



Service Excellence

Manager's Tips & Tools

The Johns Hopkins Health System -- The Johns Hopkins Hospital -- Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center -- Howard County General Hospital
Johns Hopkins Community Physicians -- Johns Hopkins HealthCare -- The Johns Hopkins Home Care Group -- Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

You have 7 Seconds

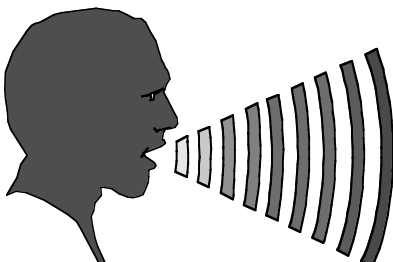
Seven seconds! That's how long it takes for a person to form a first impression. First impressions matter. Good first impressions build trust and confidence in patients, visitors and staff -- whether it's on the phone or at the front door or passing by them in the hallway. Every conversation or interaction is an opportunity to create an impression.

It's all about **communication** - the words we use, the way in which we deliver the message and the visual element, body language and physical appearance. In this issue of *Manager's Tips and Tools*, we will look at the elements of a first impression and help departments, clinics, and units make a great first impression. It's up to you!

Element #1 - It's what you say

The words we use make a difference in creating first impressions. We need to choose words that instill confidence, make patients/visitors and other customers feel comfortable, and create positive relationships.

- 4 Use courtesy words —
 - *Good morning/evening.*
 - *Please.*
 - *Thank you.*
- 4 Use welcoming words —
 - *I've been expecting you.*
 - *Welcome to Hopkins.*
 - *How may I help you?*
- 4 Avoid impersonal language —
 - *What do you want?*
 - *I'm busy.*
 - *It won't work.*
 - *Hang on.*
 - *You didn't fill this out right.*
 - *You don't understand.*
 - *Like I said, ...*
 - *I can't do that.*
 - *If you had read your manual*
- 4 Do not use vague language that puts a distance between you and the person with whom you are communicating. For example, instead of saying "I'll get back to you," say "I'll get back to you by the end of the day." Clear words show ownership and give the customer confidence.
- 4 Use helpful words —
 - *Certainly, I would be glad to.*
 - *This is what I can do.*
 - *He/she is not available, so may I or someone else help you?*
- 4 Introduce yourself and tell the patient/customer what you're going to do.
- 4 Use the patient's/customer's name.
- 4 Avoid engaging in personal conversations with peers when customers are present and can overhear you.
- 4 Go to a private place for private conversations with patients.



Element #2 - It's the way you say it

It's not what you say, it's the way you say it. Words are important but they are not the only way we create impressions when we communicate with others. When we are communicating in face-to-face settings, 38% of our message is communicated through our tone of voice. When we are on the phone and the visual element is not a factor, 86% of our message is communicated through tone.

- 4 Use a friendly tone of voice and an unhurried pace.
- 4 Smile sincerely (even when you're talking on the phone).
- 4 Do not interrupt -- wait for a pause or an appropriate opportunity to speak.
- 4 Use a variety of cadence to hold the listener's attention.



What you do thunders above your head so loudly, I cannot hear the words you speak.

Element #3 - It's what they see

It's true that actions speak louder than words. Face-to-face communication has an unmistakable visual element. Our body language, personal appearance and actions impact the messages we send and the impressions we make.

BODY LANGUAGE

- 4 Your facial expression should show interest (even if you're on the phone). Be relaxed and natural.
- 4 Match your eye contact with the message you receive. Be sensitive to cultural differences. Too much eye contact can be threatening.
- 4 Your posture should be comfortable, open and relaxed. Do not slouch. Lean slightly forward to represent listening.
- 4 Sitting side by side can enhance communication. Sitting behind a desk can put distance between you and the patient/visitor or other customer.
- 4 Use a respectful proximity - not too close and not too far away. Be sensitive to others' sense of personal space.
- 4 Gestures and movements should be appropriate. Gestures can signal condescension, impatience and disinterest.
- 4 Use a firm handshake.

APPEARANCE

- 4 Wear your ID at all times and your name badge if you have one.
- 4 Dress appropriately for the job and adhere to any dress code standards. Personal appearance demonstrates your attitude.
- 4 Avoid eating and/or drinking in the presence of patients/customers.
- 4 If you have a casual day, be sure to clearly define what is appropriate for employees so they don't look too casual.
- 4 Keep your department and workspace uncluttered. Messy spaces may imply messy procedures or messy care.
- 4 Pick up obvious trash in the hallways and public areas or report to Environmental Services or Office Manager if appropriate.
- 4 Report broken or unsafe conditions to Facilities.
- 4 If you use it, put it away. Clean up after yourself.

