



**Why a  
customer  
care culture  
matters!**

**AAPM Practice  
Administrators**



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## Transform your practice: Build a customer-centric culture in healthcare

This guide introduces essential principles and frameworks that support high-quality service in healthcare. From communication strategies to healthcare quality standards, these concepts will help you elevate the customer experience across many patient touchpoints.

**Consumers are statistics. Customers are people.**

- Stanley Marcus, Chairman, Neiman-Marcus

### Why this matters?

In today's healthcare environment, patients expect more than just clinical care, they want empathy, responsiveness, and trust. The following concepts can empower you to become champions of customer-centricity, enhancing patient satisfaction and loyalty.

Essential ingredients:

- **Customer-centricity:** Understand how every interaction shapes the patient experience.
- **Service standards:** Learn how to meet and exceed expectations using proven frameworks.
- **Communication and empathy:** Build trust and rapport with patients and families/caregivers.
- **Quality dimensions:** Align your practice with the six pillars of healthcare excellence.
- **Assurance:** Documenting standards in policies and procedures.
- **Measurement:** Methods to implement, monitor, and meet customer service standards.
- **Continuous improvement:** Gathering feedback, reviewing, and improving customer service.



### What do patients expect from great service?

At the core of exceptional customer care is the ability to meet and manage patient expectations. Patients value consistent, respectful, and timely service, and understanding what they expect helps administrators tailor their approach accordingly.

## Introducing the RATER model

One useful framework is the **RATER model** (see Figure 1), which groups expectations into five key dimensions: **Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, and Responsiveness**.

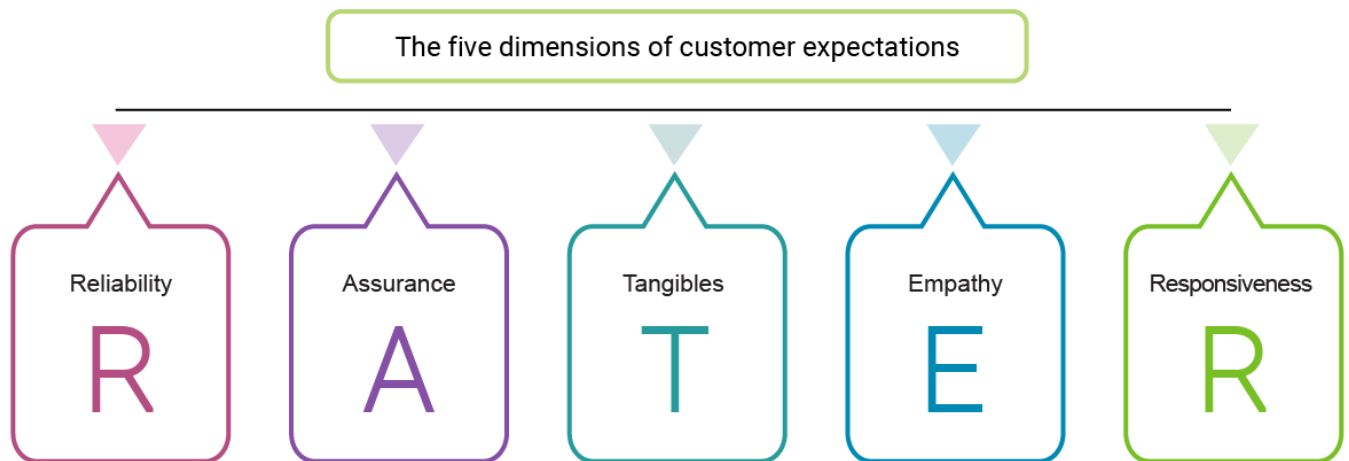


Figure 1: The RATER model relating to customer expectations

## How the RATER model works in Practice

The table below (Table 1) gives practical examples of how each RATER dimension shows up in a medical setting, for instance, keeping appointments on time (Reliability) or maintaining confidentiality (Assurance).

Table 1: Customer service expectations in a medical practice using the RATER model

Dimension	What patients expect
Reliability	Appointments run on time.
Assurance	Confidentiality is respected.
Tangibles	Clean, welcoming environment.
Empathy	Staff are caring and courteous.
Responsiveness	Urgent needs are prioritised.

## Delivering Excellence: The Six Dimensions of Healthcare Quality

High-quality care is about more than medical outcomes, it's about how that care is delivered. The **six dimensions of excellence** guide healthcare providers in delivering care that is safe, effective, and person-centred.



Figure 2: Six dimensions of healthcare quality



These dimensions guide how we deliver care that is safe, timely, effective, and equitable, with our patients at the centre. By keeping these six areas front-of-mind, administrators can contribute to a practice culture that values consistent improvement and meaningful patient outcomes.

Here's a more detailed look at each dimension.



## Safety

Ensuring that the healthcare environment and healthcare practices are safe from potential harm.



## Timeliness and accessibility

Ensuring that patients can access the care they need without unnecessary delays.



## Effectiveness and appropriateness

Delivering care that is based on scientific evidence and best practices, ensuring that treatments are suitable for the patient's condition.



## Patient centred care

Focusing on the needs, preferences, and values of patients, and involving them in decisions about their own care.



## Efficiency

Using healthcare resources wisely to achieve the best possible outcome without waste. This includes optimising processes and reducing unnecessary costs.



## Equity

Ensuring that all individuals have fair access to healthcare services, regardless of their background, socioeconomic status, or other factors.

## Building Customer Centric Strategies to Build Rapport

Delivering outstanding customer service often comes down to how well we communicate, especially in stressful or emotional situations. Below in Table 2, are example of **customer-centric communication strategies** that can help you build trust and support positive outcomes.






Practising these techniques consistently fosters a more compassionate and confident approach to service, especially when things don't go to plan.

Table 2: Customer-centric strategies and examples

Strategy	Description	Example
Active listening	Maintain good posture, eye contact, and use facilitative responses and silence. Try to talk as little as possible, listen carefully, and paraphrase what you've heard.	"I understand you're upset. What I'm hearing is that you're frustrated with the wait time."
Framing	Use phrases to clarify and confirm understanding.	"Sounds like what you are telling me is..." or "Let's see if I have this right..."
Identifying and calibrating the anger	Recognise and validate the customer's feelings without excusing or explaining the problem initially.	"That situation really got to you, didn't it?" or "I can imagine how angry I'd feel if that happened to me."
Requesting and accepting correction	Ask for confirmation to ensure you understand the customer's concerns correctly.	"Did I get that right?"
Showing empathy	Understand and express the customer's perspective without necessarily agreeing.	"I can see how this situation would be very frustrating for you."
Saying sorry	Admit mistakes and apologise sincerely if you made an error that led to anger.	"I'm sorry for the inconvenience this has caused. We will work to resolve this issue."

## Outcomes you can expect

By embedding a customer-focused mindset and applying the strategies in this guide, your practice can achieve the following outcomes.

 <p>Improved patient satisfaction</p>	 <p>Stronger communication skills</p>	 <p>Better teamwork across departments</p>	 <p>Increased referrals and loyalty</p>	 <p>Confidence in handling sensitive situations</p>
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## Your Next Step in Creating a Service-First Culture

This guide has shared just a few of the foundational frameworks that shape excellent service in healthcare settings. A course at UNE Partnerships, takes a deeper dive into these topics through professional development courses and workshops tailored to medical practice teams.

We wish you every success in building a stronger, more responsive patient experience. And if you're looking to strengthen your skills even further, we're here to help you on your journey.

Transforming  
healthcare is a  
whole team  
approach,  
lead with purpose,  
service with heart.



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