

How to Create The Ultimate Dental Patient Satisfaction Survey

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Introduction

As a natural human instinct, people want to feel heard and that their opinion is valued. What better way to show patients you care than to offer a patient satisfaction survey that shows you genuinely want to hear about their thoughts?

Reaching out to patients for feedback – and implementing changes as a result – shows them you care and value their opinion, which leads to loyal patients who are happy to refer you to friends and family. And, in today’s competitive market where dental practices pull out all the stops to bring in new patients patient loyalty is a rare gem.

In this eBook you’ll learn best practices to execute a great patient survey that helps you build relationships and implement feedback to enhance the overall patient experience you provide. As a bonus, you’ll also get pre-written survey questions to give you a jump start on survey creation.



Patient Survey Best Practices

Keep these following best practices in mind to get the most out of your patient surveys.

Elicit Useful Responses

When creating a patient survey, remember the overall goal is to elicit useful responses. While this may sound obvious, all too often dental practices ask questions seemingly for the sake of asking questions.

For example, if you have no intention of ever offering Saturday hours (even if 98% of patients would love it) don't ask if patients want that option. Similar to a porcelain crown, survey tools aren't one-size-fits-all, so make sure to only include questions that will provide useful responses.

Consider the Survey Length

One of the most important things you can do to encourage survey participation is to Keep. It. Short. We can't stress this enough, friends. Lengthy surveys are like a painful meeting that goes on too long; no one wants to participate. Unfortunately, there isn't a magic number of questions to use. It comes down the average time it will take participants to complete and that should be limited to no more than five minutes. To help make

that happen, it's best to ask closed-ended questions (bonus - it's easier to tally responses to yes/no and multiple-choice questions). If you really feel the need, you can always include a free response field for patients who would like to include any other comments.





Provide a Reason for Patients to Complete It

The use of incentives to encourage survey responses can be debated. Using an incentive means participants forgo anonymity. After all, you can't give an incentive if you don't know who to give it to. However, some people naturally avoid conflict and will not give honest feedback unless they know they will be anonymous.

The best approach you can take is having your staff explain to patients that you are committed to ensuring their satisfaction with your dental practice. Let them know you are going to send out a survey after their visit via email and stress how important their feedback is to the patient experience your practice provides.

If after a few weeks or months you are not seeing enough complete surveys, you can try offering an incentive. Either ask people their contact information on the survey or give people the chance to complete the survey in the office so you can hand them the incentive before they leave.

Possible incentives include:

- Small gift card
- Entry into a drawing for a larger prize
- Small gift if the survey is completed while in the office, such as full-size toothpaste, ear buds or special notebook.

Identify Topics You Want to Cover

Next up is determining the topics to include, while keeping in mind the importance of brevity. Every dental practice is different, but dissatisfaction in the areas below are among the top reasons patients leave dental practices, so they're a good place to start.

Scheduling – We all want things, when we want them. Blame it on pushover parents or the Internet, but the fact is we live in an on-demand world. And while we're not providing dental care on-demand yet, if a patient is routinely asked to wait four-to-six weeks to see the doctor they'll likely be looking for a new one.

In addition to appointment lead-time, convenient office hours are another hot scheduling topic that can cause a patient to look for a new dentist. Do you have a waiting list for early morning and evening slots? How about Saturday hours? It might be time to flex your practice schedule, but you don't know what you don't ask. Remember – don't ask patients if they want increased availability if you don't intend to provide it should there be sufficient demand.

Another important satisfaction indicator is in-office wait time. Yes, things happen - emergency visits don't follow schedules and late patients can throw an entire day into a tailspin, but for those patients who arrive on-time, your inability to see them promptly can be interpreted as a lack of caring and general disrespect. While every practice has a few vocal patients who don't hesitate to share when they've been asked to wait, the majority of patients who are unhappy don't tell you – they simply find a new doctor.

Courtesy – When a patient visits your practice do they feel like they're treated professionally and with respect? Before you dismiss the need for this topic, remember that we all have blind spots when it comes to those closest to us. You might be quick to assume your team demonstrates nothing but professionalism and courtesy when interacting with patients, but a nationwide Dental Economics¹ survey found that **80% of patients who left their dentist had registered complaints about rude, uncaring employees who exhibited an over-bearing attitude.** As Maya Angelou said, people may forget what you said and did, but they'll never forget how

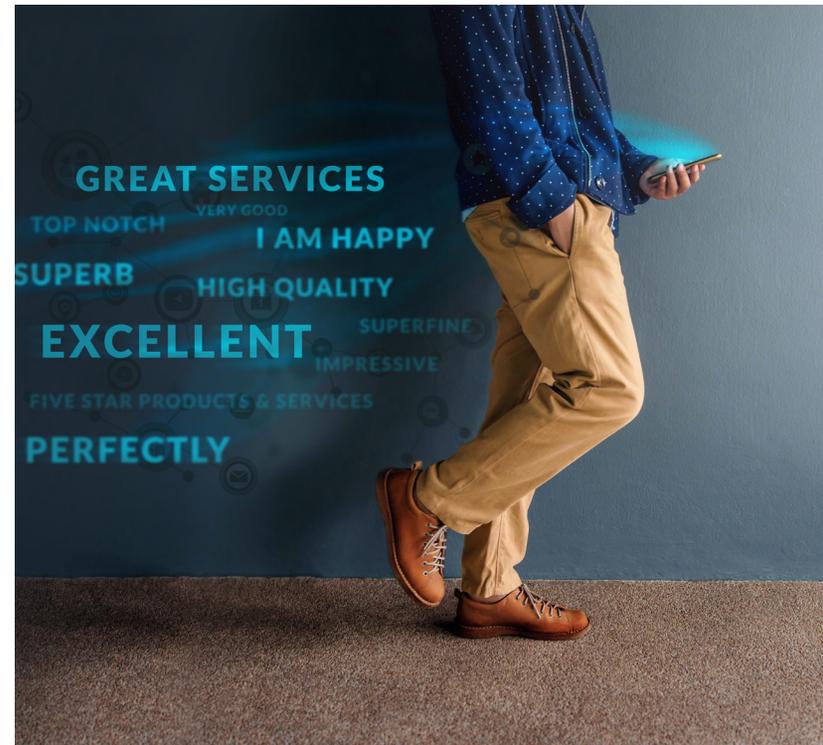
¹ "8 Primary Reasons Why Patients Don't Return - The Wisdom Truth." Dentaltown, www.dentaltown.com/Dentaltown/Blogs.aspx?action=VIEWPOST&b=123&bp=478.

