

What Dentistry Can Learn From a Successful Fashion “Make Over”

BY SHARI TASTAD

I recently had an amazing shopping experience in my hometown of Wenatchee, WA. It was that transitional time of year, between winter and spring. Feeling a bit out of touch with fashion, I casually stepped into a small boutique clothing store on Main Street. Immediately, I heard “Hi Shari!”

Keep in mind, I hadn’t been in this store for at least nine months. I was delighted to see Marsha and her vibrant smile. As I scanned the store, Marsha asked me what I was looking for. To her delight and amusement I said, “I’m looking for an increase in self-esteem.” Her response? “No problem, I can help you with that!”

Remember, this was a casual stop with no real intention to buy... a “just looking” kind of trip. With Marsha’s confidence, expertise, and enthusiasm, however, I eventually walked out of the store with three complete outfits. Delighted with my purchases, I asked myself, “How did this happen?” Or more accurately, “How did Marsha make this happen?”

The only way to find out, I decided, was to take Marsha to lunch and get her to reveal her secrets to success. Her answers are relevant to not only the fashion industry, but to any industry in which customer satisfaction matters. Dental offices are no exception. Here’s what Marsha had to say:



Q: What three things would you tell anyone whose goal is to provide outstanding service?

A: Be honest. Don’t stop until customers feel and see for themselves. Follow up after sales. Make business personal.

Q: What is it that moves you to be involved in selling clothes after 19 years in the business?

A: I genuinely care for each client. I have passion. It’s easy for me to sell what I believe in. If you sell the best, you have to believe in it.

Q: What do you think your clients are looking for?

A: No one has ever walked into my store and said, “Show me something matronly.” Everyone desires increased self-esteem and a more youthful appearance. They all want to look the best they can and to find their best personal features.

Q: What can you help them find beyond that?

A: I can’t “tell” them; I have to show them by putting them in front of a mirror and letting them identify the poor/better/best in clothing for their individual selves.

Q: How do you define success at the end of a day?

A: Of course, we look at total sales and I share that figure with my co-workers. We also ask questions such as:

1. Did I “fluff” the store today?
2. Was I on the phone following up on sales?
3. Was I writing notes to clients?
4. Did I transfer enthusiasm?

If I can answer “yes” to these questions, I know I’ve had a successful day.

Q: What is your personal secret to being successful?

A: I read seven fashion magazines each month.

I make three calls a day, which keep low totals away.

I make it “the customer’s idea.”

I write personal notes.

I dress the part. I have fun with my wardrobe and encourage my clients to do the same.

Q: How do you see dentistry and fine clothing as being related?

A: We must both get the pulse of the customer and integrate that individuality into a sale. Clothing and dentistry both offer ways for us to communicate with other people. We communicate with the appearance of our mouth and teeth just as much as we communicate by what we wear.

Q: You’ve managed this store for 19 years. How do you mentor your peers?

A: As the manager and a co-worker, I see myself as an equal. I have more responsibility, not more power. I ask myself how I would want to be treated, and I treat my co-workers the same way. I pretend I am the customer.

Marsha’s famous quotes:

“I can teach nice people to sell, but I can’t teach people to be nice.”
“People are not afraid to buy, they are afraid to buy a mistake.”
“We can make lots of sales, but we can’t make lots of customers.”
“Customers make the sales, sales don’t make the customers.”

What can YOU learn from Marsha? What a great discussion for a staff meeting! Let the ideas fly! ☺

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