

Keeping Your Practice Recession Resistant!

Creating Raving Fans

By Cathy Jameson

When patients don't proceed with treatment you've diagnosed or, worse, when they don't even show up for appointments, they be sending you the message that dentistry isn't worth the investment. You could blame it on the economy and watch your practice dwindle, or you could ask yourself "What can we do to turn this around? What can we do to help our patients truly understand the VALUE of the dentistry we know they need?"

The key is to develop, maintain and enhance your relationships with your patients so they realize that you know them and care about them individually and that they are important to you. Customer service—creating and nurturing Raving Fans. No matter what connotation the words "customer service" have in your mind, this is an art to be mastered if you really want to make your practice recession resistant and keep it in a state of stability.

Raving Fan service, as defined by Dr. Ken Blanchard, is providing service whereby your clients/patients receive all that they expect—and more—with every encounter. Dr. Blanchard says there are "Three D's of Customer Service": decide, discover and deliver.

Decide what you want; who are you? What are you about? Revisit your vision. Does everything you do in your practice epitomize your vision of the ideal practice—whatever that is to you?

As you may have studied in the Jameson Method, your mission must be written in powerful words that emotionally inspire you and your team to action. It's the spine that runs down the back of the practice. Everything else is peripheral to making that mission a reality. Get your team focused and grounded – NOW.

Then you're on to goals—the stepping stones upon which your projects and plans will be built. Follow five specific steps to making each goal—each project GET DONE! (1) WRITE THE GOAL, (2) DESIGN A PLAN OF ACTION (what are you going to do) (3) ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES FOR EACH TASK (4) TIME ACTIVATE EACH STEP OF THE PLAN and (5) EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS.

Doctors, you are the CEO's of your practices. NOW is the time for action. NOW is the time to be a leader. NOW is the time to get things done. You cannot sit back and wallow in negativity. You must get clear on what you need to do to keep your practice stable in tough times and what you need to do to thrive on the other side of this.

The second "D" is to **Discover**. Discover what the patients want. Listen to your patients. Be there to fulfill their desires. Build strong relationships. Listen to what it is that your patients want and be there to provide that care. Continue to diagnose carefully and completely and ask their permission to present the optimum care. Even if – especially if – they don't proceed with everything right now, listen to their concerns. Empathize—be careful with sympathy. If they don't want to proceed with the full case right now, find out if this is the kind of care they would ultimately like to receive and phase the treatment according to their financial wherewithal. Then, stay in touch. Move ahead one step at a time. The key is *listening*.

The third "D" is to **Deliver**. Deliver the dentistry your patients want – and do so with joy and sincere care. Deliver, yes, but deliver plus 1% to create raving fans and forever patients. Treat each patient that walks through the door with a level of respect. Show them that you value their importance as a person. Time and time again, we've seen the body language in a dentist when they are disappointed that the patient is only doing what *must* be done and not the rest of the entire treatment plan. The patient feels that body language disappointment too, and is disgruntled. Be caring and focused on them.

EXERCISE

At an upcoming team meeting, list the things you are doing at the present time to provide great customer service. Then, brainstorm additional things you can do to enhance your customer service and create Raving Fans. Then pick three new ideas that you can implement to take your Raving Fan Service up a notch. Once you have done this—and you have selected your three new projects, break up into groups and follow the goal accomplishment process I outlined above. Then, once you have the plan of action in place—**JUST DO IT!**

When people come through your door, you want them to feel good about themselves. People are seeking places where they can feel good in today's confusing times. When people feel better after being with you, you have epitomized leadership.

According to recent ADA surveys, one of the biggest reasons people leave a dental practice is because of "unfriendly staff". Every team member has the power, opportunity and responsibility to create and enhance a positive

relationship with each patient. Your interaction is going to make a difference for each person you encounter—every day.

In Summary

What are you doing right now that enhances your patient's experience with you? What can you do to be even better creators of Raving Fans? Listen. Validate. Care. Start by knowing where you want to go, in spite of our recession. Then decide, discover and deliver customer service that helps you hold steady regardless of the latest stock reports and consumer surveys. You will take another step toward making your practice recession resistant.



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