

CUSTOMER SERVICE

that makes a difference

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY ZACHARY SHELLY, EFDA, FAADOM



Every day, we interact with people, whether at our dental practice, when we go out for lunch, or at the grocery store on our way home. No matter where we are or who we see, we experience customer service in one way or another. These experiences shape how we feel about specific businesses and who we recommend them to. It takes only one thing to sway a customer (or in this case, a patient) in either direction.

Here are some ways to help shape your patient customer service experience positively.

ONE OF THE BEST PRACTICES WE CAN GET INTO IS THE HABIT OF SMILING

Our patients want to feel welcome; they want to feel important. A joyful smile that says, "I'm so happy you're here" will set the tone for their visit. Smiles are contagious, and let's face it, going to the dentist is not most people's favorite thing to do. The other part of smiling is that it shows our patients we're happy to be there and that we love our job. First impressions are essential, and if you make a wrong first impression, it's more challenging to come back from it later.

INTENTIONALITY ALSO PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Do everything with purpose and be deliberate about it. Make a point to build relationships with your patients. One thing I love to do is find at least one thing I can

connect with when I meet someone. Being intentional about connecting with your patient will change their experience. It changes from going through the motions of getting the patient what they need to build a lasting relationship with them. The second part of connecting with your patient is remembering that connection point. If you think you're going to forget, write a note somewhere. The easiest way to do this is to put that note on the appointment so you remember to mention something you discussed at the previous visit. Patients will recognize and appreciate that you remembered, making them feel essential and assuring them that you care.

FOLLOW THROUGH AND DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU WILL

It's easy to say you will do something, but doing it is hard. Expectations are set when you tell your patient that you will do something or that something will happen. When that expectation isn't met, the patient begins to lose trust in you and the practice. But when you follow through on what you say, it has the exact opposite effect. Following through is critical to excellent customer service, but you have to do it.

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Like being intentional, having a system or process to keep you accountable is immeasurably important. We aren't perfect, so set yourself up for success, make notes, and create reminders so that you can follow through with what you say you will do.

Think about the last place you visited as a customer. What do you remember most? Do you remember

how the staff acted? Did they greet you with a smile? If they did, how did that make you feel? Make a difference by having a joyful smile, being intentional, and following through with things. Improving these three characteristics will have a massive impact on your practice. ■



MEET THE MEMBER

Zachary Shelley has been in the dental field since 2009. He started his career as a dental technician, doing fixed and removable work. He transitioned to the clinical side in 2020 as the office manager for Satellite Family Dentistry and Beachside Smiles Pediatric Dentistry. He attended the University of Florida for his Expanded Functions in dental assisting and achieved his FAADOM in 2022. Zachary is on track to receive his MAADOM in 2024. On his time off, Zachary enjoys spending time with his three boys and wife, Brittany.