

Preface

Like the first edition, *Achieving Service Excellence: Strategies for Healthcare*, 2nd edition, presents and organizes the available best practices and information related to the provision of a superb total healthcare experience. Current trends, research, and examples are included throughout, offering readers a foundation for understanding the concepts discussed.

The book is designed to help executives and managers implement a customer-focused service strategy in today's customer-driven market. The book may also be used, as we have, as a primary text in both academic and executive education programs, as it covers the theories, methods, and techniques behind multiple aspects of customer service excellence.

Each chapter of this book is anchored on a service principle that has proven to work inside and outside the healthcare industry; see the inside cover for a complete list of these principles. These principles are the key strategies followed by benchmark organizations that use service as a competitive advantage and distinguish themselves from competitors that are merely good.

Book Content

The book is divided into three parts—Service Strategy, Service Staff, and Service Systems. Each component is an important contributor to the ultimate goal of meeting and exceeding the needs, wants, and expectations of internal and external customers.

Strategy (Part I) is the set of plans for fulfilling the organization's mission and vision, engendering its values and culture, and achieving its goals. All service efforts are based on this strategy. Part I comprises chapters 1 through 5 and covers many topics, including the following:

- The current market reality, including more informed and more demanding patients, and the practice of “guestology”
- The three components of the total healthcare experience: service product, service setting, and service delivery system
- The strategic planning process as it relates to the service strategy
- Environmental assessment, alignment audit, and action plans
- Quantitative and qualitative forecasting tools
- Evidence-based design and the healing environment
- The customer-focused culture

Staffing (Part II) represents the human resources activities that yield the personnel who develop, implement, improve, and monitor the strategy. Part II contains chapters 6 through 9 and addresses issues such as the following:

- Job analysis and person–organization fit
- Recruitment, selection, and retention
- Leader and staff development and training
- Employee empowerment, motivation, and rewards
- Co-production of healthcare services

Systems (Part III) refer to the processes, policies, standards, and other practices that support the strategy and the staff. Part III includes chapters 10 through 15 and explores various concepts, including the following:

- Health information systems
- Blueprinting, fishbone analysis, Program Evaluation Review Technique/Critical Path Method (PERT/CPM), and simulations
- Wait times and the psychology of waiting (perception versus reality)
- Measurement and feedback methods
- Recovering from and preventing service failures
- Service excellence model

Finally, all chapters end with Service Strategies—key points to remember from the chapter discussion as well as our recommendations for action. For this edition, sidebars that pertain to a concept have been included in most chapters, and all references have been moved to the back of the book to facilitate easier reading.

Conclusion

Often, the total healthcare experience in many healthcare facilities is less than ideal, causing dissatisfaction of all stakeholders and driving patients to defect to competing providers. Patients and their families no longer just need, want, and expect a positive clinical outcome; they also need, want, and expect great quality and great value from the service experience. These customers are taking advantage of Web-based information and tools to make all kinds of healthcare decisions. They know who does what well and who is falling behind. All other stakeholders, including clinicians and employees, are similarly informed.

This book is a comprehensive guidebook for delivering an excellent total healthcare experience.

Myron D. Fottler, PhD
Robert C. Ford, PhD
Cherrill P. Heaton, PhD