

HOW DO YOUR PATIENTS RATE YOU?



Five tips to improve your patients' experience.

BY JOSHUA DAVIDSON, OD, FSLs, FAAO

As the health care system continues to become more consumerized, notably in the optometric profession, the importance of creating an excellent patient experience has come to the forefront in many practices. We must create memorable visits and deliver exceptional vision care outcomes if we expect our businesses to grow. Patients who have had a wonderful experience at our practice are much more likely to refer their family and friends

to us; thus, it is imperative that optometrists take steps to ensure that their patients leave happy.

If, despite our best efforts, a patient should have a negative experience, it is equally important—perhaps more important—for the practice to discover that fact and take swift action to remedy the situation.

In this article, I explain how my team and I at Williamson Eye Center have worked tirelessly to create what we deem the best eye care experience possible.



FEATURE 1: EDUCATE YOUR TEAM

When I joined the practice, one of my first actions was to explain to my team just how important patient care and satisfaction are to me. There will always be patients who are nearly impossible to please, but it's our job to make everyone who has entrusted their most important sense to us as comfortable and pleased as possible.

To emphasize the importance of the patient experience, I purchased for each member of my team *Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service*, a book written and developed by the Disney Institute. Each week we went over a chapter together at lunch and discussed the key points and how they relate to our practice and our patients. This was invaluable in establishing a strong patient-focused team.



FEATURE 2: GAUGE YOUR PATIENTS' EXPERIENCE

Patient satisfaction and superior outcomes have always been hallmarks of Williamson Eye Center. I was excited to jump in and see just

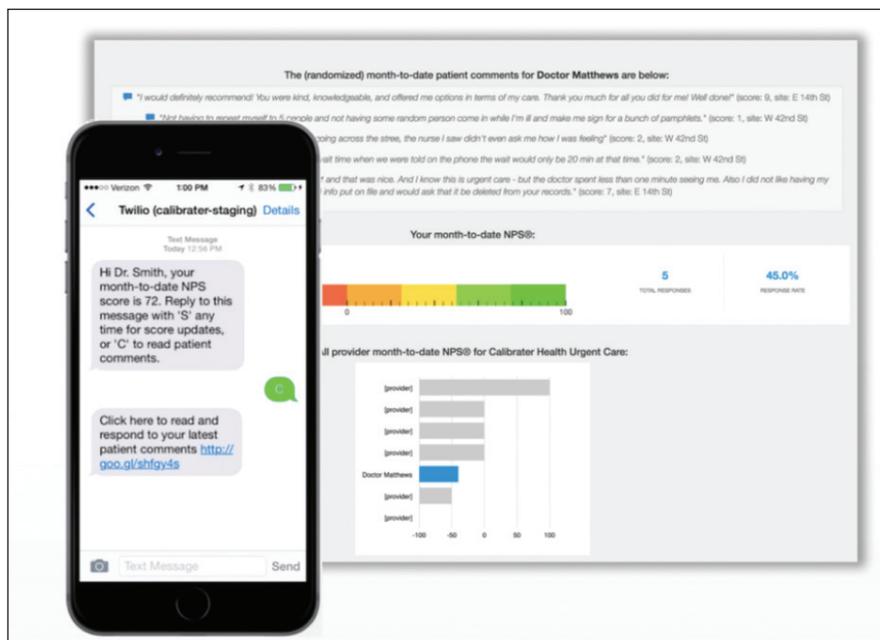


Figure 1. Each provider receives a weekly score based on patient feedback.