ACTIONS

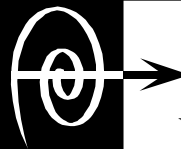
- ! Allow patients/customers to board the elevator before staff. Allow people to exit an elevator before you attempt to enter.
- ! Use the Hold button when people are entering/exiting the elevator.
- ! Do not run past or push through escalator riders! Consider using the stairs rather than the escalator if you're in a hurry.
- ! Be on the lookout for lost patients/visitors and offer to escort them to their destination or direct them to the nearest Information Desk/Security Officer.
- ! Knock first before entering a room, office or treatment space.
- ! Turn phones and pagers on vibrate (or turn them off if you can).
- 4 Do not interrupt - wait for a pause or an appropriate opportunity to speak.
- 4 Give your full attention to all patients/customers.
- 4 Hold doors open for those following close behind you.
- 4 Keep public areas free of private behavior (maintain your professional role).
- 4 Take breaks in non-public areas.
- 4 Be a team player —
 - ⊆ *Help colleagues by gently reminding them of the rules for creating good first impressions.*
 - ⊆ *Make the environment feel friendly by greeting each other in the hallways.*
 - ⊆ *Avoid blaming other departments when things don't go quite right. We're all in this together.*
- 4 Rudeness is never acceptable.

Moments of Truth

Moments of Truth isn't just a catchy phrase or gimmick. Jan Carlson, former President of Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) discovered that as human beings we take very specific experiences and generalize them throughout an organization. He coined the phrase **Moments of Truth** and defines these as the moments when a customer or a potential customer comes into contact with any aspect of your organization and makes a judgement about the quality of the organization and the products/services provided.

For example, when airline passengers see ripped upholstery or a stain on a tray table, they may wonder if the engine and other mechanical parts of the plane are also in disrepair. What he learned is that these specific experiences strongly influence an individual's decision to purchase from, stay with or leave an organization. This is the power of first impressions.

Carlson is renowned for his use of **Moments of Truth** to achieve customer focus. What are the **Moments of Truth** in your job?



Tips

You never get a second chance to make a first impression

What You Can Do as a Manager

Does your department's office create great first impressions?

Complete the assessment below to see how you are doing. Use the ideas included or come up with new ones.

ELEMENT	ASSESSMENT	IDEAS
It's what you say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> r Each person is greeted appropriately upon arrival or admission r Staff routinely introduces themselves and explains who they are and what they are going to do r Staff uses courteous, welcoming and helpful words when communicating with everyone r Phones are answered within 3 rings and callers are greeted with welcoming words, the location and name of the person answering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥Scripted greetings ¥Create a list of words or phrases to avoid using
It's the way you say it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> r Staff smiles when they interact with others in person and on the phone r Staff uses a friendly tone of voice r Staff performs job duties in an unhurried but efficient pace r Staff's speech has a variety of cadence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥Role plays ¥Audio tape ¥Mystery shopper
It's what they see - Body Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> r Staff facial expressions display interest and sensitivity r Staff eye contact matches that received from the patient/customer r Staff uses gestures that are appropriate for the situation r Staff uses an open and welcoming posture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥Role plays ¥Video tape
It's what they see - Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> r Staff apparel is neat and clean r Staff adheres to departmental dress code r Staff does not eat in the presence of patients/customers r Departmental workspace is neat, clean, uncluttered r Public restrooms in your area have adequate supplies r Workspaces and storage areas in public view are neat and tidy r Walls are free of damage r Furniture is in good repair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥Fashion show ¥Mystery shopper ¥Clean-Up Day
It's what they see - Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> r Appointment delays and changes are routinely explained to the patient r Confidentiality (patient and staff) is respected r Patients/customers/visitors are provided with clear, concise directions r Staff does not congregate in patient/visitor areas r Staff stops and offers assistance to individuals who appear lost r Staff are considerate of patients/visitors in hallways, elevators and public areas r Staff takes responsibility for patient/visitor issues by displaying a no-fault attitude r Staff pulls together to resolve problems r Staff acknowledges and greet other staff members when in hallways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥Video tape ¥Mystery shopper ¥Create teamwork rules