

THE 10 CORE VALUES OF A CONCIERGE PRACTICE



Legitimate practice model or marketing ploy? Are you really a concierge practice?

BY MARIE CZENKO

Are you *REALLY* a concierge practice or do you just market your practice as one?

The term concierge has dramatically evolved from its origins in 16th century France as a “castle slave” to the “keep of the gold keys” at luxury hotels in the early 1980s. The term has further evolved as a noun to define a person and vocational title, and into an adjective to classify a service model. When you visit your local Nordstrom, a concierge is there to help hold bags or offer direction. In addition, personal concierge services are growing to provide a plethora of services from running errands to personal shopping and more.

Today, the word concierge is used to brand medical practices—both cosmetic and general. Unfortunately, sometimes it has become a marketing term for “service” that frequently does not align with all the core values that defines concierge.

To truly be a concierge practice, you must incorporate and embody these 10 core values:

- Integrity: Honest, thoughtful commitment
- Courtesy: Utmost manners and respect
- Information: Personalized to be valuable, relative, and useful
- Direction: A trusted pathway to arrive at the ultimate destination
- Access: Priority access that meets guests frequently changing needs
- Amenity: Perks and privileges
- Communication: Gracious, personal, and timely
- Convenience: Able to meet unique timelines
- Loyalty: To the practice, to the patient
- Goodwill: Going the extra mile when things are not perfect

CORE VALUES

Calling yourself a concierge-based practice—or employing a cosmetic concierge—requires incorporating the entire list of core values noted above. Absence of one or more of these values and a practice is simply embarking on a marketing trend rather than truly defining the practice. Let’s take a closer look at how these values can apply to your practice.

Integrity requires practices believe in their providers and what they offer. Practices must:

- Credential providers, procedures, and products with authority and honest enthusiasm.
- Offer and recommend services and products that you yourself would pay for and that deliver real value and outcomes for your patients.
- Know when to say “no” or advise against something, regardless of the immediate impact on revenue.

Courtesy demonstrates the best level of manners that make patients feel they hold the keys to the castle. Practices must:

- Address patients personally and appropriately, with a high degree of privacy.
- Pay attention to helpful details (i.e., offer to hang a coat, provide hospitality, such as appropriate beverages or healthy snacks, walk a patient out with an umbrella on a rainy day, and escort patients out through a private exit to make a quick escape).
- Ask for permission to call, text, email, touch, or direct the patient.
- Show gratitude, with pleasure and sincerity. “Thank you for choosing...” is both a greeting and closing salutation.

Information when consulting with patients is only one of several points of service. Practices must:

- Ask the right questions (i.e., questions that lead to tailored education and recommendations).
- Provide thorough guidance so patients can confidently make informed and pleasing decisions, with no surprises in treatment, recovery, or pricing.
- Demonstrate a mastery of knowledge on a host of services, locations, and referrals such as recovery facilities, a personal trainer, or a complementary professional (i.e., a cosmetic dentist).
- Find and deliver requested information where a concierge may not have first-hand knowledge.
- Focus on the individual, not the deal of the day.

Direction is not simply navigating patients to a location; it’s providing a host of directions for patients. Practices must:

- Provide clear, concise, step-by-step details, not a “one-and-done route” for an engaged patient.
- Create a personal plan to achieve good outcomes, provide a positive experience, and protect one’s investment.
- Offer on-demand guidance when a patient forgets or is simply unsure.
- Prepare explicit and easy guidelines for post-treatment care for the patient and for caregivers, when necessary.
- Make guidelines available for selecting the right caregiver or hiring one (when necessary).

Access to anything the patient needs is important to a concierge practice. Practices must:

- Have an easy-to-navigate, consumer-friendly online portal available.
- Feature accommodating office hours and easy parking.
- Limit playing phone tag.
- Offer direct access to product fulfillment and refills when an in-office visit is not convenient.
- Promote advocacy that connects patients with a peer who can offer a testimonial and/or candid insight.
- Elicit feedback and testimonials through easy solutions where patients feel safe and “heard.”
- Provide after-hours contact information and in-home visits or care.
- Host timely and appropriate special events and opportunities tailored to individuals (to keep them engaged and loyal to the practice).

Amenity affords small touches that make a big difference. Practices must:

- Provide soft robes, quiet areas and private rooms, and engaging “wait times.” When a patient is numbing, icing, or resting post-op, there must be a sense of serenity, not loneliness.
- Include take-home skincare as part of a treatment plan.
- Provide post-op garments with procedures.
- Offer a private payment area (not a public checkout desk) for a thoughtful, one-on-one transaction.
- Create hospitality and private waiting areas for those accompanying patients in treatment, or direction to local “distractions” while one waits (i.e., dining/cafes, retail stores, museum, and parks). Also, there is a trend to provide a “buzzer” for waiting caregivers ... how horribly impersonal. A concierge makes a call or texts based on caregiver preferences.

Communication is much more than a telephone call, a website, and in-person dialogue. Practices must:

- Ask for, and respect, communication preferences.
- Make appointment reminders and confirmation as easy as possible. For example, take a step beyond the reminder text message and send an Outlook or iCal invite so that it goes directly to an individual’s personal calendar.

- Employ clear and consistent messaging and information across all platforms.
- Use dialogue that is clear of interruptions and is personal and thoughtful.
- Provide immediate access when possible and response in a timely manner when immediate access is not possible.

Convenience requires more than meeting patient timelines. Practices must:

- Offer flexible office hours and scheduling.
- Be able to overcome barriers such as offering valet service where there is limited parking.
- Employ proper planning for appointments that put patients first (based on the individual’s realistic timeline to achieve results).

Loyalty must be sincere, clear, and obvious to everyone. Practices must:

- Make it evident that every member of the team is part of the concierge experience and that the team wholeheartedly embraces a culture of loyalty to the practice and respect for one another.
- Understand that consistent premium service, procedures, and products are what build patient loyalty, not the deal of the day.
- Offer programs that add value and demonstrate support for patient goals on multiple levels.

Goodwill means that when things go wrong, or someone has a bad day (and we all have bad days), concierge core values and spirit nonetheless endures. Practices must:

- Make goodwill an everyday special feeling that cannot be commoditized and makes a difference for every patient, in every encounter.
- Put all the concierge elements together with humility and a commitment to service.
- Understand the only way to honestly demonstrate goodwill is make sure that all key core values of a concierge practice are experienced at each encounter.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

If you want to be able to market yourself as a concierge, it is imperative that you continuously question yourself, your model, and your team to determine if all the core values are being consistently met. ■

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