

The Power of Quality Service

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A question was brought up during a discussion with aspiring nursing students regarding the meaning of quality care and service. The group was familiar with the concept of quality care, but service? We meet patients' needs and respond to call lights as fast as we can. Isn't the service piece somebody else's job?

Quality outcomes, isn't that the bottom line in our lives? As long as we are making money, winning or providing good care, nothing else really matters, right? The service component usually gets put on the back burner or suffers. We all have been let down at some point in our lives by poor service and still have the memory of the negative impression it left on us.

Ask anybody what quality service feels like and you get similar responses: "they remembered my name," "the environment was clean," "it felt calm," "everything ran smoothly," "the person who helped me was happy to be there," "she was smiling," "they went above and beyond to help me." Exceptional service experiences leave an invaluable impression on individuals — so why isn't everybody doing it?

Out of all the places I have been in my life, the most memorable service experience I have ever had was at a local oil and lube shop in Denver. It was a hot day in July after work on a Thursday. I was stressed out, there was an accident on the road resulting in heavy traffic, and I just wanted to get home. I was long overdue for an oil change and this was the last place I wanted to be. Upon entering the shop, a fresh blast of cool air hit me and I was struck by the clean waiting area. A service tech immediately greeted me: "Thank you for coming in today, how can I help you?" I informed him of my need for an oil change and handed him my keys. Thanking me, he offered me refreshments. Delicious coffee and snack in hand, I picked up my favorite magazine and sat in the cool, clean lobby as I waited for my oil to be changed. And something magical happened — memories of my stressful day dissipated.

A quick 15 minutes later, the service tech took me into the garage and pulled the dipstick out of my car to show me the new oil level, informed me about my vehicle's upcoming maintenance schedule and inquired, "Is there anything else I can help you with?" Excuse me!?! No hassle about being way overdue for an oil change? No attempts to up-sell me products and services I don't need? I paid my bill and was on my way home in less than 30 minutes — a very satisfied customer.

Just as you and I expect an automotive technician to competently change the oil, patients, residents and families expect to receive quality care in health-care settings. The point I try to make to aspiring care providers and leadership personnel is this: While quality care should certainly be a focus in our jobs, there is also a quality of service component that matters to individuals under our care and the people who entrust the care of their loved ones to us. Yes, it takes extra effort, but quality care is just the minimum. Quality service shows people we care.

Whether you work in the health-care or oil and lube business, memorable service experiences include the following:

- 1) Authenticity – Associates who are passionate and care about the product or service they are providing is key. They exude confidence and competence and are able to anticipate consumers' needs.
- 2) Attention to detail – An organization that goes the extra mile to create and maintain an inviting and comforting environment for consumers helps remove barriers and preconceived notions.

3) Promptness – Let’s face it, people are busy and are always on the run. (Yes, even in the mountains.) Respect consumers’ time and respond to their needs in a timely manner.

It doesn’t matter who you are or what industry you work in, you have an opportunity every day to positively impact those you interact with. What sets a business apart from its competition is its ability to consistently deliver quality outcomes with exceptional service. How are you going to leverage the power of exceptional service in your life?