

## **SUPA Objectives**

By Tom Bowen, President

Let's begin this discussion by talking about phone scripts for a moment. You know the volumes of paper you and the staff have generated over the years that might be better suited as fireplace fare? Ever wonder why your staff never seems to use those scripts? The reason is simple - those scripts are meaningless to the users. Don't misunderstand me, they were written with the perfection of a Steinbeck novel. The problem is no one cares.

Think about it. First of all, you're asking staff to memorize a bunch of words someone else wrote when no phones were ringing, the staffing situation was perfect, no patients were acting up, no demanding clients were around, and you had all the time in the world. Now, back in reality, we're asking your staff to take these perfect-world words someone else wrote and use them in their own reality. Yikes!

Now that we agree this is a ridiculous notion, here's the point. It's not the script, but the educational objectives that are important, memorable, and useful. Whether it's a phone shopper at the front desk, a new client in the exam room, or walk-in product customer, the key to success is carefully defining what we want clients to understand and perceive, and how we want them to react. Then we let all that come out in a person's own style and words.

We must breakdown a client's experience into its components. We'll call the experience our ladder and the components our rungs. As Practice Coach Clients well know, we call this the production cycle, and every business has one. Here is a brief synopsis of the production cycle from the start of a client's experience (bottom rung) to completion (top rung).

- Marketing (to generate interest)
- Gate-Keeping (the receptionist converts interest into patients)
- Physical reception
- Data collection
- Pre-Exam
- Evaluation and diagnosis
- Treatment and prescribing
- Product selection
- Dispensing
- Dismissal
- Follow-up

These are the rungs your clients encounter on the production ladder. Since we're always hearing about the importance of client education, here's the million-dollar question. What are your specific objectives for client education at each rung? What do you want clients to know? What do you want clients to perceive about your offering relative to what they know? How do you want them to react?

A major study done by one of the nation's most prestigious universities showed you're 50 times more likely to accomplish something if you write it down. That's 5000%! And if writing team objectives for education makes us 5000% more likely to achieve them, we have some writing to do! But how do we write them and where do we start? SUPA!

**S** - Satisfaction. What client needs/ desires must be met?

**U** - Understanding. Specifically, what do you want clients to understand about a service, process, unique benefit, etc.?

**P** - Perception. What do you want clients to perceive about your practice/ people as a result of what they understand?

**A** - Acceptance. What is your exact desired result?

There you have it: The SUPA objectives. Let's do an example focusing on the gate-keeping (telephone reception) rung. Let's say we have a potential client on the telephone inquiring about our price for a spay.

Here's a sample SUPA objective:

**S** - Assure the potential client is satisfied that they have received an clear answer to their question.

**U** - Assure the patient understands there are significant differences in the inclusions of a spay program from one place to another. Specifically over view differences and unique aspects of your program (pre-surgical blood work, pain control, EKG monitoring, post-procedure care, etc.)

**P** - Assure the client perceives your practice as more concerned about thoroughness, health, and quality of life than any other provider.

**A** - Set an objective for client acceptance. An example would be an objective to book 7 of every 10 phone shoppers into appointments (which we track periodically).

Once we understand our specific objectives for gate-keeping as a group, each team member will have her/his own way of communicating them. Writing a script from these objectives is helpful for visualization/training purposes. When the real call comes in, you'll be much more productive by actually talking with the potential client, rather than reading to them. Oftentimes, however, at gate-keeping and all the other rungs, we simply tell people what to say, but we never really define our objectives. The result is under-performance.

I have a little quiz for you. Don't worry, it's just one question: Could you reach into a file cabinet or folder right now and pull out a list of your specific objectives for what you want a client to understand and perceive and how you want them to react at each rung on your production ladder? If not, client education may be more of a buzzword than a defined, effective process in your practice. Remember, it's not what we do for a client that determines perceived value. It's what they understand. It's time to get serious about an integrated program for client education, and team SUPA objectives are the place to start!