

Tough Love: Managing your lab customers to improve relationships and outcomes

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**Myth: Exceptional service
requires complete deference to
customer requests**

Where high customer deference makes sense:



And where it doesn't:



Facts:

- Customers' requests often don't represent the best ways to meet their needs
- Customer requests can have unintended consequences
 - High deference to customers requires high flexibility
 - High flexibility entails major tradeoffs in both cost and quality.
- Most customers care more about cost and quality than about getting things “their way”

Common Customer Problems in Laboratories

- Inappropriate test orders
- Requests for customization to fit customer convenience
- Specimen collection and submission errors
- Missing or erroneous information on orders

Goal of this presentation

Describe ways in which clinical laboratories can:

- Create better partnerships with customers
- Make it easier for customers to follow desired behaviors

**But won't customers be
offended if you tell them
what to do?**





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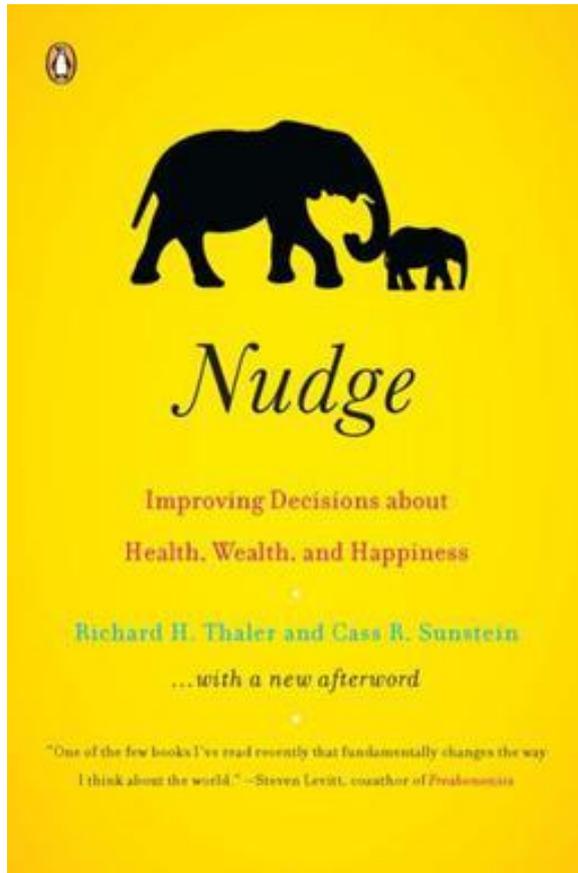
Achieving High Quality in a Service Business

The customer is an active participant; not simply a passive user.

Therefore:

Service quality is dependent on the customer's behavior.

Applied Behavioral Economics



- Human thinking isn't perfect
- Use the imperfection to your advantage

Fast vs Slow Thinking

- Humans spend most of our time in System 1 (fast) thinking mode
 - Intuitive
 - Quick
 - Honed by experience
 - But subject to biases
- Humans only switch to System 2 (deep thinking) when there's a reason to do so
- Source: *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. 2013: Daniel Kahneman

Shortcuts



Mental Shortcuts

- Default Effect
- Bandwagon effect
- Stereotyping
- Reciprocity
- Attribution bias
- Availability heuristic
- Loss aversion
- And on and on...

Default Effect: When given a choice between several options, the tendency to favor the default one.

Default Effect: Retirement Plans

- Workers are 15 times more likely to save for retirement when their employers offer retirement plans
- For workplaces offering retirement plans:
 - If workers have to sign up, 70% will participate
 - If they're signed up automatically, 90% will participate
- Source: AARP

Default Effect: Opiate Prescriptions

- Two emergency departments lowered the default number of pills for opiate prescriptions in their EHR
- Prescriptions for 10 pills (the new default) increased by 22%
- Source: Delgado MK et al. *JGIM* 2018. 33(4):409-411.

Default Effect: Laboratory Ordering

- Standardized order sets
- Limited panels
- Reflex panels
- Removal of tests from menu

Default Effect: Specimen Handling

- Standardized collection kits
- Visual clues
- Standardized handoff and submission processes

Bandwagon Effect: The tendency to do or believe things because many other people do/believe the same.

