

Foreword by “The Experience Economy” Co-Authors

B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore



**BEYOND
BEDSIDE
MANNER**

**INSIGHTS ON PERFECTING THE
PATIENT EXPERIENCE**

SHAREEF MAHDAVI

Exclusive Chapter 1 Download for the PX Movement

Praise for the Author

“Some things never go out of style. Kindness, compassion, listening and caring are as important to the success of a physician today as they were at the birth of medicine. Shareef calls on his years of experience as a consultant to bring the modern insights of teamwork, focus and collaboration to the present day doctor. This book is a must read for any medical practice that places a premium on maximizing the patient experience.”

— Mitchell Brown MD MEd FRCS
Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, Toronto, ON

“*Beyond Bedside Manner* is a must read for everyone in the field of medicine, from medical students wanting to begin their professional career with a foundation for success, to all the members of an established practice trying to better cope with our changing environment. Shareef’s insight and his organization of this book can de-stress harried physicians, who are anxious about how to survive, by giving them the tips to thrive.”

— Mary P Lupo, MD
Lupo Center for Aesthetic & General Dermatology, New Orleans, LA

“Shareef Mahdavi is a world expert at knowing the empathetic mindset, awareness, and actions it takes for doctors and their team to build and deliver an experience that will secure the trust of their patients. In his masterfully written book he uses his years of teaching and coaching to chart a clear path for doctors and their team to read, follow, and frequently reference as they grow their patient experience. The key to achieving excellence in medicine is to understand what it takes to deliver a world class patient experience and that is why *Beyond Bedside Manner* is a must for all practices that desire to go to the next level.”

— Vance Thompson, MD
Vance Thompson Vision, Sioux Falls, SD

“Mr. Mahdavi is an expert in improving the patient experience and creating new revenue sources outside of health insurance in medical practices. *Beyond Bedside Manner* is a pleasure to read with insights of great value to physicians and anyone interested in great customer service. Interested in better patient care while enhancing revenue? This is the book for you.”

— Stephen Wilmarth, MD
Wilmarth Eye, Sacramento, CA

“Great advice is a key success factor in any service business, and ophthalmology is a service business. Shareef Mahdavi is my favorite guru in the never-ending challenge to provide a Ritz Carlton experience for our patients in an era of Motel 6 reimbursement. A daunting task, but one that is absolutely essential to build a successful, sustainable practice today.”

— Richard L Lindstrom, MD
Founder, Minnesota Eye Consultants, Minneapolis, MN

“The pearls of wisdom found in *Beyond Bedside Manner* is a culmination of years spent by Shareef building authentic relationships with physicians and always looking for ways to improve the patient experience and outcomes while enhancing the physician’s joy of practicing medicine. Shareef clearly shows us that despite the influence of insurance companies, big pharma, hospital systems and others, healthcare is most effective when the doctor and patient are the primary decision makers. The engaged and educated patient can be very impactful in helping to change healthcare from “treating illness” to “chasing health.” Shareef’s insights and experience will help continue the necessary changes in our healthcare system. This book will be much valued by both physicians and patients and the timing of these words is opportune for a world searching for direction and answers.”

— Peter Sneed, MD

Oculoplastic and Reconstructive Specialist, Traverse City, MI

“What an incredible resource for anyone in the medical industry and beyond. The customer experience is something that has been often lost in medicine. The author deftly navigates these muddy waters by providing insight to the reader on creating a culture that places the customer center stage to receive first-rate care. This patient-centric culture will not only provide a better customer experience but also a roadmap for achieving greater success for the practitioner. For anyone wanting to do it better but not sure how to make it happen, this book is a MUST! The author provides a thorough outline of all the things I think matter in changing the culture in each of our practices, all in one quick read. There is a paradigm shift necessary in medicine that is focused on the customer experience and a patient-centric approach...this book provides the path to get there!”

— M Bradley Calobrace, MD

CaloAesthetics Plastic Surgery Center, Louisville, KY

“Shareef Mahdavi knows better than anyone walking the planet about building and creating a truly world-class patient experience that ultimately makes price irrelevant. His insights are simple yet brilliantly effective for any business to replicate and execute. *Beyond Bedside Manner* should be every medical practice’s bible.”

— John R DiJulius, III

Bestselling author The Relationship Economy: Building Stronger Customer Connections in the Digital Age

“*Beyond Bedside Manner* is a much-needed resource to help doctors bring the world of hospitality into their practices. Treating patients like guests is good for business and good for the soul.”