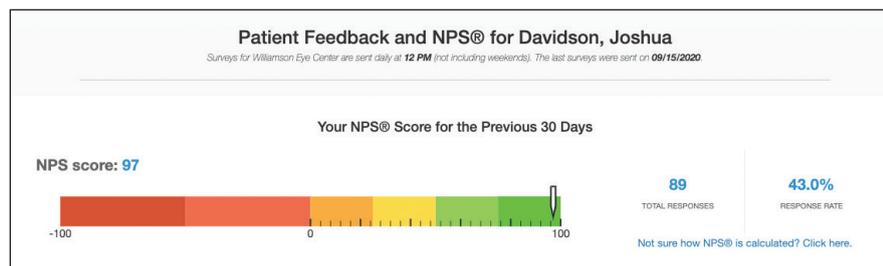


Figure 2. Dr. Davidson's aggregate score for the previous 30 days.

what the secret sauce was. I learned quickly that the first step of improving and maintaining the patient experience is measuring the patient experience. We use Calibrater Health, a service that delivers to our physicians and management team real-time patient surveys and feedback via text messaging. The ease of use on both ends of this system (for both patient and business) makes for a robust feedback management platform.

The Williamson practice wisely chose a text-based platform because of its incredibly high open and response rates. Industry-wide data have shown that text message systems can have open rates as high as 98%.¹ These rates are higher than any other feasible option for us, notably emails, phone calls, or paper

surveys at checkout. Additionally, according to Calibrater's data, millennials are just as likely as 70-year-olds to respond to texts. This method also provides a degree of anonymity that means we often receive feedback that may not have been given otherwise.

Our system lets us tailor our reports based on which of our six offices were visited, what types of visit transpired, and which providers handled the care. Every Thursday morning, each provider is emailed an updated score complete with patient comments and grades (Figure 1). They are also shown how their score compares with those of the practice's other providers. This creates a fun competition among the practice's providers to see whose patients are the happiest.



FEATURE 3: YOU'VE GOT THE DATA, NOW USE IT

I love using the data to see where the peaks and pits are within our practice. I've provided my most recent net promoter score (NPS) for the previous 30 days (Figure 2). Of particular note, it is not uncommon for all of our providers to score 80 or above. When we compare these numbers against the industry standard, it allows us to remain confident that we are providing superior care and patient service.

Based on my patients' comments from last week, I took action on a few fronts. I received a poor score from a patient who was not satisfied during her experience in our new optical shop (Figure 3). This was passed on to our optical manager, who quickly discovered the problem: When that patient was picking out her glasses, we were experiencing an unexpected surge of patients, which resulted in a longer-than-average wait time. A heartfelt apology and promise to address the situation went a long way to making this patient feel heard.

On the other hand, if you look at the comment list in Figure 4, you can see that a patient texted saying that she wasn't noticing any improvement on her initial dry eye regimen after just 2 days and requested a callback about "taking the next step." She was called within hours of her text, assured that immediate relief was not to be expected, and asked to please be patient with the treatment protocol. She told us she was thankful for us "hearing her and listening to her."



FEATURE 4: SPREAD THE WORD VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Any good practice should use all avenues to stay competitive in today's optometric marketplace, and a system such as Calibrater allows us to do just that.

