

# THE KEY TO ENHANCING YOUR PRACTICE'S RATINGS, REVIEWS, AND REFERRALS



It all starts with fostering a practice environment that will wow your patients.

BY LAURA LIVESEY AND ROD SOLAR

In a previous article, we discussed the Ritz-Carlton credo for customer service and how to engage your employees so that your practice can offer similarly excellent customer service and attain a high level of



customer loyalty (scan the QR code to read the article). Engaged employees are more likely to offer top-tier customer service.

Over the past 20 years, we've had the privilege of visiting hundreds of eye clinics, and we've observed many receptionists at work in those clinics—some of whom we've personally recruited, trained, and managed. The experience has taught us that the key to getting more and better ratings, reviews, and referrals is to offer excellent customer service that optimizes the patient experience.

## RECEPTION

Top-tier service starts with the receptionist. When I (L.L.) think of the best receptionist I've ever worked with, I think of Carey from my early experiences managing London Vision Clinic, owned by Dan Z. Reinstein, MD, MA(Cantab), FRCSC, DABO, FRCOphth, FEBO. Carey was a superstar, and if I ever looked for a receptionist again, I would use Carey as my model.

Carey built strong relationships and created patients for life for London Vision Clinic—patients who returned

for their annual check-up 10 years after their initial visit would still ask about Carey, who had moved on by then. She was always responsive to patients' expressed and unexpressed wishes and needs. She was empowered to create unique, memorable, and personal experiences for patients, and she continuously sought opportunities to improve the patient experience. Carey both owned and immediately resolved problems that arose. She helped to create an environment of teamwork and lateral service so that patients' and coworkers' needs were met.

Carey had the opportunity to learn and grow continuously. She was involved in the planning of the work that affected her. She was proud of her professional appearance, language, and behavior. She protected the privacy and security of patients, her fellow employees, and the company's confidential information and assets. She was responsible for ensuring that the facility was meticulously clean and creating a safe and accident-free environment.

Today, London Vision Clinic has one of the best reputations of any independent clinic in the United Kingdom. Its ratings and reviews are excellent, and it receives almost half of its new patients from patient and optometric referrals.

Consider your receptionists, patient liaisons, health care technicians, optometrists, and surgeons. Do they embody the same characteristics as Carey? It's up to your practice's leadership to ensure that they do.

## THE ROLE OF PRACTICE LEADERS

Your team is the most important resource in your service commitment to your patients. By applying principles of trust, honesty, respect, integrity, and commitment, you can nurture and maximize talent to benefit your employees, your patients, and your clinic overall.

It's important to foster a working environment that values diversity, enhances patient quality of life, and fulfills individual aspirations. This can strengthen your brand beyond the capabilities of any marketing campaign.

**Engage.** Encourage your team to engage with guests in any way possible—whether it's before patients arrive, in the office, or postoperatively. Positive and constructive feedback is crucial for the development and growth of your employees and practice.

**Respond to all guest feedback.** Analyze the data from your reviews and surveys and use these data to prioritize investment and promotion decisions. Be consistent in your service and approach to making your brand successful. Cultivate a practice culture that fosters the creation of "a-ha" moments that delight and wow your patients every time they visit.

You may not have a 5-star facility, but you can offer 5-star service.

## REQUEST RATINGS, REVIEWS, AND REFERRALS

It usually takes patients a couple of weeks to adjust to life after cataract or refractive surgery. Request their ratings, reviews, and referrals after this

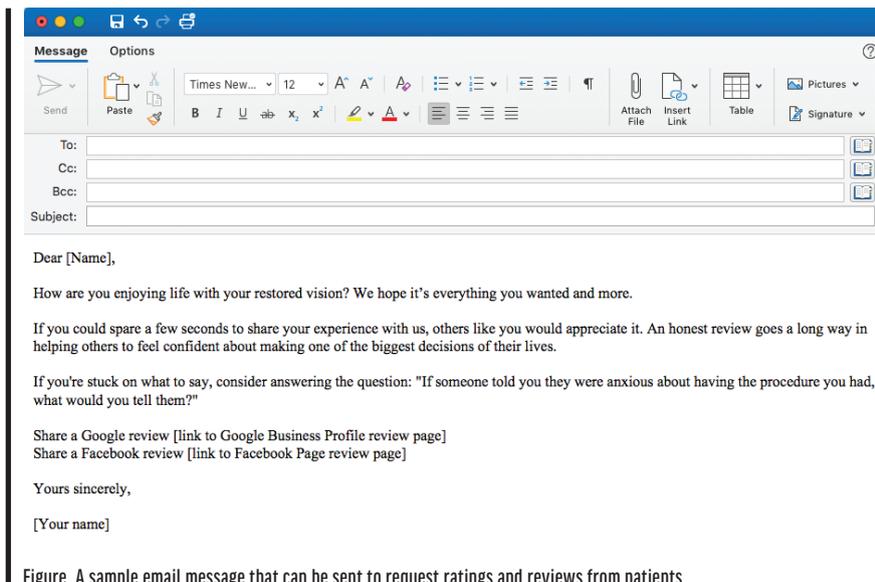


Figure. A sample email message that can be sent to request ratings and reviews from patients.

period, once they can fully enjoy the benefits of treatment.

Do not to wait too long to ask for these things! People tend to adapt to new circumstances quickly. In our experience, excitement

and enthusiasm usually start to fade between 1 and 3 months postoperatively. Depending on the nature of the treatment and recovery, the best time to ask for a referral is usually after the first month.

The patient liaison who has already formed a bond with the patient is often best positioned to ask for the ratings, reviews, and referrals. The receptionist, however, is another excellent person to perform this task. The Figure provides a sample email message that can be sent to request ratings and reviews from patients. ■

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