The 10th Dimension... the power of 10 Dancing with your patient

Part one: patients – or customers?

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should the people who at-
tend our dental practices be considered simply as patients, or are they, like every-
one else who uses any other business, customers as well? The answer to this question is fundamental to your chances of long-term survival as a dentist in practice.

Setting the standards

I am sitting in the lounge of a hotel in South Africa writing this article. It is 6:15am, the time when my mind is clear and there are no disturbances. Then the hotel manager walks in. At 6:15am I hand over and go out for a round of golf. The boss sets the standards, and everyone else delivers – this is why I come back here every year.

Setting aside for the moment the current recession, think of your high-street bank and consider what happens when you go at lunchtime to deposit your weekly takings. Think of the 10 to 20 minutes you stand in line, watching and listening as a cashier sits counting a mountain of coins from someone else’s deposit or phoning head office to deal with a customer’s query or, more likely, complaint. Then think of your feelings when just a few short months ago you picked up your Sunday newspaper and read that the bank had made billions in profit in that quarter. Think about the huge bonuses being earned by banking executives. Then think how you felt when you read that the same bank was pleading for Government bale-out money. Until a few years ago the notion of patient service wasn’t even a twin-
kle in the eye of a medical pro-
fessional. Then it was born but aftercare. It includes dealing with complaints, or better still, pre-emting them. In short, it is the whole story of keeping your patients/customers satisfied. It is now about supreme customer service.

Supreme customer service is essential in attaining market supremacy over your col-
leagues, and is achieved by re-
defining the role of service within your practice using cut-
tting-edge service thinking. It is about attracting, courting and marrying the customer to your business, establishing a mutu-
ally beneficial relationship, and most important, keeping the customer and avoiding a di-

You can manage comfortably with complaints, or better still, pre-empting them. In short, it is the whole story of keeping your patients/customers satisfied.

The answer to this question is: “Think beyond the ex-
cellence of what you do.”

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The customer. And he can fire
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Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart

Patient service

Dentistry has never been noted as a truly service-orien-
tated profession. It, like its medical counterpart, took its lead from central Government. Until a few years ago the notion of pa-
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