



Developing Superior Service Strategies

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Besides Customer Service, there are other lab areas that receive calls from different staff members at a client's facility. Additionally, patients converse with lab personnel, such as billing, client services, and phlebotomy. As a sales and marketing person, I have always endeavored to be professional and empathetic when dealing with customers, because my job equates to generating goodwill and value. Hearing any negative circumstances regarding client/patient interactions with lab personnel naturally raises my concern.

Research psychologists have discovered people will complain ten times about a product or service versus seven who say the experience was very good or just OK. This equates to a 30% difference. I have heard anecdotal instances where lab employees have made insensitive and tactless remarks to clients/patients, causing an adverse reaction—triggering deleterious comments to others and affecting the lab's reputation. This is where establishing superior service strategies come into the picture to possibly avoid such damaging situations.

Operating Principle

Some labs implement a department-by-department operative standard that defines what superior service looks like. Each customer-touch unit receives employee input to fashion a "We the people"- type document outlining an understandable and unifying idea of what that sector wants to accomplish to make itself unique in the client's eyes. This service strategy certificate directs the attention within the department to the real priorities of the account. In essence, it says, "This is who we are, what we do, and what we believe in." The statement does not have to be lengthy; in fact, brief bullet points stand as more meaningful.

As an example, let's look at the courier section. An operating principle could be:

1. We handle and transport patient specimens, some of which could be from my own family.
2. We are vigilant to ensure specimen integrity by using the appropriate transport container.
3. We will always be courteous to our customers.
4. We will notify our supervisor of major delays outside a fifteen-minute normal client arrival time.
5. We will dress and groom appropriately.
6. We will immediately inform our supervisor if we notice (a) specimen volume significantly deviates from the usual and/or (b) competitive activity.
7. We are proud and professional employees of XYZ Lab.

Measuring Goals

Sending or handing out satisfaction surveys to office managers is one method to gain client feedback to ensure the lab is meeting first-class service levels. In addition, specific grievances from phone conversations should be catalogued and reviewed for trends.

Client service divisions at some companies conclude in-coming calls by asking a simple question: "Is there anything else I can help you with?" This helps instill an affirmative indication to the caller that says, "This person cares."

Summary

Creating a service strategy for each customer-touch department—and posting it prominently for all workers within that unit to see—provides a foundation that declares who we are, what we do, and what we believe in.

Finally—and coming from a marketing person—it's appropriate for reps to occasionally mention to office administrators and providers the lab's obligation to superior service. Supplementing the conversation, the marketer may want to hand out and review a certain department's operating principles. For existing accounts, should Murphy's Law emerge (and it always does), reminding the client of that department's "constitution"—along with a promise to investigate the issue—becomes a double-edge mollification progression.

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