



ORTHO2

# Creating Value in Your Orthodontic Practice

by **Carol Eaton**

**A**t the core of value lies customer service. Customer Service is defined as “the provision of service to customers before, during, and after a purchase, customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation,” according to Wikipedia.

In the orthodontic industry, high-standards of customer service is spoken about and most often performed at the initial new patient consultation. However, do we keep those same high standards throughout the orthodontic process from that new patient call to the final retention appointment?

At a recent popular breakfast house on the central coast of California, I came across a saying on the menu stating, “Your experience is our number one priority. You are the most important person in our restaurant.”

Can you imagine an orthodontic office printing those words on their website, all of their written communications, and perhaps decoratively painted on a wall in the reception room, and actually supported by each and every team member throughout the day?

The importance of customer service may vary by product, service, industry, or customer. The perception of success of such interactions will be dependent on employees who can adjust themselves to the personality of the guest, client, or patient/parent.

Customer service plays an important role in an organization’s ability to generate income and revenue; therefore it is a critical part of the overall approach to systematic improvement. It should be part of our yearly training as a reminder and motivation to continue to find

ways to provide customer service to our new and existing patients/parents, including our retention patients. One can never be over-trained in this area.

A customer service experience can change the entire

perception a customer has of the organization; both good and bad. Yelp reviews can be your friend or your enemy. Word of mouth conversations shared about your practice can create new referrals or keep potential patients away.

*Customer Service is not lip service. It’s actual hands-on, day-to-day consistent, above and beyond service extended to your patients and parents.*

*Value includes concepts of worth, concepts of quantity, amount, or entity.*

## Benefits of Creating a Customer Service Protocol

- Provide an exceptional customer service experience
- Increase customer service and customer loyalty
- Retain customers (expand services to other family members, friends, etc.)
- Improve profits
- Create new referral sources

Teaching employees the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to increase customer service and customer loyalty should be a standard training protocol for new employees as well as seasoned employees.

Is a customer service makeover in your future?

Training Tools Required:

### 1. Listening Skills

- Listen to the specific expectations of the patient and parent.

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- Clearly explain the next steps in the orthodontic process and confirm that the patient/parent is on board and satisfied with this decision and requested action.

## 2. Enhance Your First Contacts

- Research has shown that improving first contact resolution is one of the primary drivers of customer satisfaction.
- Evaluate your current new patient phone call protocol as well as the first initial visit to your practice; make a list of what needs to be improved.

## 3. Brand the Interaction of Your Team with Your Patients and Parents

- Make excellent service part of their daily offering, thereby adding value at every interaction.

## 4. Invest in Your Employees/Team Members

- Employees feel valued and motivated when you invest in their growth and training. This can reduce turnover and associated costs

In his popular book "From Good to Great", Jim Collins says, "Good is the enemy of great."; it is imperative that we establish standards in our individual practices that elevate us to a higher level of clinical delivery, customer service, and perceived value. List what you need to do in each of these categories to elevate your standards:

1. **Clinical Delivery and Efficiency:** How does a patient judge this aspect of your practice?

2. **Chairside Customer Service:** What do you currently do that shows signs of incredible customer service in the clinical arena?

3. **Front Office Customer Service:** What do you currently do that shows signs of incredible customer service from your front office/administrative team when interacting with patients and parents?

4. **Perceived Value:** How would a patient or parent measure value in your practice?

"Satisfied customers (patients, parents, and our referral sources) are the most important asset of any business. Our mission is to understand their needs, values, fears, and goals. We must learn to see through their eyes. If we serve customers with creativity, compassion, and competence...the competition may catch on. But they will never catch up," Author unknown. ☺

# About the Author



Carol Eaton is best known for her expertise in training new patient coordinators and streamlining the new patient process for efficiency and effectiveness and orthodontics. She is presenting two classes at the 2014 Users Group Meeting.