you made them feel... even at the dentist. Ok, we adlibbed that last part, but if a patient feels disrespected or dismissed - especially when it comes to their own care - chances of them returning, let alone referring, are nil.

Services Offered - Asking patients if there are any other services they would like to see you offer can be like opening Pandora's box, but how else will you know? In fact, you might already be losing patients (and leaving money on the table) if you're not effectively communicating your full capabilities. Maybe you offer laser teeth whitening, but since patients can't opt for services they're not aware of they turn to another dental practice that specializes in cosmetic procedures, etc. Including a question around services highlights areas for potential growth and provides insight into how well you're marketing your full breadth of services.

Closing Questions - At the end of the day, you want to know if patients are satisfied with the care you provide and if they would recommend you to friends and family. The answers to these questions are the lifeblood of your practice, so don't mince words. Go ahead and put it out there. The previous

questions provide a backdrop and their responses direct where you should make changes, but in the end it's patients' satisfaction and willingness to refer you that determine your success.



Sample Survey Questions

Getting started is always the most difficult step when it comes to any project. Below are a series of example questions you can use in your own patient satisfaction surveys to get started:

Please rate the following regarding your appointment:

1. The ease in which you could schedule your appointment.
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A
2. The friendliness of our staff at your appointment.
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A
3. The availability of getting your ideal date/time.
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A
4. The efficiency of the new patient check-in process.
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A
5. The waiting time in the reception area.
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A
6. The waiting time in the exam room.
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A

Please rate the following during your appointment:

1. The courtesy of the doctor.
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A
2. The courtesy of the team.
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A
3. Did you feel the dentist/staff clearly explained treatment plan and next steps?
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A
4. Did you feel like you understood how to make improvements to your oral health following the visit?
 Excellent Good Fair Not Great Poor N/A

Sample Survey Questions

Getting started is always the most difficult step when it comes to any project. Below are a series of example questions you can use in your own patient satisfaction surveys to get started:

11. Have you been on our practice website?

Yes No

If yes, have you been able to easily find the information you're looking for?

Yes No If "no" can you please elaborate on what we can make easier to find?

12. Did you receive text/email reminders prior to your appointment?

Yes No

13. What is your preferred method of patient reminders?

Text Message Email Phone Call Postcard

14. What is your most important quality in a dentist?

15. How can we better serve you?

16. Would you recommend us to a friend or family member?

Yes No

17. Why?

Executing Your Survey

When it comes time to share the survey with your patients, there are two primary ways to go about doing so:

1. Share a printed paper survey.
2. Ask patients to participate electronically.

Unless there is a particular reason to do a paper survey, we recommend conducting an electronic survey to save time, paper, money, and ensure ease of calculating final results.

If you do opt to use a paper survey, we recommend leaving a stack of printed surveys near your front desk and ask patients to complete them before leaving the office to eliminate the cost of postage of sending and receiving the survey. Ask patients to complete the survey and drop it into an anonymous box in your office. Remember, this also means that you'll also have to assign someone in your practice to manually tabulate the results.

To execute an electronic survey, you can use several online survey tools, such as SurveyMonkey. Using an electronic

platform enables you to send a link to patients after their appointment, inviting them to complete the survey. Online survey tools generally offer integrated analytics which will make monitoring the volume of completed surveys and the results much easier. You can also see how changes you make in your office impact the results of the survey over time.



Tying it All Together

Ensuring happy and loyal clients are a must for any successful business. By delivering thoughtful patient surveys that can truly give you helpful information about how your practice is doing and areas you may be able to improve, you can work toward delivering a flawless patient experience each and every time. Plus, providing patient surveys is a great way to keep pulse on your business and proactively address any potential issues patients are experiencing- before hearing about it via a bad review online.

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ABOUT PRACTICEMOJO

PracticeMojo helps dentists accelerate practice growth and acquire new patients through innovative online marketing solutions.

We take a consultative approach and create tailored marketing strategies that support your practice goals through our comprehensive suite of online marketing solutions.

- **Automated recalls and reminders.** We help you eliminate last-minute cancellations and no-shows while improving patient loyalty through timely and personalized communications. To reach 100% of patients you can remind them via email, text message, phone call, or direct mailer.
- **Dental reviews pro solution.** To help improve your online reputation, we will automatically send a request to patients after their appointment to leave a positive review about your practice.
- **Facebook Pro.** We help you create a strong brand image while actively engaging with patients on Facebook by providing pre-written posts for your practice each week.
- **PracticeMojo insights.** You don't have to guess if your automated communications are working. Your service includes a dashboard so you can easily see the success of your campaigns and overall return on investment. On average, we help dental practices see a 5000% return (\$50 back for every dollar they spend with us)!

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