— Chip Conley

Boutique Hotelier (Joie de Vivre Hospitality), Strategic Advisor to AirBnB, and New York Times best-selling author

“Medicine lags far behind every other industry in terms of customer service and honing in on what the consumer (patient) desires. *Beyond Bedside Manner* carefully describes proven methods for any practice, whether small or large, to significantly improve the patient experience, grow their volume, improve their impact in the community, and truly make a difference for their patients. Having put into place many of the recommended practices as outlined, I know firsthand that they work. It has made all the difference for my patients, my staff and the way I practice.”

— Aaron Waite, MD

Waite Vision, Salt Lake City, UT

“In a time of unprecedented pressures on doctors from all sides, Shareef Mahdavi’s book, *Beyond Bedside Manner*, gives a road-map for doctors to develop a plan for professional success.”

— Timothy Hanley, MD

Cedar Run Eye Center, Traverse City, MI

“Exceptional care is the expectation of every patient. Unfortunately today this does not always translate into an exceptional customer experience in our medical practices. Shareef visited the Alabama Nasal and Sinus Center and literally walked through our front door with us and experienced the flow through our office from first impression to departure. Based on his feedback we have repurposed our “waiting room,” focused on the “director of first impressions” and examined every step in a patient’s pathway through our practice in order to maximize each patient’s customer experience. In his book Shareef unpacks numerous opportunities each of us has to make a more lasting impact in the lives of our patients. Open mindedness and a willingness to change the status quo are critical in not just surviving but thriving in today’s competitive medical environment. Thank you Shareef!”

— Michael Sillers, MD
Alabama Nasal and Sinus Center, Birmingham, AL

“*Beyond Bedside Manner* offers a wonderful portfolio of ideas to help you create experiential value beyond measure.”

— B. Joseph Pine II & James H. Gilmore
Co-authors of *The Experience Economy: Competing for Customer Time, Attention, and Money*



INSIGHTS ON PERFECTING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

SHAREEF MAHDAVI



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Softcover ISBN: 978-1-7344127-2-7

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Printed in the United States of America.

Cover and Layout Design: Story Seven Publishing

First-line Editor: Kennedy Mahdavi

Primary and Proofreading Editor: Alyssa Tschirgi

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Dedication

This book is for my Dad, who devoted over fifty years of his life as a physician, and for all doctors who want to do better for their patients and their practices.

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Foreword

B. Joseph Pine II & James H. Gilmore

CO-AUTHORS OF
*The Experience Economy: Competing for
Customer Time, Attention, and Money*

Attention. Caring. Circular. Deep. Entertainment. Expertise. Humane. Influence. Innovation. Knowledge. Longevity. Membership. Mobile. Passion. People-centered. Purpose. Relationship. Sharing. Social Media. Thank You. Velvet Rope. These are just a small sampling of the words uncovered when surfing Amazon.com for books with “Experience” in their titles. All these qualifiers, however, describe elements that may exist in any system of production and consumption. Some may even reflect mission-critical pursuits for enterprises yielding any economic offering, be it a commodity, good, or service—the three forms of output generally recognized by economists.

In our article “Welcome to The Experience Economy” (*Harvard Business Review*, July-August 1998), and even earlier in a 1997 *Wall Street Journal* piece entitled “How to Profit from Experience,” we presented the argument that experiences represent a fourth genre of economic output, distinct from commodities,

goods, and services. As we saw it, an Experience Economy — one in which people increasingly and explicitly pay for time in places and events—was emerging. Today it's here. The Experience Economy has fully arrived. We admit to feeling a great deal of gratification when we see others also recognize this reality, such as when McKinsey & Company released a research study, “Cashing in on the US Experience Economy,” reporting American expenditures on experiences increasing 6.3% annually, while goods and services are only up 1.6% and 4.7% respectively.

We're delighted to see the many new-to-the-world experiences that have taken hold in the past twenty years, such as Apple Stores, Airbnb, TopGolf, and Tough Mudder, to name just a few examples. We marvel at the thousands of escape rooms, rage rooms, salt rooms, scream rooms, and countless other genres of experience now consumed. This shift was no mere fad or trend, but a fundamental change in the very fabric of advanced economies: We now consume time most of all.

Shareef Mahdavi embraced this fact in the infancy of the idea. He participated in our annual *thinkAbout* events, at which we encountered firsthand Shareef's passion for helping doctors treat patients and his obvious prowess in bringing his consulting skills to health care. Here was a person who truly wanted to put more Care into Health Care. We encouraged Shareef to become a Pine & Gilmore Experience Economy Certified Expert. In this weeklong intensive training, we saw light bulbs go off. Shareef was a sponge, internalizing our frameworks and tools as if his own—exactly what we like to see from those in our network of Certified Experts!

