

SOMEBODY

answer the phone!

Successful practices need a friendly, professional person to welcome visitors and answer the phone, but even the very best receptionist needs back up at busy times, says **Glenn Jackson** *.

A surgery's reception is a vital part of its offering, defining the practice to patients right from the initial phone call or welcome. Handling calls effectively is critical, particularly for a service that operates on an appointments basis, as getting the call right from the start helps prevent messages going astray or having phone calls left unanswered. Both of these can result in lost revenue.

Customers can also be a little impatient at times. Research shows that 62% of callers will not ring back if they hear an engaged tone, whilst 79% say they won't call back if their call goes unanswered. This often means clients don't inform a practice of the decision to change their appointment, which then results in a large number of appointments going to waste - and a loss of revenue for the practice.

CATCHING THE PEAKS

Having efficient systems and support means customer service need not stop at lunchtime, if a receptionist is on holiday or if the practice has closed. Equally, no matter how efficient a receptionist is, there are times, such as the busy 12-2pm lunch period or when they are dealing face-to-face with patients, when they simply cannot answer the phone.

These are the times when an outsourced reception service really pays off. Calls can either be diverted in their entirety or when

the line is engaged or left unanswered. The call is diverted to an experienced outsourced receptionist and handled in a professional and courteous manner by someone who's been briefed by you, on your practice. Knowing who your key people are, the practice location, opening hours and so on is all information they will have at their fingertips.

Better still, any message taken can be relayed to your team via email or SMS text within seconds, enabling in-house staff to call someone back immediately, or simply update a patient's records or appointment details on their computer screen - without having to make another call.

Another factor for practices to consider is a 2009 report from the Cass Business School which shows that there's a potential £136 million saving to be made across the board by effective outsourcing. It's likely that outsourced call handling would contribute directly to a practice's bottom line by helping it use its employees' time more effectively and ensure no calls are missed when experiencing high volumes.

The service provided by Moneypenny is inherently flexible, which means outsourcing can be used as much or as little as needed, negating the need to recruit extra staff to cover peak call times, staff absence or emergency out-of-hours. Pricing is structured according to usage, and can be scaled up or down to reflect demand, which helps organisations use their existing staffing resources in a much more efficient and cost effective way.

THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY

By using simple call screening technology, an outsourced receptionist can handle calls professionally, whether by identifying key client calls or fielding unwanted sales callers. For example, the caller recognition software employed by Moneypenny helps a receptionist to identify regular contacts or key customers. This enables the receptionist to pass on messages without having to confirm



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the contact details with the caller each and every time, making them feel valued. It's the personal touch which people really appreciate.

Often, it's when things go wrong that outstanding customer service shines through. An example of this would be if there was a power outage or a flood that affected communications in your practice. During this time a professional receptionist, located away from the affected area, would continue to handle calls and provide business continuity until the issue is resolved.

The option of being able to outsource overflow calls to Moneypenny ensures that an exceptional level of customer service is maintained and that no calls are ever missed. And all this can be achieved without the need for traditional overheads - which should help keep both patients and practitioners smiling.

An outsourced reception service is beneficial to all organisations, regardless of size. For more information, call Moneypenny on 08000 199 944 or visit moneypenny.co.uk.

** Managing Director of Moneypenny. Moneypenny looks after telephone calls for businesses of all shapes and sizes. For larger companies, Moneypenny can either support an existing reception team or provide a fully outsourced switchboard function. Based in Wrexham, Moneypenny has over 250 staff, a figure that is growing at a rapid rate. The company handles over 8 million calls a year.*