

The 6 Cardinal Rules of Customer Service



Following these tips will help to retain patients.

BY NANCY FRIEDMAN

The best weapon for a small business against the BIG guys is Customer Service. It's that simple.

We will pay more for better service! So if you're a small or big practice, and if you're looking for ways to improve, read on. Telephone Doctor, an international customer service training company headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, believes in helping small businesses get better at communicating with their customers.

To get off on the right foot with your customers, whether you're a large or small practice, whether your patients come to you via the phone or in person, here are the Telephone Doctor's Six Cardinal Rules of Customer Service. Adapting these easy steps will make your day and, more importantly, make the customer's day a better experience for you and your company.

Cardinal Rule #1:

People Before Paperwork

When someone walks into your office, or calls you while you're working on something, drop everything for that person. Remember, paper can wait, people should not. We've all been abused when we go shopping and have been ignored, and we know how that feels. Let's not abuse our own patients. Remember: People before paperwork.

Cardinal Rule #2:

Rushing Threatens Patients

Sure, you may understand something real quick, but rushing the patient along will only lead to them feeling intimidated, and you won't see them coming back to you. Take it easy. Remember, speed is not success! Trying

to be "done" with a patient as quickly as possible is seen as being rude and uncaring. Take your time with each and every contact.

Cardinal Rule #3:

Medical Jargon

Have you ever gotten a report from a company and not understand it? Some companies have company jargon that makes the CIA wonder what's up. Be very careful not to use your own medical practice jargon on your patients. You and your employees may understand it very well, but the patient may not.

you' and 'You're welcome' are beautiful words. The patient cannot hear them too often. However, if you're telling your patients to "have a nice day," please say it with meaning! I recently had a checkout clerk tell the FLOOR to have a nice day. She wouldn't look at me. Make eye contact when you're saying something nice.

Cardinal Rule #6:

Be Friendly BEFORE You Know

Who It Is

There's a good lesson to be learned here. The Telephone Doctor motto is:

Be very careful not to use your own medical practice jargon on your patients.

And you'll only cause a lot of unnecessary confusion. Spell things out for your patients. Don't abbreviate. Remember, don't use military language on civilians.

Cardinal Rule #4:

Don't Be Too Busy to Be Nice

Hey, everyone's busy! That's what it's all about. Being busy does not give you carte blanche to be rude. Remember, you meet the same people coming down as you do going up. They'll remember you. What's worse than being busy? NOT being busy.

Cardinal Rule #5:

"Uh Huh" Is Not 'Thank You'— "There Ya Go" Is Not 'You're Welcome'

How often do you hear these slang phrases? We need to remember "Thank

Smile BEFORE you know who it is. It will earn you many classic patient service points. Patients need to know you want to work with them, no matter who they are. Remember, sometimes, it's way too late to smile and be friendly after you know who it is.

Any one of these tips will boost your customer service! **PM**



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