about them? Is it something you can impact, maybe compliment them on? Make sure it's appropriate, individualized, and positive.

Skill 3

ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE

Evaluate what you say and how you say it. Be aware of your tone of voice, enunciate your words, and get to the point clearly and concisely. Talking a lot does not make you a good communicator, be conscious of time and patient tolerance.

Skill 4

KNOWLEDGEABLE

What do you know about your Doctor, the practice, the optical industry on a whole? How about products beyond those you carry in your practice? Are you aware of services and innovation that may be of value or interesting to a patient?

Skill 5

SPEAK IN POSITIVES

When working with patients always focus on what you CAN do! Language is important, avoid negative and focus on abilities. Here is an example:

“You’re frame is backordered for at least a month.”

“I can have the new frame to you by March 23. I do have an alternate color you can use until then.”

Skill 6

ACTING SKILLS

Have each staff member think of themselves as an actor in a play. When they are in any areas of the practice where they may be visible to patient or within earshot, they should never be “out of character”.

Skill 7

TIME MANAGEMENT

Not only do you have to be efficient in your own use of time, you must be aware of the patient’s time. How long are they waiting to see they doctor? Have long does it take to deliver glasses after they are ordered? Set a performance expectation level and then have a plan of action if you don’t hit that target.

Skill 8

READING THE SIGNS

What do the body language signs mean from a patient? Can you tell when your behavior is escalating a problem? Look for changes in facial expressions, tense or rigid postures, pointing, crossed arms, heavy sighs, or exasperated breathing. Be aware of how well you are listening versus talking too much and be prepared to move the patient to a private area to discuss their frustration. Remember a solution is goal number one, making the patient feel better is!

Skill 9

TENACITY

Are you willing to stick with the patient and find solutions? Is expediency you first goal? If so, slow down; set your sight on finding the best solution not the quickest.

Skill 10

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

None of us are perfect, we can all be better at our job. Ask for feedback and input from people you admire and trust, then really listen, try not to be defensive. Now the hard time try to integrate your new knowledge into behavior change...

BONUS SKILL

ABILITY TO HANDLE SURPRISES

Know that no matter how much you prepare there will always be something that comes at you from left field, keep calm, have confidence and know that you are willing to do your best.

The more situations you encounter the better your skills will become. So don’t avoid difficult customer service situation embrace them and learn from them.

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