



The Customer Journey

Touchpoint **eleven:** Payment, product presentation and leaving the practice

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Touchpoint eleven: Payment, product presentation and leaving the practice

This is the last the opportunity to ensure every customer/patient leaving the practice does so with a positive, lasting impression. Whether the patient has attended for a sight test only or has purchased spectacles and/or contact lenses, they must be made to feel that they will be welcome again when they return. For the majority of practices that rely on the recommendations of existing patients to gain new ones, this is the final chance to encourage them to tell their friends, family and work colleagues that your practice is the one to visit when they need an Optician. However, opportunities to impress are often neglected at this stage, perhaps due to complacency.

Final paperwork

When the paperwork is finalised and the eye examination is being paid for, when appropriate, always ensure that a copy of the customer's prescription is issued. If the prescription is provided in a practice wallet or brochure, with the practice's contact details and an outline of the products and services available, customers will easily be able to contact the practice in future.

Always ask for a deposit

When a customer has agreed to purchase spectacles or contact lenses, it is advisable to ask for a deposit to be paid before going ahead with the order. This will confirm the true commitment of the customer to this particular pair of spectacles or contact lenses. The deposit must cover the cost of goods, at least. Typically this will be between 30 and 50% of the total price. When a customer has paid a deposit they will be far more likely to return to collect their goods promptly. This will have the added benefit of improving the cash flow for the practice too. In fact, many practices find that when asking for a deposit to be paid, the customer volunteers to pay the full amount.

If a customer seems to be struggling to pay, remind them of all the methods they can use. This may include: cash, cheque, credit card, interest free credit terms or signing up to an eyecare plan.

Delivery times

Always provide the customer with an expected delivery date for their spectacles and/or contact lenses. Do not be tempted to be too optimistic. It is better to err on the side of caution. Remember to: under promise and over deliver. This means that if you expect the goods to be ready for collection in five working days, you should allow seven working days. This will allow time for any unexpected delays and if they are ready for collection any sooner than this, they can be contacted with the good news.

Practice staff must use systems to monitor the progress of outstanding jobs and not be afraid to chase suppliers. They will then be able to keep the customer informed of progress if there are any delays. This is better than waiting for the customer to call in to the practice for their goods, only to find that they are not ready yet.

Departure

After the order has been confirmed, all the paperwork finalised and a deposit has been taken, the assistant should thank the customer by name, for choosing your practice. They must stand up behind the desk as they leave. Better still; take them to the door, before dealing with the next customer, although this may not be practical in every practice. In addition, they should be reminded that if they have any 'questions', regarding eye care or eye wear, they must not hesitate to contact the practice. The word 'problems' must not be used.

Price quotations

For those patients who need new spectacles, but seem reluctant to buy them from your practice, a no obligation price quotation could be offered. This will allow them to compare prices when 'shopping around'. Of course, they should be reminded that they must compare the exact same spectacle frame brand and model, as well as lens type. It will encourage them to compare the complete price of a pair of finished spectacles and not be misled by offers on frames that may distract them from inflated lens prices.

In addition, you may wish to offer a 'price match guarantee'. This means that you will refund the difference, if the customer can provide written

evidence that they could have bought identical spectacles or contact lenses from another practice locally, within a limited time (usually one month) of purchasing them from you. This will provide customers and staff with added confidence in your practice's prices and rarely leads to many claims being made.

Spectacle collection

To enhance the level of service at the point of collection, it is recommended that appointments are made with the Dispenser for people collecting new spectacles. This is especially important for first time varifocal and bifocal wearers.

All customers returning to collect new spectacles should be asked to take a seat, away from the main reception area, so they can try on their new spectacles. Initially, show them their new spectacles and then ask them to put them on, so they can assess the vision and fitting. As they are putting them on, do remind them that they may require some adjustment before they are comfortable. Customers who have had an old frame re-glazed should still be offered the same service.

Also...

- Remind them of the main features and related personalised benefits of the frame and lenses.
- Demonstrate how to clean anti-reflection coated lenses using the correct cloth and solution.
- Remind first time varifocal lens wearers that it may take three or four weeks to get used to this new way of seeing. If they get used to them sooner they will be more impressed with their new spectacles.

Before they leave the practice with their new spectacles do remind them that if they have any questions or feel any adjustments are required, they should not hesitate to contact the practice. Avoid using the word 'problems', otherwise you may invite them!

Remind them of any discounts the practice may offer regarding the purchase of a second pair of spectacles, to the same prescription.

Contact lens collection

Do remind contact lens wearers that you stock the solutions they may require. Also, for first time contact lens wearers, point out your non-prescription sunglasses and let them know that they can wear them over their new contact lenses.

Follow-up calls

To really add value to the service and care offered by your practice, why not telephone patients a couple of weeks after they have collected new spectacles or contact lenses. It may not be practical to telephone everyone. Initially, it will be beneficial just to telephone first time wearers of contact lenses and varifocal spectacles. To avoid surprises, customers should be told that they will be telephoned in a couple of weeks 'to see how they are getting on'. When the call is made they should be asked if they have any questions regarding their new contact lenses/spectacles. Spectacle wearers should be reminded that if they feel their new frame requires any adjustment, which is quite normal in the first few weeks, they can call into the practice.

This system will help to reduce failure and non-tolerance rates, as well as enhance the level of care provided by the practice.

Recommend-a-friend schemes

A formal recommendation and referral scheme could be introduced to encourage existing happy patients to recommend their friends, work colleagues and family. This would build on the fact that the majority of patients claim they recommend you to others already.

This can be achieved in two ways;

1. Word of mouth

When staff are aware that a customer is very pleased with the service and products supplied from the practice, it is an ideal occasion to 'solicit' that positive attitude of goodwill by using such a phrase as:

What to say

'We're very pleased you like your glasses/CLs. If you know anyone at home, work or perhaps friends who need an Optician, please don't hesitate to tell them about us'.

Often in a very short space of time a referred customer will make an appointment or call-in.

If the manager or owner takes the extra time to contact, by letter or telephone, and thank the patient for their recommendation personally, another new customer is likely to be recommended very soon.

This form of informal, friendly and viral marketing is free of charge and works extremely well.

2. **Customer reward schemes**

The referral can be rewarded. For example a £10 credit could be offered towards the next purchase made by the existing patient, for each new patient referred. This has the benefit of keeping the existing patient even more loyal to the practice. To make this type of promotion really successful, it may be advisable to offer a small discount to the new patient, although it is best to try it without, initially. This can be a very cost-effective and measurable way to gain new patients, because money is paid only when a new patient is found. Unlike advertising, which has to be paid for regardless of the response.

Customer Journey materials

'Exit questionnaire' from www.thecustomerjourney.co.uk

Action Plan

The whole practice team should consider ways in which all customers can have their expectations exceeded during the final stages of their visit to the practice, after the sale has been made. This can be extended to include ways to generate more new patients through existing happy ones.

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