Bandwagon Effect (Herd Mentality): English Tax Collections

- Simple reminders: “We have not received your return; please file it...”
 - 33% response
- “Social” reminders: “Nine out of ten people with a debt like yours, in your area, pay their tax on time. You are in the minority...”
 - 39% response

Source: www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk

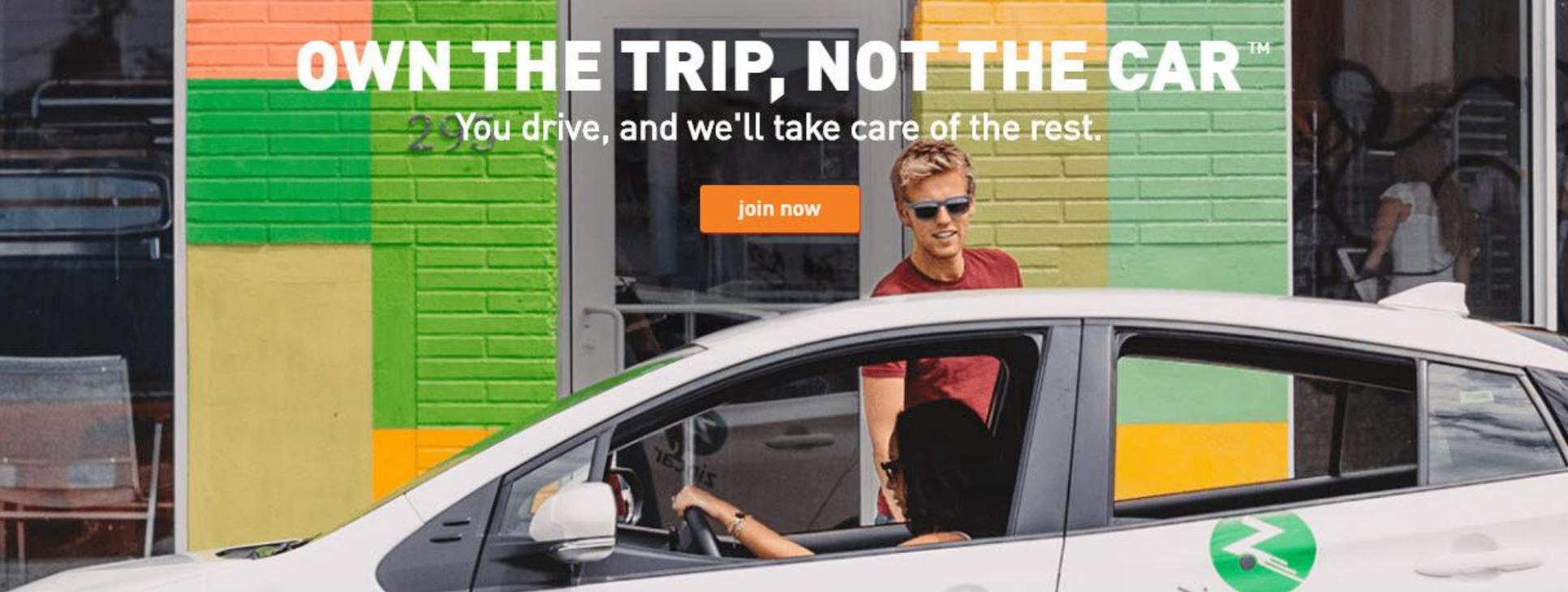
Bandwagon Effect: Blood Product Utilization

- Cardiac surgery transfusion protocol: reduce target Hgb to 8 g/dL
- Both group and individual feedback on protocol adherence
 - 50% reduction in transfusions in patients with Hgb > 8 g/dL
- Source: Beaty CA et al. *Ann Thorac Surg* 2013; 96(6):2168-2174

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Cultural reinforcement

- Culture = common ground, unwritten expectations
- What cultural values do we share in clinical medicine?
 - Patient comes first
 - High performance
 - Evidence-based medicine

Summary

- High service quality requires active management of customers
- Customers value quality more than they value deference
- Nudging is a powerful way to manage customers
 - Default options
 - Bandwagon effect