



Captivate patients in the buying process and beyond

At Unitron, we believe this business is personal. So when we had the opportunity to sit down with Jim Tincher, Founder of Heart of the Customer, a leading customer experience expert who shares our values, we were naturally excited to capture his insights on how hearing healthcare professionals can deliver an end-to-end experience and earn patients for life.

In our time together, Jim offered us insight into the world of hearing healthcare patients and shared some valuable strategies hearing healthcare providers can use to engage them during the buying process and beyond.

Q What challenges with the patient journey are you seeing in today's hearing healthcare practices?

Jim: It's easy for a hearing healthcare professional to forget what it's like to be new to this space. You look at the patient experience through your rational mind, which is informed by years of experience and you expect your patients to do the same. But it is important that you remember patients don't share your clinician's mindset. This is an emotional

experience for them and a potential turning point in their life. So you need to use familiar language and provide guidance and expertise to help them make an informed decision. Don't send them home with printed materials and expect them to make a decision on their own. That's too overwhelming. I would suggest following up with them within 72 hours of their visit, to check in on their decision process and to offer additional support. To wait any longer is a big miss.

Q How do you empower patients to manage choice in the decision making process?

Jim: The three most important parts of any journey are the beginning, the end, and the peak point of pain. If a patient's journey doesn't start well, there may not be the rest of the journey. So in managing the end-to-end patient experience with your patients, you need to consistently reinforce that they are in charge. Use every opportunity along the way to make a positive brand impression, by telling them that you are there to help their lives get better. This puts patients at ease, empowers them to make the best choices with respect to their hearing health, and improves their chances of going through with a hearing aid purchase.

Q What are some of the ways to ensure an effective experience for patients?

Jim: First, understand your customer demographics to identify what creates an effective experience for your patients. For instance, your standard business hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm may be inconvenient for busy or working patients. You want your patients focused on their hearing healthcare decision, not on your office hours. So if they have to think about making time in their busy schedule to see you, you are likely not going to be their first choice.

Q What should hearing healthcare professionals understand about patient emotions?

Jim: The hearing healthcare journey is a substantial life milestone for your patients. It will either be the day where they start hearing their grandchildren and living life again, or the day they began feeling like an old man or old lady. Make sure patients understand you are there to help get them what they need to start living life again.



Meet Jim Tincher

Founder,
Heart of the Customer



With a lifelong passion for customer experience, Jim founded Heart of the Customer to help companies of all sizes increase customer engagement. His goal as the lead consultant is to provide organizations with key insights by providing a 360-degree view of their customer's extreme highs and frustrating lows through the use of journey maps. He sees the world in a special way: through the eyes of customers and he strives to help his customers see it too.

Are you looking to understand the end to end-to-end experience you're delivering and find new ways to improve it?

If so, contact Jim Tincher by email at jim@heartofthecustomer.com. He's happy to help guide you on the journey to better practice growth.

You must connect with patients emotionally in order to create lasting relationships. Patients don't evaluate the technology pros and cons. They evaluate how you made them feel. So put them at ease by letting them know that this is a very normal process and that the emotions they are going through are natural. Reinforce that you understand that this is not an easy change. Assure them you are there to help them select the best product to meet their needs. Explain you are going to help them gain back the sounds of life they are missing.

Q How can healthcare professionals ensure they end on a high note to close the end-to-end experience?

Jim: We know from customer experience research that the end of an experience has a disproportionate impact on how the customer feels about the entire journey. A patient won't necessarily remember what you did, but they will

remember how you made them feel. So don't bombard your patients with brochures as they leave the appointment. It's unlikely they will read them. Instead, spend some time at the end of the appointment assuring them that the emotions they are experiencing are normal, that you are here to help and will provide them with a plan to move forward.

Unitron's Flex for instance, offers patients such a plan. It allows them to trial a hearing aid risk free, while you monitor their results using real life data. You can then use those results to ensure they have the right technology solution. This proactive approach is what patients will remember and will be the reason they return. It will also increase the likelihood that they will recommend you to family and friends.

Q What do hearing healthcare professionals need to be paying attention to in their practice?

Approximately 85% of hearing aid wearers say that their overall well-being improves after acquiring a hearing aid. Yet, only 45% of patients actually proceed with purchasing one, despite the fact there is a real chance it can improve their life. The difference is what is known as the trust gap and it determines your patient success rate. You need to know what this number is. You need to understand it. And you need to manage that trust gap over time.

You also need to understand every aspect of the patient journey. For instance, if your receptionist handles initial face-to-face contact with patients, then you need to invest in finding the very best person for the job. You need someone in your front office who is driven to deliver an exceptional customer experience.

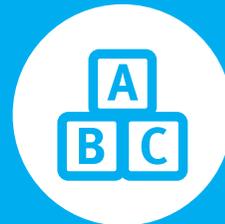
Q What's the one thing hearing healthcare professionals should change now to maintain patients for life?

Jim: Take the time to put yourself into your patients' shoes. Perhaps have a new staff member go through the experience — then give you unedited feedback. Or find an equivalent experience where you aren't an expert, and see how that practitioner makes you feel. Taking the time to truly experience what your patients are experiencing will help you see how to make this journey an easier and better emotional experience for them.

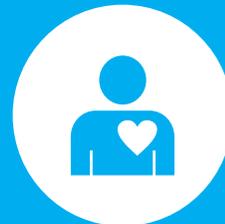
Three keys to closing the trust gap



The end-to-end patient experience determines your effectiveness – you need to have a deliberate process for ending on a high note.



Easy experiences create loyal customers. Strong advocacy is driven by the ease of doing business with a company.



Emotion trumps everything else.