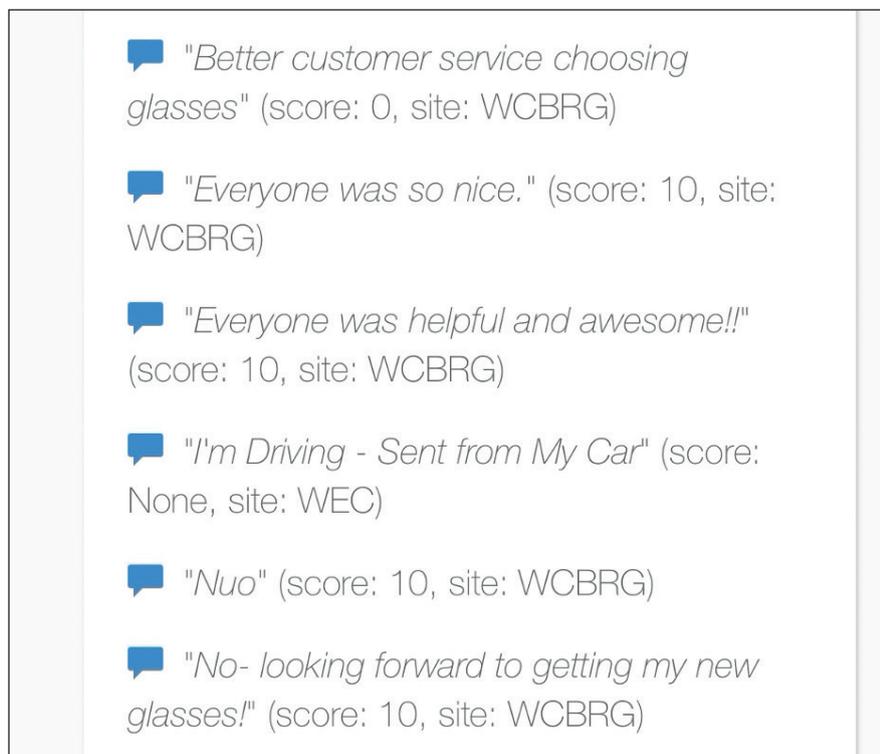


Figure 3. One patient was dissatisfied with an experience in the optical shop.

Instead of personally asking our patients to leave a positive review on social media regarding their experience at our practice, we can automatically send text reminders to our patients asking them to share their experiences online. This results in significantly increased numbers of reviews on social media.

In addition, the comments left via text can be shared as reviews on our personal website and formatted to specifically improve our search rankings on Google. As Google search crawlers are specifically drawn to fresh content, a near constant stream of positive reviews not seen anywhere else on the internet gives us a constant boost in search engine optimization.



FEATURE 5: PRIORITIZE PATIENT SATISFACTION

At Williamson Eye Center, the patient experience is the top priority. Thanks to Calibrater Health's technology, we have been able to take this to a new level. By implementing the system and stressing its importance to our patients, we can see who on our team is delivering a fantastic patient care experience and who may need some help. We measure the patient experience at every interaction and make it a priority that each interaction must be as perfect as possible, borrowing the aforementioned Disney magic.

We have used Calibrater to stress transparency and accountability at all levels of our organization and, as

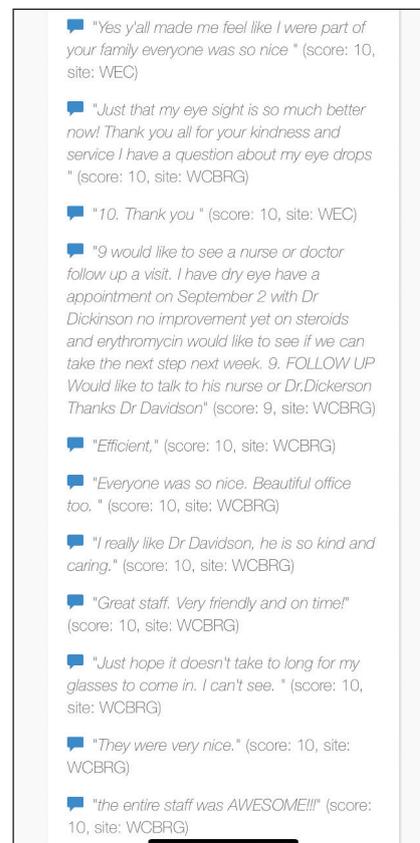


Figure 4. Patient comments, including one asking for dry eye treatment to be taken to the next step.

an added bonus, have used it to help us get noticed online. If your practice is not yet using patient satisfaction software, I encourage you to immediately investigate its feasibility in your institution. ■

1. ROI showdown: SMS marketing vs email marketing. Campaign Monitor Blog. January 18, 2019. campaignmonitor.com/blog/email-marketing/2019/01/roi-showdown-sms-marketing-vs-email-marketing/. Accessed August 28, 2020.

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