



ORTHO2

The Tao of WOW

Creating Exceptional Customer Service

by **Joan Garbo**

The word service has become the new buzz word in many industries, and there is a plethora of books, articles, and seminars on the topic. Many business owners read these books, send employees to trainings, and consequently are able to improve the level of service they give to their customers.

For the most part, however, the business owners end up being copycats, following in the footsteps of the models they learned about in the books and seminars.

My intent in this article is not to give you another model to copy, but rather to take a step back to see where the ideas of service originated and to create your own model that others will want to copy.

The literal translation of Tao (pronounced Dao) means “the way” or “the path”. It implies movement and journey, which is why I chose this word for investigating what true service is about. It is not stagnant, it is not something to do, but rather a continuous journey of discovery and inquiry into what it takes to BE of service, and to adopt a service mind-set.

Service begins with the self-confidence of humility. Author C.S. Lewis said it best about humility, “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” It takes a confident person to put himself second and not be focused on his own needs and desires first.

The experience of service occurs when the patients feel as if they are the most important thing happening at that moment. And frankly, when they come in and sit in your chairs, they should be!

Offering coffee, water, and juice in your reception area, games for kids to play, having WiFi available, smiling, and greeting each patient by name – these are the must dos and are the most basic elements of service.

True service is rooted in empathy – looking at the experience of doing business with you from the patients’ eyes. The must do ideas came from someone seeking to

experience exactly what the patients do while sitting in the reception area, and determining what would make that experience a pleasant one. These ideas catch on quickly and before long, every other practice in your area has the coffee and juice bar, video games, and so on.

This is why I call it the Tao of WOW. It’s a journey to keep on deepening your view of the patient’s experience so that you are the leader in service and not the follower copying others.

We have all been on journeys, and the purpose of the trip determines the experience we have. Many times the purpose is to just get to the destination. Chances are we don’t take much notice of the surroundings as our focus is on time, speed, and landmarks denoting how far along we are and how far we have yet to go.

However, if the purpose of the journey is to have fun or to learn, such as on a hike, or on vacation as a tourist, we are alert and in tune to the environment – the “see-sense-and-feel” of the trip. We take pictures, send postcards, post selfies and notes on Facebook, and want to share the experience with our friends and families. These types of journeys are the ones we remember best.

Applying the above to your practice, you can make the purpose in your practice to be either treat patients and take care of teeth, or have a caring and fun relationship with the patients while you treat and take care of their teeth. The first purpose has an end point, a destination; the second one is on-going, and can continue even after the treatment is done.

I have a dear friend whom I referred to an orthodontist in her town. She is a perfectionist and has high standards and expectations for service. Often, others view her as

Reprinted from

The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2
January 2016 - Volume 34 Issue 1

being demanding and may consider her to be a “Ms. PITA” since she is also very vocal when her expectations aren’t met. Despite some glitches along the way, the doctor and team always treated her with kindness, and a glad to see you attitude. At the end of her treatment, she brought them wine, flowers, and a wonderful thank you note raving about how wonderful her experience was.

Think of the times you’ve been a patient or a customer. What complaints have you had? What experiences made you smile and want to return? What was different in the attitude and attention of the people serving you in the two situations? How can these observations be applied to your practice?

Some of the best wow service ideas come from your own experiences. For instance, having WiFi available is common, but taking the extra step is much more appreciated. For example, someone was in a reception area and needed to recharge his cell phone or iPad. Finding an outlet is easy; but he didn’t have his adapter with him to use. BINGO! The orthodontists found a charging station online with multiple types of adapters attached, and ordered one for his own practice. Now clients can recharge their cell phones and iPads while waiting to be seen or while being treated.

When you set aside your own concerns and keep focused on taking care of others, you can put yourself in their shoes and from that vantage point you will find ways to wow them. Wow moments aren’t necessarily big and flashy. More often people are wowed by the small things: someone remembered a conversation and asked about it again; someone remembered a birthday or anniversary; someone congratulates someone for an

award, or accomplishment, etc. In other words, when someone shows genuine interest in and knowledge about someone else, that person feels acknowledged and important. That’s a moment of wow.

Orthodontics itself is a wow moment when the braces come off and the patient sees a new beautiful smile to be proud of. That moment is an opportunity to really wow the patient. Rosemary Bray, one of the many Wow-Masters disguised as orthodontic consultants, has written “Deband Songs—50 Top Songs to Add Pizzazz to Deband Day”. Other Wow-Masters like LeeAnn Peniche, Carole Eaton, and Debbie Best (to cite but a few) consistently share fabulous ideas that transform a dental appointment into a loving experience to remember and share with others. Whenever you attend one of their lectures, you should definitely steal their ideas and listen to their counsel. More important, though, is to capture the thinking that generated the ideas they share, and not just the ideas themselves. When you start looking through the eyes of the patients, you begin the Tao of WOW. ♡

About the Author



Joan Garbo is a coach, speaker, and consultant specializing in effective communication skills, team building, and leadership skills. She will be presenting a class at the 2016 Users Group Meeting in Las Vegas.