

Marketing Mishaps

The Simpler, the Better

Putting the KISS Principle to work in your practice.

BY SHAREEF MAHDAVI



As the world around us grows increasingly complex, people everywhere are clamoring for simplicity. A quick search on Amazon.com returns over 5,500 books with the word *simple* in the title. It's a popular topic, perhaps because it seems to elude most of us in our daily

lives, no matter how hard we strive for it. Product designers are known to invoke the acronym *KISS* to counter an inclination to create products whose complexity outweighs their utility. The acronym stands for *keep it short and simple*, or, for fans of nursery rhymes, *keep it simple, Simon*.

A MARKETING SHORTCOMING

The refractive surgery industry—with the emergence of customized treatments, laser-made flaps, and intraocular implants—needs to put this philosophy into practice. The complexity of refractive surgical technology is appreciated only by technologists. Most patients care nothing about the details of a technology; they care only about the doctor using it and whether or not it will improve their vision. This fact is the reason everyone in our industry must commit to converting technical terms into phrases and ideas that the average consumer can understand. The lack of attention on this front has resulted in confusion in the marketplace. And when consumers are confused, they delay action.

AREAS WHERE YOU CAN “KISS”

Technology, however, is just one area to which the *KISS* principle can be applied. Almost any touch point that you and your staff have with patients is ripe for an analysis of simplification. Consider pricing, for instance. Tiered pricing creates choices, but it also complicates the decision-making process, because it requires the patient to understand the differences between each price point. This pricing approach, therefore, runs contrary to the *KISS* principle.

Patient financing should be evaluated similarly. Do you offer too many financing options, when just one or two are ever used? Do you make your patients do the work when it

comes to the financing application? If so, you need to revisit how simple the process is for your customers. Here are a couple of other areas that may not be patient-friendly:

Patient Seminars

How easy is it to sign up and attend? Can attendees understand what the speaker is saying? Can they read the slides?

Postoperative Instructions

How easy are they to understand? Is the instruction sheet simple to keep and locate? How easily can patients contact someone for questions or help?

THE REWARDS OF SIMPLIFICATION

This type of “looking under the hood” may seem daunting at first, but you won't regret taking an honest look at each of your standard operating procedures to evaluate how you might simplify them for your customers. Hire a pretend patient (aka, a “mystery shopper”) to visit your practice and compile feedback as to which processes worked well (or not so well). Such steps are necessary if you want to improve the level of service you offer customers, and the benefits of the effort are tremendous: your patients as well as staff will be happier.

I have yet to come across a practice that does everything right. In fact, I find that the most efficient and profitable practices are those that continually work to improve their services in order to save time and money or merely reduce hassles for patients. Secondary to their outcomes, patients most remember their experience in a practice (ie, how they were treated). The simpler it is for them to understand the services you provide, the better their experience.

By the way, I own one of those books on how to simplify my life. Now, if I could just find it underneath all this clutter... ■

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