

PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLES
WRITTEN BY YOU
OUR MEMBERS!

MEMBER FEATURES

IT'S NOT OUR FAULT! *but it is our problem* A CLOSER LOOK AT DISNEY'S APPROACH TO CARING FOR *complaints*

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY KRISTI ABRAHAMSEN, MAADOM



MEET THE MEMBER

Kristi Abrahamsen, MAADOM is privileged to serve as the President and a member of the AADOM Bay Area, CA AADOM Chapter. Since 1991, she has worked in multiple capacities throughout both orthodontic and pedodontic specialty practices. In addition to being a Registered Dental Assistant, she currently leads as a dental office manager for Gila C. Dorostkar, DDS Pediatric Dentistry, a multi-location, multi-doctor practice in the San Francisco Bay Area. Kristi is a Disney Institute Alumni and shares her strong passion for outstanding customer service and commitment to excellence with her team.

We can probably all agree that Disney is the master of the ultimate customer service experience. And though it may be hard to believe, even the Magical Kingdom, on occasion, receives complaints. As a graduate from the Disney Institute, I thought I would share some tips on how Disney cast members are trained to care for complaints; or as they call it, “Service Recovery”.

First, it is important to recognize the drive behind Service Recovery. Disney holds to the belief that “it is to pursue the reconciliation of the relationship, not just the resolution of the issue.” In other words, sincerely do what is necessary to salvage a potentially damaged guest relationship. It is important for the complaint to be viewed from a humanizing standpoint and to acknowledge the emotions the customer is feeling, not just the issue itself.

I’m sure we’ve all been in a situation where we have experienced a service failure. Maybe you were served the wrong order at a restaurant, you were overcharged at a department store, or you waited a long time to be seen at your doctor’s office. When a failure

occurs, a customer’s emotions are usually heightened. They may be frustrated or aggravated. The more quickly and effectively you respond to and address the issue, the better the result will be for all parties involved.

Being on the receiving end of an upset patient can be daunting for dental office managers. If possible, bring the patient to a more private area in your practice and offer them a seat. Studies have shown that the action of sitting down sends a message of safety and security to the brain. Get out a pen and paper and explain to your patient that you want to take notes, so you don’t forget anything they want to say. This will convey to your patient that they are important enough for you to write it down, but it also allows you the ability to break eye contact in a courteous way. It is extremely difficult and uncomfortable to look someone in the eye while they are yelling at you; and by writing things down, you will have an opportunity to look away for brief moments.

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...NOT OUR FAULT CONTINUED

Disney has developed a simple acronym that cast members use to successfully proceed through the Service Recovery Process: HEARD

H - HEAR

Most people just want to be heard, understood, and to have someone care about their experience. If you have a service failure, allow your patient the opportunity to tell their story. It is important to not interrupt them. Take notes of the details in case you need the information later. And often, just by listening, this one step alone can resolve a bad situation.

E - EMPATHIZE

Patients want to feel understood. Use phrases like "I understand how you feel." "I wish you did not have that experience". Try and relay to them that you deeply understand how they feel.

A - APOLOGIZE

It needs to be sincere. Saying you are sorry does not mean you are admitting any wrongdoing. You can say "I am really sorry for the misunderstanding and I'm sorry you feel we didn't meet your expectations."

R - RESOLVE

How can you make it better for your patient and how quickly can you achieve that resolution? It is okay to ask, "What can I do to make this right?" It is important to keep three things in mind when offering an acceptable resolution.

- **Achievable:** The resolution must be realistic and a promise you can fulfill. Do not offer anything you can't deliver on, as it would only further damage the relationship.
- **Accessible:** The resolution must be readily obtainable. For example, if it is determined that a professional courtesy is appropriate, make sure that all team members have the ability to do a ledger adjustment—not just the manager.
- **Appropriate:** The resolution must be suitable or fitting. Giving a crown or filling for free devalues your practice and your doctor's worth. You don't have to go overboard to make someone happy. Many patients will already feel better knowing that you actually want to help them, so listen closely and focus on a solution that is tailored to each situation.

D - DIAGNOSE

To prevent the service failure from happening again, it is important to understand why the mistake occurred in the first place. Focus your effort on fixing the process without placing blame on anyone.

By training your team to follow Disney's simple HEARD technique for Service Recovery, the patient relationships in your practice will continue to grow and flourish. And even on days when it feels a little less magical, you and your team will be prepared and ready to handle challenges as they come at you. ■



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