Then Shareef took the all-important step of translating our principles and design techniques into methods specifically developed for application to health and wellness. He partnered with us to form a multi-client forum (a salon, if you will) of a dozen refractive eye surgeons, which Shareef led as a means to

verify the efficacy of experience thinking when applied to actual medical practices. The results were truly astounding. So much so that in 2011 Shareef was the recipient of our Experience Management Achievement award, given each year to a person demonstrating exemplary work in enhancing the experiences of a particular industry.

Now, with *Beyond Bedside Manner*, Shareef equips physicians and their staffs with fifty-seven insights, drawn from his years helping medical practices offer better experiences. We echo Shareef's advice to read just one per week, looking to apply lessons learned on an ongoing basis. As you do so, we'd like to offer this perspective: Services are *what you do*, your activity; experiences are *how* you do what you do, to enhance your patients' time, to fill it with memorable moments. Nothing creates a memorable event as readily as providing poor service (people always remember that!); so in pursuing better experiences, you can't walk away from the highest standards of service excellence. But what will distinguish your practice and differentiate your business will undoubtedly be the experiences you create. *Beyond Bedside Manner* offers a wonderful portfolio of ideas to help you create experiential value beyond measure.

Why I Wrote This Book:

I grew up the son of a pediatrician. My dad was known for his kindness and empathy with his young patients and their all-too-often anxious parents. He practiced in an era where doctors were judged, in part, on their bedside manner, which summarizes the interpersonal skills of the doctor and, by extension, nurses and staff. It became a mainstream phrase used to evaluate doctors on criteria patients understand: listening, empathy, kindness, and tactfulness, among others. It was the de facto customer survey in medicine.

While the need for doctors to exhibit good bedside manner hasn't gone away, the world around them is barely recognizable. The once sacred doctor-patient relationship has had a series of wedges placed in-between the two. Some are obvious. Health insurance has devolved into a bureaucratic nightmare for both parties. Online information has simultaneously made patients more knowledgeable and skeptical of clinical rec-

ommendations. And technology, which always promises to improve our lives, often falls short. Anybody using EHR will attest to this, as often will their patients. It's easy to see how the doctor-patient relationship has been severely fractured based on what most of us experience in today's healthcare system as patients, as doctors and as staff members trying to run a practice.

But with every crisis comes opportunity. I wrote this book to help you see your practice in a different light. I've spent the past thirty years working with doctors across multiple specialties. Professionally speaking, I grew up in ophthalmology and have been part of several large trends in medical technology (e.g., LASIK). The rising popularity of self-pay elective procedures across multiple specialties, as well as the rise of concierge medicine in primary care, have fundamentally changed how patients interact with doctors and their staff. And while this book originated from the perspective I've gained as part of the "elective" medical industry, the content applies across the board to doctors regardless of specialty, type of practice or patient demographics.

Every practice today needs to focus on what it can do to increase its value. In the past, that meant adding equipment in order to offer new services or procedures. For both reimbursed healthcare as well as elective services, it still means working to make outcomes safer and better over time. And while it's still important for doctors and their teams to be nice, exhibiting good bedside manner is no longer good enough.

The premise of this book is to give guidance to the entire practice - doctors, administrators, supervisors and front-line staff members - on how to move forward and revitalize the doctor-patient relationship. The promise of this book is that when you commit to improving the patient experience, good things happen.

The lessons I've learned over the years have been distilled into a series of insights. These insights take time-tested principles from the world around us and make them relevant and useful in a medical environment.

Every practice has a patient experience; the problem is that most of them are poor. My goal is to inspire you and your team to improve how you do what you do every day. By virtue of the fact that you are reading this, you already have some ideas as to what you want to do differently in your practice. These ideas likely come from your own personal experiences as a consumer and how you like to be treated. This book will give you additional ideas as well as guidance as to how to make it happen. But the most important reason for writing this book is to help you understand why patient experience is worth the effort to perfect, step by step and day by day.

By focusing on patients beyond their clinical needs and delivering on their customer expectations, you will create an environment that attracts patients who willingly spend their time (and money) at the practice. This will happen naturally, as their patient experience becomes on par with their most memorable customer experiences.

Healthcare has largely been given a pass when it comes to the non-clinical aspects of patient care. Pretty much every other industry has been working feverishly to improve customer service and, increasingly, the overall customer experience. Healthcare environments, especially the medical practice, have lagged far behind. Now is the time to change that. It's already happening, especially in practices with office-based care that patients pay for directly. This is what distinguishes the categories of elective and concierge medicine from traditional reimbursed healthcare.

