

# Delivering Excellence in Customer Experience

Is this powerful PR or a pointless luxury in times of hardship?

Patient involvement, patient journey, patient experience, patient choice, patient this and patient that. It is not uncommon for the healthcare professional to question the role of the patient in healthcare beyond simply being a patient. Many remember the days when patients turned up, sat patiently, were treated and went politely on their way. So why the enormous cultural shift to 'customer is king' mentality? We'd like to explore the growing importance of delivering a customer-centric service before services lose both patients and patience.

### Customers? What are customers?

We used the term 'customer' because to restrict our service orientation to patients is to ignore the fact that the patient is but one component of the system. Maybe we need to define 'customer' first. A quick Google of the term brings out a clear consensus. A customer is a person who buys goods or services from another person or organisation. At face value you could conclude this doesn't include healthcare but ultimately someone must pay the bill. With more consideration however, this definition is immensely helpful.

Consequently, if customer service is going to be important in the future then considering exactly who or what our customers are seems like a vital first step. Bu why does it matter?



Types of customer	Their role as customer
Patient	Ultimately pays the bill through taxation
PCT/ Commissioner	Administers the bill payment through contracting or payment by results
GP	Refers the patient to various services and is likely to have its own budget when the Government changes
Other Specialty	Some services may well act as services to others

### It's a matter of markets

In the new market economy, money essentially follows the patient. As block contracts rapidly demise, replaced by payment by results, a steady flow of patients represents departmental funding. Let's put it another way, if patients don't come in through the door then neither does the cash. And what affects whether a patient comes in through the door? Well, traditionally it has been the GP and they still wield tremendous influence in this regard. However, patient experience is likely to play an ever greater part in influencing the ultimate choice of locality for elective work. At this point you could be forgiven for thinking that Mrs Jones isn't going to want to travel to the next town, even if she does have choice. We'd have to agree. However, one of the imperatives of World Class Commissioning is to increase the range of options at a local level, wherever feasible. Commissioners will employ the 'Any Willing Provider' approach to making this a reality, seeking to

establish a local market in which Mrs Jones may choose provider A, B or C. Under the Any Willing Provider legislation, the provider carries the risk by setting up a service without the security of a nice cosy contract. However, if you are thinking this sounds too risky for many then just ask how many BUPA or BMI hospitals there already are – all with excellent theatre facilities. Whilst we're considering previously private providers, it is worth remembering that the reasons for private healthcare include timeliness, convenience and service – all adding up to customer experience.

### The crux of the matter

So, we are left with the unequivocal reality that as patients have options and money follows the patient then anything that causes patients to ebb or flow has a financial impact on services. Patient flow will be influenced by the patient themselves, the GP and also the PCT in many circumstances, as well as fellow professionals. Each of these is influenced in their choices by the experience they have of a service. Whereas we couldn't doubt that outcome is a key determinant of experience, the vast majority of 'customers' experience similar outcomes. We must therefore turn to the rest of the journey to look for the opportunity to influence that experience and ultimately affect patient flow. With customers able to express their experiences on Patient Choices, Patient Opinion, Dr Foster and a growing number of other public sites, only the misguided brave ignore customer experience and they may well not live to regret it as funding dries up locally in favour of the shiny new treatment centre that offers a range of benefits beyond the healthcare itself.

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3 approaches, 1 goal – excellence in customer experience

## Open courses

### Leading Customer Experience Excellence

A comprehensive course aimed at those seeking to ensure the delivery of customer-centric services, covering strategic, financial, leadership and operational issues around moving towards better customer experience.

### Core Skills in Customer Service Excellence

Aimed at the team in general and designed to embed a customer-centric approach into everyday service life. It includes the importance, understanding it, what it looks like on the ground, team approaches and more.

Both courses are comprehensive, 1-day programmes designed to deliver a measurable difference from day 1. Full programme details online.

## Bespoke (in-house) solutions

### Customer Experience Excellence (CEE) Programme

For maximum impact and a service specific approach, why not bring us in-house. Our CEE programme is more than just a course and includes:

- Customer-centric audit, to identify shortfalls
- Report into how to improve customer-centric focus
- Tailored, in-house training interventions to lead improvement
- Consultancy support where necessary

## Assessing the experience

### Patient Perception

It's difficult to improve what you don't measure and yet resources are limited. Patient Perception is Medicology's rapidly deployable system for providing continuous patient experience measurement.

Empower your team to see what they are achieving and how it can be improved, without having to wait for a low-relevance, national survey.

Medicology's approach to Customer Experience Excellence is full flexible, depending on service capability and requirements. We'd be delighted to discuss your individual situation. In the first instance, contact Dr Sara Watkin on **01332 821260** or [sara@medicology.co.uk](mailto:sara@medicology.co.uk)

Expanded information can be found at [www.customer-excellence.co.uk](http://www.customer-excellence.co.uk)

*Customer Experience Excellence is part of Medicology's Quality, Governance & Experience Centre of Excellence which focuses specifically in this area providing research, insight and interventions that deliver exceptional results.*