

## Seven Service Essentials that Distinguish Leading Medical Groups from “Back of the Pack” Practices

Ever wonder what distinguishes Customer Service superstars from those who wish they were?

Check out the top performers on healthplan "pay for performance" rankings, and you'll find they all have something in common – let's call them "service essentials," that separate the winners from second-tier groups. In fact, why not use this article as a checklist to rate how well your practice is competing for patient loyalty and word-of-mouth referrals?

### 1. Patient satisfaction is a key business strategy.

Leaders are role models for Customer Service; they serve on the Customer Service committee and participate actively in activities that promote patient satisfaction and insider morale, knowing that service contributes directly to practice revenue and profits.

Every member of the team is equally respected and valued for the worth and dignity of their job; management actions and decisions are explained, and progress reports are continuous. Team members understand and identify with the

### 2. Engaged, motivated people are seen as a major asset, and treated accordingly.

mission, and do their part to make it come alive.

3. Providers and staff treat patients as valued customers.

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Everyone knows that Customer Service is as important as delivering excellent medical care, and not an option; patients are loyal because their visit is welcomed, their time is respected, and their concerns are addressed with empathy and professionalism.

### 4. Continuous measurement keeps the focus on service improvement.

Management measures service

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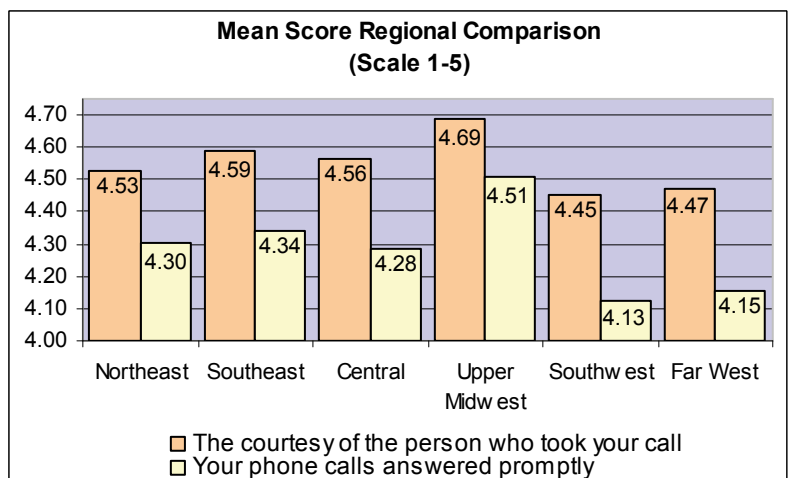
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#### User's Corner:

### Telephone Courtesy and Promptness - A Regional Comparison

The MGMA-Sullivan/Luallin patient survey database says something important about regional differences in scores for “The courtesy of the person who took your call” and “Your phone calls answered promptly.”

The illustration shows each region's score for these survey questions, both of which correlate significantly with overall satisfaction and willingness to refer. While the Upper Midwest region scores highest for both survey questions, patients in the Southwest region are least satisfied with telephone courtesy and promptness.



## One Doctor's Strategy for Setting Patient Expectations



Robert L. Alt, MD, an Internal Medicine physician associated with Dean Health System, Madison (WI) takes an active role in ensuring the satisfaction of his patients. He's created "Satisfactpaks" (patient satisfaction packets) - available in his exam rooms and containing interesting magazine articles that give patients valuable information to help them make informed decisions about their healthcare.

A recent Satisfactpak included special messages from Dr. Alt including the description of the self-

addressed postcards in each of his exam rooms. Says Dr. Alt in the Satisfactpak, "It is my hope that you will comment about the experience you have with the care from me and others here at the East Clinic. If your comment results in a positive change in my practice, and you choose to include your signature, I'll send you a small gift certificate redeemable at the Farm & Fleet."

In addition, the Satisfactpak has an easy to read section labeled "**YOU SHOULD KNOW**" which includes the following information of value to patients:

*1. Usually we have 15 minutes to visit. If I spend more time with*

*you than that, I will have less time for the next patient. I have to be fair to the next patient too. We may need to meet again in the near future if your problems are complicated or numerous.*

*2. I spend time on the weekend before our visit doing computer entry to make our visit more personal and effective.*

*3. Every day I have 4-5 slots held open for "same day appointments" so you can see me soon when you are truly ill.*

*Best wishes for your good health. Stay in touch.*

*Robert L. Alt, MD*

### *In the best practices...*

## Spotlight on Panorama Orthopedics & Spine Center Scribe Model

Panorama Orthopedics & Spine Center, a 24-doctor practice in Golden (CO), uses a unique approach to helping physicians be more efficient and productive. Each provider has two medical assistants who rotate among patients. They room patients and sit in during the entire visit. While the doctor is examining the patient, the MA sits at the computer and enters the patient's data into the electronic record. When the doctor offers to show the patient X-ray results, the MA calls up the film on the computer, and the doctor brings the patient over to the screen. If the diagnosis calls for a prescription, the doctor tells the patient what is being prescribed and the medical assistant enters the prescription request into the computer.

