

# MANY HAPPY RETURNS

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

Customer service excellence is no longer a guessing game. Customers are very clear in what they expect. As a digital brand, the onus of delivering singular patient experiences that will make patients come back for more lies with you.

Here are nine strategies to get you off to a grand brand-building start in 2017.

## 1. Maintain a Patient-Support Email Address

Social media is the New Hunting Ground as it is the place where patients ask questions, discuss brands, offer advice, provide recommendations, and complain if they are dissatisfied. You can respond to some of the social talk, but it's not feasible to do so 24/7. Instead, maintain a dedicated patient-support email address or provide a link back to your patient-support ticketing system.

## 2. Use Live Chat to Build Engagement

Your patients want fast and quick answers to queries. A live chat service even if it is only during peak hours each day will make it easy for patients to collect information and make informed decisions. A live chat is also a great way to create an emotional connection with patients.

## 3. Create a FAQ Page

Many patients turn to competitors simply because they are unable to find answers to routine queries. A painless way of ensuring you don't lose patients this way is to create a robust FAQ (frequently asked questions) page on your website. Provide information on services, prices, refunds (if you offer one), contact details, and any other commonly asked questions.

## 4. Speed Up Response Time

If your patients have to wait 24 to 48 hours before hearing back from you, they will turn to your competitor. Work with your staff and patient service reps to create a quick return policy.

## 5. Integrate Customer Service Into Your Mobile App

Use mobile apps to create a faster channel of communication and for improving patient experiences. Apps can be used to provide product and service information, facilitate transactions, and manage consultation bookings among other actions. And if you have a substantial millennial base, a self-service option such as a mobile app can be a great way to enhance patient experience.

## 6. Provide Text Support

SMS (Short Message Service) aka "text messaging" makes communication quicker and easier. If your audience base skews younger, they would prefer SMS to talking to a rep anytime.

## 7. Safeguard Privacy

Consider the security of personal and sensitive information of your patients as sacrosanct. Asking for any personal or health information can easily jeopardize trust in your brand. If you are using patient portals on your site, stick to questions that are absolutely necessary, and ensure all safety protocols are met and followed.

## 8. Drop Heavy Duty Medical Jargon

Speak English, not medicalese. Instruct your staff and patient service reps to respond in clear and easy to understand language. Break up big chunks of information into smaller parts and make sure patients understand what you are telling them.

## 9. Administer Patient Satisfaction Surveys

Surveys are a great tool to understand the pulse of your patient base. Position your surveys at all important touch points online and offline. Use the feedback to improve areas that are lacking and to do more of what patients like. Remember, it takes a lot more by way of money, time, and effort to acquire a new patient than to retain an existing one.

Following these nine strategies will dramatically improve your patients experience, and further ingratiate them with your brand. ■



Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete Internet marketing company which focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education and the online reputations of Dermatologists and Plastic Surgeons. With a team of 140+ full time marketers, [www.ekwa.com](http://www.ekwa.com) helps doctors who know where they want to go get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call 855-598-3320 to speak one-on-one with Naren.