# HOW TO USE YOUR RECEPTION AREA TO EDUCATE, ENGAGE AND INSPIRE PATIENTS

By the time a patient walks in your front door, you've already invested significant time, money and resources to get them there. To optimize this investment, you want to reinforce their decision to choose your practice and help them move forward in their decision to improve hearing health. This means using your practice environment to focus patients on their hearing health and educate and engage them so they are active participants throughout the entire appointment. You want to keep them focused on positive emotional triggers and the benefits of hearing health and use every second they are in the practice intentionally.

> YOUR RECEPTION AREA PROVIDES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE YOUR PATIENTS FEEL APPRECIATED, VALUED AND RESPECTED.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER – A LOT!

Let's start at the beginning of the patient's experience in the practice. They open the door and the first thing they see is your reception area. The reception area is much more than just a place for patients to wait their turn, it is the window to your clinic's soul. You have, on average, only seven seconds to make your first impression. And believe me, first impressions are important. In these moments patients begin to either doubt or trust you and your team. There's a great quote from Maya Angelou that goes, ***"I've learned that people will forget what you've said. I've learned that they'll forget what you did. But they will never forget how you made them feel."*** That's the key. Your reception area provides you the opportunity to make your patients feel appreciated, valued and respected.

So, how do you intentionally create an engaging reception area? First, you want to understand what your patients see. You want to maximize the investments you've made to get your phone to ring and capitalize on those moments in the waiting room. Even if it's for a few minutes, that is precious, powerful time that you have to engage and interact with your patients while they wait.

After you've completed the assessment, prioritize the changes and improvements that need to be made, assign a champion, completion date and resources, including time and money.

## TO DO: CONDUCT A RECEPTION AREA ASSESSMENT

- ☐ WALK OUTSIDE YOUR CLINIC AND WALK THROUGH THE DOOR THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUR PATIENT.
- ☐ ASSESS YOUR CLINIC FROM ALL THE SENSES –INCLUDING SIGHT, SOUND, FEELING AND SMELL. START FROM THE CEILING TO THE FLOOR.
- ☐ LOOK FOR THE "LITTLE THINGS" THAT PATIENTS NOTICE AND COULD IMPACT HOW THEY VIEW YOUR PRACTICE INCLUDING DUST, COBWEBS, CLUTTER, TEMPERATURE, ORGANIZATION AND EVEN OUTDATED MAGAZINES.
- ☐ LOOK FOR THE BIG THINGS, TOO, INCLUDING SEATING ARRANGEMENTS, ACCESSIBILITY, DESIGN AND DÉCOR.
- ☐ MAKE SURE THERE ARE, AT A MINIMUM, 3 RESOURCES EASILY AVAILABLE FOR PATIENTS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HEARING HEALTH SUCH AS MAGAZINES, BROCHURES AND WAITING ROOM "INFO-TAINMENT" PLAYING ON A TELEVISION.
- ☐ AND FINALLY, BE EXCELLENT IN THE WAY THE PATIENT IS GREETED, SEATED AND MADE TO FEEL WELCOME BY YOUR TEAM. EVERY PATIENT CONTACT SHOULD BE INTENTIONAL.

## CREATE CONTENT TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING

Your patients do not come to you to purchase a hearing aid. They come to you because you can help them remain involved, active and connected to other people. They are looking to you to help them understand their hearing problem, understand the solutions available and understand how they can overcome any barriers to purchase, such as cost, timing and fear. This means your team must be ready and able to answer questions and provide relevant information. To do this, consider using the 10-10-4 Strategy. This strategy should be done as a team and is the ideal way to be prepared to help patients along their decision-making process by answering patient concerns and providing answers to "unasked" questions

## TO DO: IMPLEMENT THE 10-10-4 STRATEGY

- ☐ WRITE DOWN THE TOP 10 QUESTIONS PATIENTS ASK ON A REGULAR BASIS AND THE "BEST ANSWERS" TO THOSE QUESTIONS.
- ☐ WRITE DOWN THE TOP 10 QUESTIONS YOUR PATIENTS SHOULD BE ASKING YOU BUT AREN'T, ALONG WITH THE "BEST ANSWERS."
- ☐ CREATE 4 ADDITIONAL KEY CONTENT PIECES THAT WOULD BE MEANINGFUL TO YOUR PATIENTS.

1. CALL TO ACTION: WHAT DO YOU WANT PATIENTS TO DO NEXT IN EVERY DECISION-MAKING POINT ALONG THEIR JOURNEY?
2. PORTAL FOR MORE: MAKE SURE YOUR PATIENTS KNOW YOUR WEB ADDRESS AND PLACE SPECIFIC KEY INFORMATION THAT ANSWERS THE 10 MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED AND 10 SHOULD BE ASKED QUESTIONS.
3. APPRECIATE IN ADVANCE: LET YOUR PATIENTS KNOW —IN ADVANCE — THAT YOU APPRECIATE THEM TAKING THEIR HEARING HEALTH JOURNEY WITH YOU. THIS CAN BE A QUICK IPHONE VIDEO YOU SEND PRIOR TO THEIR APPOINTMENT.
4. ADDED VALUE: MAKE SURE PATIENTS KNOW ALL THE GREAT SERVICES AND ADDED VALUE YOU DELIVER, SUCH AS A BATTERY PROGRAM OR PROMOTIONAL FINANCING WITH A COMPANY LIKE BELTONE FINANCING OPTIONS.ME BY YOUR TEAM. EVERY PATIENT CONTACT SHOULD BE INTENTIONAL.

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## DON'T JUST EDUCATE. INSPIRE!

Reception area "info-tainment" is one of the most effective ways to educate patients about hearing health and your practice. If you have a television but are currently using it solely to entertain by playing the Travel Channel or Food Network, you are missing a great opportunity. Our company contracted Accent House Research to conduct a waiting room impact study. They found 93% of the doctors that participated indicated that their patients asked much more thoughtful questions after viewing digital signage or digital video in the waiting room. Because video/television engages several senses (hearing and vision), it is a great way to not only educate but also inspire patients. When you create your own video, you control the content and can tell your story. You can introduce your team and their passions in life. You can share patient testimonials as social proof that other lives have been improved because of care and the hearing health solutions you and your team provide. Finally, you can ensure patients are exposed to content that will validate their decision to choose you for their hearing health and help them make great hearing health choices. Remember, repetitive messaging will enhance retention and understanding. So make sure the content you created from your 10-10-4 Strategy are included as content on your video "info-tainment," website and displays throughout your practice.

**Michele Ahlman**
CEO & Company Cheerleader
Clear Digital Media, LLC

Michele Ahlman is CEO, of Clear Digital Media, a Chicago-based privately held company that prides itself in providing high-quality, educational content to healthcare providers' waiting rooms. Michele is responsible for leading the development and execution of both long and short-term strategies and strategic partnerships. With vision, passion and commitment this privately held, family-run, women-owned company creatively, stylishly and economically transforms healthcare waiting rooms into powerful patient engagement tools.

As CEO and company cheerleader, Michele's goal is to provide a great waiting room experience that gives patients an opportunity to learn about their health, their clinic and the latest healthcare trends. She believes that being informed is an essential part of an enjoyable life and is dedicated to delivering it in the most ingenious ways.

## RECEPTION AREA ASSESMENT NOTES:

## TOP 10 QUESTIONS PATIENTS ASK ON A REGULAR BASIS:

## TOP 10 QUESTIONS PATIENTS DON'T ASK ON A REGULAR BASIS BUT YOU WISH THEY DID:

## BRAINSTORM SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL CONTENT IDEAS:

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