

MEETING THE INSANE, UNREALISTIC, BEAUTIFUL EXPECTATIONS OF THE UBERIZED CONSUMER

Leverage technology to adapt to the everything-on-demand world where consumer needs are escalating, especially when it comes to getting a response to an online inquiry.

BY TOM SEERY, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, FOUNDER AND CEO OF REALSELF

When you request a ride from Uber, how long are you willing to wait for the car to arrive? Would you wait 20 minutes? 10? Or just five minutes? No matter your waiting tolerance, your expectations have been Uberized. Just a few years ago you would patiently wait for a yellow cab to show up. You were powerless to influence the delivery of the service.

The notion of being disempowered when making a purchase as mundane as a cab ride has become so foreign to us due to the ubiquity of both “at your service” businesses and mobile-based technology. Uber-like services aggregate tremendous consumer purchasing intent based on models that shift much greater control to the person holding both the credit card and a smart phone. In the process of doing this, consumers have developed new, higher expectations of the experiences provided by all businesses, including aesthetic practices.

Consumers want to have everything readily available at their fingertips. According to a survey by The Webby Awards,¹ 90 percent of respondents expect real-time customer service and 89 percent expect to be able to schedule any service whenever they need it. People want instant gratification.

Most medical practices need to play catch up, starting with response time to online inquiries (“leads”). RealSelf data has consistently shown that the typical practice takes 28 hours to respond to an email lead, if at all.

This compares to a widely recognized benchmark across multiple industries that a response to an online lead should

be under five minutes. Sounds crazy right? But again, recall that most inquiries are coming from a mobile phone—the same device used to hail that Uber or to order delivery of food from a local restaurant.

Why five minutes? It drives revenue and profit. The land-

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Respond to online leads within five minutes. A study by InsideSales.com and MIT² found the odds of making contact with a web-generated lead increased 100 times when contacted within five minutes compared to 30 minutes. Add a dedicated cell phone line just for inquiries. It can travel among staff, so someone is always monitoring incoming inquiries.

mark study by InsideSales.com and MIT² found the odds of making contact with a web-generated lead increased 100 times when contacted within five minutes compared to 30 minutes. The odds of qualifying the lead were 21 times higher during the same time period.

An extra 25 minutes may not seem like much, but it has a massive impact. RealSelf surveyed practices at the 2017 American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) meeting and found that only six percent respond to email inquiries within five minutes. Twenty-one percent said they respond within an hour, while 72 percent said they respond within one day. And that may be looking on the bright side. In a RealSelf survey, 68 percent of potential patients said they hadn't received a response within three days, while 24 percent hadn't received a response after a month.

Think about that: Some online shopping orders are now delivered within an hour, but nearly 25 percent of potential patients don't receive an inquiry response within 30 days.

You might be wondering how you can devote the necessary time and effort to your practice and keep up with the rising demand for quicker responses. Technology may be at the root of the problem, but it can also provide the solution.

DON'T OVERLOOK SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

New technology is unveiled every day, but you don't necessarily need the latest and greatest. The key to meeting these demands is using technology to reduce the friction and disconnect between the service your customers expect and what you are actually able to provide. In many cases, a simple email will do just fine.

With that in mind, don't overlook the easy solution. An autoresponder service is a low-cost, simple technology that can take a significant burden off your practice staff. You can use it to make the initial contact and set an expectation for your customers. Then at least they know their inquiry was received and to expect further contact. For a better and more personal response, there is software that will collect and organize inquiries to save your staff time.

One practice that responds within five minutes streamlined the process by getting a dedicated cell phone just for inquiries. It travels among staff, so someone is always monitoring incoming inquiries. It didn't require a major change in staff roles or an entirely new system. Just a simple addition to the current work flow.

KNOW HOW YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT TO BE REACHED AND ADJUST ACCORDINGLY

At RealSelf, we've built an entire team dedicated to receiving inquiries and responding within five minutes. The RealSelf Connect team initiates the immediate contact only

minutes after the inquiry is made, then connects the customer with a doctor.

Through that process, we've learned a lot about following up on inquiries. The typical practice follows up on an inquiry one time, but we've found it actually takes up to 15 follow-ups to make the connection. People are busy and a single return voicemail gets lost and forgotten.

So, do you need a dedicated person on staff relentlessly calling every potential customer? No. Instead, it's important to optimize the way you contact inquiries. Through RealSelf Connect, we've learned customers are 3.5 times more likely to respond via a text message compared to an email. Don't waste your staff's time calling an inquiry a dozen times, when you could just take 20 seconds to send a text.

Simply asking your customers their preference makes your process more efficient. Doing so can be as easy as a small tweak to your current online inquiry form.

MEASURE YOUR RESULTS, REFINE YOUR PROCESS

Whatever you use, it's important to not use technology just for the sake of using it. You have to find what works best for you, your staff, and your customers. Maybe that's a new email system, or a dedicated phone to text customers. Regardless, it needs to produce results.

And those results should be noticeable. The medical practices working with RealSelf Connect saw scheduled consultations increase by three to six times when every inquiry was responded to within five minutes.

There is no one size fits all model. Each practice—and each customer—might do better with a different approach. Focus on reducing the disconnect in expectations, improving the customer experience, and making the process for your staff easier and more efficient.

Doing so can transform your response system from something that actively damages your business to something that takes it to another level. ■

1. <http://www.webbyawards.com/about/webby-talks-tour/at-your-service-whitepaper/>

2. http://www.leadresponsemanagement.org/images/lrm_study.pdf



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