

Book Review: *The Patient-Centered Payoff*

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Capko J, Bisera C. *The patient-centered payoff: Driving practice growth through image, culture, and patient experience.* Greenbranch Publishing Phoenix, MD. 2014; 12 chapters; index; 238 pages; paperback \$50.00 on Amazon

It doesn't matter if you practice in academia, a hospital based practice, corporate practice or private practice; placing the patient at the very center of what we do is not only what today's patients expect but frequently results in improved practice growth and a heightened reputation. As noted in this text, we all think our practice and reputation is already the best it could be, but is it really? For most of us the reality of how we are perceived does not fit our perception. We often believe we are much, much better in being patient centered than we are in the eyes of the patient.

This book is broken up into key organizational components. These components are image (chapters 1-4), organization culture (chapters 5-8) and the patient experience (chapters 9-12). Capko and Bisera note that you must be able to measure outcomes in productivity and efficiency; profitability and cost control and revenue management. The fourth benchmark that has become important to assess is patient satisfaction. The key factors here are the look and comfort of your office; how respectful and attentive you and your staff are; communication; ease of access and your management of the patient's time during their office visit. They also give several resources so that you can obtain information on how practices of similar size perform. (These are medical practices so there may not be a direct correlation to optometry however.) We know that patient satisfaction is vital



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to the well-being of the patient. If they like you; if they believe that you value them as an individual; patient compliance tends to improve significantly and so does patient outcomes.

This text excels at pointing out problem areas that illustrate a specific point. For instance when it comes to unhappy patients they note how costly they can be to your reputation and practice. Approximately 90% of unhappy patients just leave your practice and never tell you why. This is unfortunate since a great deal of information on how to make your practice better is lost.

Another issue is brand recognition and that many offices seem to have an identity crisis. Your mission statement (You do have a mission statement right?); your logo and your overall branding should be consistent and reflect what you want your office to represent to the world. In another chapter, contributing author Laurie Morgan, notes that how you are perceived on the internet is very important as well. She notes that (and it has been my experience that) when a patient searches for information about a doctor, all they see on the first 3 pages are the health care rating sites. If you search "Dominick Maino" on Google, more often than not those first pages will reflect what I want you to see. You can do this too, but the doctor must feel comfortable with having a great deal of information about them in the digital world.

Organizational Culture

No matter how big or small your office may be it reflects upon your values and culture, your staff values and culture and what you value in others. Starting with chapter 5, "What's Wrong with this Picture", the authors take a serious look at how the culture around and within affects what you do, your perceptions of patients, their needs and expectations, and how you are really perceived by others. It is important for you and your staff to not only know your mission, but to live it. The authors then give several examples of how patient expectations were not met. This included how the phone was answered, to the office decor, to the follow up required for outstanding care.

The Patient Experience

The final few chapters get down to the nitty-gritty of the patient experience. They give 21 recommendations on how to make your practice a much better patient centered experience that will enhance the care you give, your reputation in the community and the fiscal bottom line. These recommendations all seem to have the "Duh!" face palm factor that, unfortunately we should have done without being told that it should be done.

These recommendations include but are not limited to keeping the office and your office staff clean and tidy. It's interesting that a story about an OD who no longer uses a phone in his office was recently featured in an optometry magazine while according to the authors of this text improve phone access and not eliminating

it is important. They also suggested to review your practice logo and brochure, eliminate the patient sign in sheet, revise/develop a new mission statement, ask your patients how you, your staff, and all aspects of what happens in and associated with your office are doing in terms of meeting their needs. The direct patient experience should "Wow them in the Welcome" and always end with asking if there is anything else they need to ask or would like you/your staff to do to improve their patient experience.

Finally, I and the authors of this book, emphasize the importance of claiming your digital space. Your website, blog, Facebook page, Twitter account and other current and/or soon to be developed digital opportunities require constant development, upgrading and vigilance. Learn how to respond to negative reviews on Yelp and other rating sites in a positive manner that reflects well on what you do and how you do it. All digital outreach requires constant surveillance, upkeep and responses. I recently took a course on Social Media and the Arts that noted at least 8 exposures to your message was required before an individual took action. Yes, that was eight!

Overall this is a most readable text that often states the obvious. Even though we know we should be doing much of what they recommend, seldom do we actually do or act accordingly. Read the book. Adopt their recommendations. Make your office, your office staff and yourself more patient centered. The outcomes will be well worth the effort.

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