Panorama Orthopedics & Spine Center began the process of having medical assistants enter data in the electronic record as a way to ease the transition for doctors from paper charts to Electronic Medical Records (EMRs). It has proven to be a more efficient way of entering patient data into the electronic record quickly while at the same time allowing doctors to give patients their undivided attention. Plus, since physicians are spending less time hunting and pecking on the keyboard, there's more time for seeing an additional one or two patients, which offsets the need for hiring additional highly trained medical assistants.

## Attention CAPG Members!

You don't have to wait until the annual Pacific Business Group on Health (PBGH) survey to know how your providers are doing!

PBGH has produced an abbreviated version of the Patient Assessment Survey (PAS) so that you can obtain interim progress reports, and SullivanLuallin has received permission from PBGH to administer this abbreviated survey.

We're pleased to announce that we've expanded our Group Purchasing agreement with the California Association of Physician Groups (CAPG) to include interim PAS surveying for CAPG members at a discounted fee.

For more information about this new program, please call Mari Bacon at 619-283-8988.

## Personal Use of Office Equipment

**Q** *We're not a large practice and have limited phone lines and office equipment including computers, copiers and faxes. How do we discourage staff members from using these machines for their personal needs?*

**A** You've probably thought of this already, but be sure to have your personal use of office equipment policy in writing and in your policy manual. During a staff meeting, explain that office equipment is to be used solely in the context of patient care. If you want to underscore your point, you might mention that, while the practice doctors respect their privacy, the owners have the right to inspect and review all material stored on company computers and voice mail. That said, consider that your flexibility in the matter of copiers and fax machines can contribute to employee morale. An occasional after-business-hours personal copy or document fax by productive, valuable staff members could be considered a perk of working for you. As long as employees don't overuse the equipment, cut them a little slack!



### Meet Nicole Curcio

As the Project Manager for our *Keeping the Spotlight on Service™* Mystery Call Program, Nicole brings more than five years' Customer Service experience to the SullivanLuallin team. She also works closely with clients coordinating a variety of customer service engagements.

Nicole earned her degree in Hospitality from Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island, where she was named to the Dean's List and was a member of the Eta Sigma Delta Hospitality Honor Society. Keeping true to her love of travel, this Massachusetts native studied abroad in Greece and completed an internship in Germany.

We're happy that Nicole has settled here in San Diego, and are delighted to welcome her to the SullivanLuallin team!

(Service Essentials — Continued from page 1)

strengths and weaknesses, and implements improvement strategies; each practice site reviews direct and indirect benchmarks to identify specific priorities, and provides progress reports.

### **5. Frequent, effective communication makes service part of the culture.**

Team members are fully informed of management decisions, policies affecting patient and insider satisfaction, and progress toward extraordinary service levels; service superstars are publicly recognized; providers and managers notice and praise employees for outstanding performance.

### **6. Mediocrity is not tolerated; everyone is held accountable.**

Serving with pride and passion is the standard of performance; providers, managers and employees use service protocols and scripts that are proven to produce high levels of patient satisfaction; standards for medical management include Customer Service as well as clinical performance; under-performers receive coaching and are required to demonstrate steady improvement toward performance goals.

### **7. Individual and team contributions are recognized and rewarded.**

All team members share in tangible rewards for excelling at Customer Service; team awards go to sites and departments where providers and employees collaborate to reach service goals.

## Upcoming Events:

Please join us at one of our upcoming conferences:

- **MGMA CSCA Annual Conference (Seattle, WA)**  
*April 19-20 Exhibiting - Booth #20*
- **AAOE Annual Conference (Austin, TX)**  
*May 3-5 Exhibiting - Booth #621*
- **WA/OR MGMA Joint Conference (Portland, OR)**  
*May 17-19 Speaking & Exhibiting - Booth#310*
- **RBMA Radiology Summit (Orlando, FL)**  
*June 7-9 Exhibiting - Booth #514*
- **CAPG Healthcare Conference (San Diego, CA)**  
*June 26 Exhibiting - Booth TBD*

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**SullivanLuallin is the first name in:**

- Patient satisfaction surveys
- Physician and staff member surveys
- Customer service training for staff and supervisors
- Physician/patient communication seminars
- Shadow coaching
- Mystery patient assessments
- Mystery patient calls

