

CREATING AN INDISPENSIBLE IMPRESSION

Tami Hagemeyer, ABOC
tamihagemeyer@gmail.com
TLH Training and Consulting

Science recognizes first impressions as an involuntary physical response made by our brain within seconds of initial introductions, often before conversation, and, surprisingly accurate of an individual's personality.

If first impressions are involuntary, and made without conversation, is it possible to control *how* we are initially perceived?

Yes! We *are* able to control first impressions, but only when we recognize the importance of our physical appearance. There is some control we gain professionally when we "dress to impress." It does not take a new wardrobe to positively influence another, but some planning to control the situation. We must remember whom we represent, and the person or person's we are interacting with. There is science behind clothing choices and how people view us, both socially and professionally. To capitalize on this thought, we remember the goal to appear confident while giving an impression of leadership, and important to remember, if we want to be perceived as a leader, we must *look* like a leader.

Consideration to body language as another huge portion of how we are initially perceived, and is essential to note that while our patients are evaluating us, we have the ability to evaluate our patients, and team members as well.

When we remain alert to facial expressions, we have the ability to understand unspoken sentiments. Facial expressions help reveal emotions regardless of what may be verbally expressed. Many individuals find it difficult to express any true or negative emotions.

Scent is another part of how first impressions are developed. Too much perfume will offend the olfactory senses. Creating an undesirable first impression. A good rule when using perfume is "less is more."

The same can be said for multiple pieces of jewelry, which may be a noisy distraction.

The tone of our voices during the first telephone contact will create a representation of the practice's character. Insuring a positive initial first impression is made with the first words spoken to our patients, and colleagues; it is wise to *think* about how we say hello. Our words alone do not create an impression; tone of our voice plays an essential role.

When we speak with a smile our tone changes, it sounds bright and cheerful. The tone of our voice heard initially is more important than the words we speak

Our patients' want to feel connected to the practice; that the practice character and values are similar to their own. There are three vital questions to consider when the first contact is received:

1. Did the provider sounded genuinely pleased to speak to the caller?
2. Did the prospective patient have to repeat any pertinent information?
3. Were the caller's questions been answered?

Writing information or questions asked on a note pad kept by the telephone will avoid making our patients repeat any information initially given; conveying their needs, or

questions have been heard. It will permit our new patient to feel confident that his or her optical needs are in capable hands, which is an important first step towards a long professional relationship.

Should it be necessary to place our patient's call on hold, always ask permission first. Then when returning to the call, thank them for holding, and reference the reason for their call (try never to ask the patient to repeat information).

During the initial conversation, get as much information as possible. When we acquire their history, i.e. name address etc. before scheduling their appointment, feels that they have already invested a certain amount of time with us, making it is likely that they will continue scheduling their appointment, as opposed to not continuing with the call, should the requested appointment not be available on a specific requested day or time.

When patients arrive at our practice, they should expect to be greeted by every staff member that is visible to them. The first physical face-to-face greeting will dictate the mood of our patient's visit. If a greeting by all staff members is not possible, a simple nod or smile will suffice.

Addressing each patient by name is an additional method to provide our patients with a sense of familiarity.

When entering the frame room, the "hand off" between the prescribing doctor and optician should be comfortable. The doctor will advise of changes in the patients' prescription, and offer a lens suggestion. The interaction between doctor and optician is very important, the best representation of complete trust.

Casual conversation during frame styling should take on a personal tone, as we ask pertinent questions; occupation, hobbies; only valuable communication will enable us to determine the correct lenses and frames for their individual needs.

The conversation helps us to evaluate the need for additional eyewear to improve visual acuity and provide protection while participating in their various hobbies, and extracurricular activities. Discussions regarding hobbies open the door to providing valuable information on UV protection, encouraging second pair options, not necessarily for the monetary sales value, but to provide a second pair for the comfort and safety of our patient.

Continue to become educated about the products you are marketing. Samples of lenses and lens enhancers are an incredibly important tool for promoting for sales; patients appreciate having examples to physically try.

Most patients' have heard advertisements describing tints and lens products. We have an opportunity to explain in detail those products and their benefits. Some may have heard horror stories about complications encountered with a specific lens from a friend or family member. Assisting them to distinguish the facts will be a perfect way to provide valuable information. Recommending the best frame, lenses and lens enhancers, with a full description of why this is the best option to provide the most optimum visual

Allow ample time to review our patient's orders, make sure they have full understanding of the products purchased will avoid any confusion he/she may feel and help alleviate any "buyers remorse." To be specific with expenditures, generate a form that describes line-by-line detail of what each item, include the tax and any discounts, it will allow us to provide our patient's with full disclosure.

When patients' reflect on their experience as positive, they become loyal patients and return for all of their vision care needs. Additionally, a patient's satisfaction will lead to numerous referrals. Boosting practices' growth.

Remember, "You Never Get A Second Chance to Meet Someone For The First Time."