

# Build Your Brand With Better Patient Experiences

26 Oct 2015 Dentistry Today

Today's Dental News



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Patient experience is not always a tangible and describable element of brand building. Every interaction is different, and patients experience your brand in different ways. While for some patients the best experience might have been easy resolution to an urgent issue, for others it might have been a small and subtle acknowledgement of their continued patronage.

There is really only one way of looking at dental brand marketing and reputation building—do you consistently deliver stellar patient experiences? After all, a brand is only as good as its patients.

Everything from the kind of experiences a brand delivers to the kind of value it offers as well as its ability to address customer needs and expectations collectively add to its reputation and goodwill. In today's digital environment, your patients drive your value and reputation.

If you can provide happy experiences, it will reflect in the way your patients interact with your brand. Keeping them happy has to become a top priority if you want to build a loyal patient base while also attracting new patients.

## Customer Experience Stats

Statistics not only reveal the story behind the growing importance of customer experiences, they also shed light on why brands need to make customer experiences a top priority:

- By 2016, 89% of brands expect to mostly compete on customer experience compared to 36% just four years ago.<sup>1</sup>
- 90% of customer service decision makers believe that delivering good service is critical to their company's success, while 63% believe its importance has risen.<sup>2</sup>
- Close to 62% of companies believe mobile customer service can prove to be a competitive brand differentiator.<sup>3</sup>
- 78% of companies agreed that in the coming year they will try to differentiate their brand through customer experience.<sup>4</sup>
- Consumers with positive social-care experiences are 3 times more likely to recommend the brand to others.<sup>5</sup>
- 95% of customers share bad experiences while 87% share good experiences with others.<sup>6</sup>
- 74% of consumers have spent more due to good customer service.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, brands need to step up their customer experience game plan if they want to forge deeper and meaningful relationships with their customers.

## A Collective Responsibility

A one-time patient service mistake can be written off. However, if there are multiple instances of patient dissatisfaction, then you need to look at the situation again and quickly find or address the fault lines before they wreak havoc on your reputation.

Stellar patient experience comes down to priorities, resources, and budgeting. It also depends on how consumed you and your staff are with delivering the best experiences to your patients. Revenue cannot be the only motivation to effective brand building. Keep in mind that most consumer buying experiences are subject to how they are treated.

First, make patient experience a team priority. Everyone in your office needs to be on the same page when it comes to patient experiences. Shared priorities encourage collective responsibility. Ensure everyone on your staff knows and understands the importance of stellar patient experience and the kind of impact it can have on the practice's bottom line.

Second, lead by example. Your voice and language can influence not only how your employees perform but also the kinds of priorities they set when it comes to patient experiences. Treat your patients the way you want your staff to treat them. Involve your staff in brand building strategies. Talk to them about meeting patient expectations and about ways in which you can further improve brand interactions on vital issues such as scheduling and patient complaints. Recognize and reward personal initiatives as a way of encouraging others to do their best with patient experiences.

Third, match responsibilities with the right skill set. Patient interactions happen over a variety of touch points such as over the phone, over social media, or in person. It is vitally important that you have the right person for each job responsibility. For example, on social media you need to have a staffer who has strong communication skills and is conscientious, reliable, and organized, while the staffer who answers your phone needs to have excellent phone etiquette. Each of these jobs comes with its own set of skills, and having the right person for the job can be the difference between a good and bad patient experience.

## **Today's Digital Environment**

Thanks to the digital marketplace, patients today have an ever-increasing array of options when it comes to buying a product or service. Your dental brand is subject to the same kind of scrutiny by potential patients that a restaurant or mobile device undergoes. They will carefully compare, check, and recheck the kind of value your brand stands for and whether or not it meets their needs and expectations.

And if this wasn't challenge enough, most digital patients have an increasingly short attention span. So if you want your patients to come to you, then you need to ensure that all your digital interaction touch points are optimized for encouraging repeat visits and patronage. Here are four things you can do to keep your patients coming back for more.

First, provide fast and easy access. The "back" button can decide the fate of your dental brand. If potential patients are not happy with anything they see or, worse, if they cannot access your online real estate because your sites load slowly, then they will not hesitate to press the back button and go search for more viable options. Regardless of whether your patients use a computer or a mobile device, load times should not exceed a few seconds. You should aim for optimized performance for your patients regardless of the device, location, and network connection they use.

Next, simplify navigation and use site search. One of the most important aspects of driving brand recognition is to ensure easy navigation of your dental website. If visitors have to click multiple times or if your site navigation is complicated, they might quickly lose interest. Organize your menu and tabs to deliver quick access to relevant content and make use of features such as auto-scroll to improve site experience. Site search can help you connect the dots between visitor intent and your content. Effective site search not only improves site usability for the visitor but also means higher conversion rates since visitors can quickly and easily find what they want.

Third, update your contact information and provide multiple contact options. Potential patients should have multiple ways of getting in touch with your brand. Not all your patients use the same method to contact you. While older patients may prefer communicating via phone, younger and tech-savvy patients may prefer social media or mobile apps. If they can't quickly and easily access your contact information through a channel of their choice, it reflects poorly on your brand.

Finally, provide live chat. It's one of the most effective tools for improving online patient experience. When potential patients can interact with your dental brand in real time, it can do wonders for boosting patient experience. Using live chat, your patients can ask for important information and find out about products and services that interest them instantly without having to wait for a phone call or email. You can also use live chat to gain insight into the preferences and expectations of your patients and to find

out if your patients are happy with your brand and what needs to be done to further improve their experiences.

## Conclusion

There is always room for improvement when it comes to delivering stellar patient experiences. You can optimize scheduling and wait time or set into place protocols for addressing patient issues or dissatisfaction to the best of your knowledge and ability, and yet there will always be instances where unintentionally a slip-up happens.

You can't always be perfect. But given those isolated mistakes and unsavory experiences, what really matters is how consistent and honest you are about improving interactions for your patients. If you can show you are committed in your efforts to constantly deliver only the best, your patients will easily be more forgiving and loyal to your brand.

## References

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