



THE POWER OF ENGAGEMENT



Engage with patients to drive meaningful content, improved relationships

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

Engagement is a measure of how involved and enthusiastic employees are for their work and place of employment. Gallup wrote the “book” on how to survey employees’ engagement levels, and their research has been used by thousands of firms worldwide to bolster the collective engagement of their respective staff and associates.

Just as you collect as much information as possible to make an accurate diagnosis, firms that measure their workforce engagement try to derive as many insights as possible about their teams. These metrics can inform “treatment options” for addressing a lagging workforce. Or, more specifically, their findings can be used

to develop strategies that effectively address the two potentially damaging personas of engagement:

- The unengaged, who do not have a psychological attachment to their work/company and are simply putting in the time (not the energy nor the passion)
- The actively disengaged, who can be a malignancy upon an organization and are effectively taking out their personal and professional resentments and animosities in their day-to-day work lives

A departure from the above personas, the truly engaged take ownership of their work and workplace. They are driven to perform at a high level, innovate, and move their workforces forward. They think big and relish doing so.

MORE THAN BENEFICIAL IN THEORY

Engagement has significant implications for workforces of all types and across all industries, including “high-touch” realms, such as health care practices. Gallup researchers have found that employee engagement among “best-practice organizations” stands at 72% versus the “average” engagement rates of 32% and 23% in the US and worldwide.¹ These best-practice groups generally outperform their less-engaged peers in several key areas:

- Business outcomes critical to sustained firmwide success
- Workforce wellbeing
- Favorable retention rates
- Lower missed work days
- Keen productivity

Looking at engagement through the lens of a dermatology practice, you’re likely aware of the importance of establishing and supporting a healthy workplace culture that embodies a high degree of engagement; however, this discussion may be just the impetus to revisit issues associated with workforce culture.

Major red flags may include upticks in areas like absenteeism or other indicators related to “hard numbers” for business outcomes like profitability and patient traffic. Like so many different aspects of your practice’s operations, these matters must be consistently addressed to avoid malignancies from spreading.

THE PATIENT LENS

Another way to view engagement as a provider of dermatology services is through the “patient lens.” So many beneficial insights are just a few clicks away, courtesy of patients. These insights can be leveraged to improve operations as a whole and specific, high-value functions within your practice—notably marketing strategy and content and communications creation.

In the health care space, engaged patients generally have better outcomes from treatment, which drives patient satisfaction. The US Department of Health and Human Services’ Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality guide to patient and family engagement notes how organizations that had established a brand identity around these notions secured a competitive edge and increased their market share.²

Furthermore, the guide notes the links between staff satisfaction with their work and workplace and overall workforce retention; engaged patients and their positive outcomes drive happy staff. It can also be said that engaged workforces help support engaged patients. They genuinely want to see their patients and practices thrive—and it shows. There is a certain energy and passion for following up with patients, partnering with them, being available to answer any questions, and driving discourse and

communications after treatments, for instance.

A MAP TO BETTER PATIENT ENGAGEMENT

As always, if you have not assessed factors that contribute to and define patient engagement in some time, it is essential to start there—with an understanding of what you do well and areas for improvement. You will want to audit touch points, such as:

- Annual number of patient visits
- A mix of patient services
- History of “no-shows” and cancellations

Zeroing in on long-term patients who appear to be “actively engaged” as well as those who are either “not engaged” or “actively disengaged” is particularly beneficial. An inventory of the above indicators of patient engagement can provide some sense of where these patients stand. Both types of patients can help you to glean good insights into strengths to highlight within the day-to-day functions of the practice and marketing strategy, as well as weaknesses to address and resolve.

Identify and target these patients for easy-to-complete surveys and to generally solicit their feedback. Put a system in practice that encourages transparent, prompt, and hassle-free feedback from all patients—not just those with a long history with you and your team.

Be thoughtful in the questions and the information that you solicit. A few ideas for items that are helpful when developing strategies to boost business outcomes and the results from marketing and communications include:

- What are your most and least preferred methods for communicating with us?
- What skin care topics most interest you?
- What topics in skin care treatments would you like to learn more about?
- How do you want to consume information, ie, videos, podcasts, blog posts?

Because everyone is always so busy, enticing respondents with incentives, such as discounts on a product in your online store or a service that might resonate with different types of patients, can be helpful.

For “blanket” efforts to solicit the type of information that aids in both general communications and marketing efforts/content creation, post related information about soliciting such feedback on social media channels. This is an excellent way to promote efforts actively and to potentially integrate them with other initiatives that you may already leverage.

Be sure to show your genuine appreciation whenever possible. Keep your community in the loop about how information may be used to support their continued exceptional care and to empower them with content and information that is truly meaningful to them.

The term “engagement” is about demonstrating to others around us—our talented staff or our most valuable patients—that they matter. ■

AT A GLANCE

- Measuring the engagement of your employees is an important first step when building a welcoming practice.
- Zeroing in on which patients are actively engaged versus not engaged or actively disengaged is particularly beneficial to creating better engagement.
- Use social media platforms to your advantage to connect with your community of patients.

1. Indicators: Employee Engagement. Gallup. Accessed June 20, 2024. <https://www.gallup.com/394373/indicator-employee-engagement.aspx>.

2. How Patient and Family Engagement Benefits Your Hospital. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Accessed June 20, 2024. https://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/professionals/systems/hospital/engaging-families/howtogetstarted/How_PFE_Benefits_Hosp_508.pdf

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