With the investment of time and a willingness to change, you can absolutely take your practice to the next level in terms of

the patient experience. As more and more doctors and their teams do the same, I envision practices reaching out beyond the silos of their own specialty to collaborate with other like-minded practices. I've seen a lot of common ground among refractive eye surgeons, plastic surgeons, dermatologists, concierge primary care physicians and cosmetic dentists. There is a growing body of knowledge to share when it comes to how we "treat" our patients. And the patient experience in your practice is one area of the healthcare system where you do have control.

Doctors who have forged ahead on this path will tell you that the work comprises some of the most challenging and most rewarding aspects of what they do. Like all great accomplishments, transforming your practice requires a dedication of heart and mind more than of wallet or purse. In the end, the practice is healthier, stronger and a more vibrant part of the overall community. I firmly believe that if doctors and staff engage patients in a more meaningful way, healthcare outcomes will improve. This is good for your patients, your practice and for society as a whole.

It's time to move *beyond* bedside manner.

Developing the Mindset

Your commitment to go beyond traditional bedside manner becomes a mindset that can have a profound effect on your practice. It will change the way you approach your work each day. This mindset will influence how you interact with patients and how you empower your staff to do the same so the entire practice becomes increasingly patient-driven in all the non-clinical aspects of care.

Having worked with hundreds of doctors across multiple specialties, the benefits they've realized include happier patients, stronger practice culture, and improved economics. The biggest change, however, takes place by expanding your role as a professional physician to include essential business and social concepts that weren't covered in those many years of training. What results from employing the common-sense tactics described in this book is practice growth and a rekindled sense

of joy. For some, it's a renewal of why they chose medicine in the first place.

The thought that the patient is a customer may not come naturally to every doctor. When it comes to patient health, medical and consumer issues don't seem to get equal footing. The business of medicine seems to go against the goal of most patient encounters. While doctors - having completed nearly a decade of medical training before going into practice - are highly skilled at diagnosing a problem with a patient, they are often at a loss when it comes to diagnosing areas in the practice that are unhealthy in terms of how they impact patient experience.

Improving the health of the patient experience begins with eliminating archaic, counterproductive trademarks often associated with a medical practice: Telephone answering that begins with "Doctor's office, please hold"; the waiting room; the sliding window. And that's just the beginning of what it means to start moving beyond bedside manner. The focus of the practice gradually expands its dedication beyond quality patient care to also include excellent customer satisfaction.

For most of the past generation, healthcare in the US resembled an environment where the patient was like a non-paying customer, essentially "shopping with someone else's credit card," as described by former Whole Foods CEO John Mackey. Imagine how your buying behavior would change if you knew that somebody else was paying the bill. That's been the tradition in the past among patients and the doctors who provided them services. Earlier in my career, doctors routinely lamented that patients would complain when they told them certain services would have to be paid for out-of-pocket.

In recent years, however, the healthcare environment has changed dramatically, placing an increased responsibility

for financing on the shoulders of the patient through higher premiums, deductibles and copayments. The rise in elective self-pay offerings across multiple specialties is evidence of this shift, as is the growth in concierge style practices among primary care physicians where a monthly subscription fee is assessed for access to the doctor. This naturally turns the patient into a customer who is seeking to understand the benefits of what they are receiving in return for their investment. Whether you choose to think of them as patients, customers, clients, guests or another title, make no mistake — that patient is becoming an increasingly savvy consumer when it comes to how they choose their healthcare.

There is now a distinct difference between a doctor's role as healer and the business realities of being a service provider. Both are required for the modern doctor and their medical practice. You can overcome whatever biases or preconceived notions you have about what it means to treat patients and serve customers. Below is an exercise that should prove helpful.

Imagine that you have two different pairs of glasses resting on the table in front of you. Your instinct is always to reach for the sturdy pair of black glasses on your right, which helps you as a doctor to see your patient. Using these glasses you can spot ailments from a mile away, noticing the subtlest of symptoms and finding the most accurate diagnoses. But what would happen if you tried on the glasses to your left? These glasses help turn you into a businessperson by looking through the eyes of a customer. With these lenses, you suddenly notice how cold and unwelcoming the front lobby is, or how some staff members get short with patients when stressed. These glasses could become a priceless tool in your toolbelt if you could get used to looking through them. Seeing from a customer's perspective is the first step towards creating a well-rounded, business-savvy

practice that looks attractive no matter what glasses you're looking through.

Adjusting to this new frame of mind takes practice and an active desire to improve. Here are three rules of thumb to keep in mind as you consider making patient experience a priority in your practice:

First, you operate in a society where much power is now in the hands of consumers. As overall quality of goods and services has improved across all industries, competition has required businesses to shift their differentiation from what is delivered to how it is received. In essence, power has shifted to the consumer, enabled in part by the immediacy and visibility afforded by the internet. This also helps explain why more and more attention at companies is being given to customer experience.

Second, you are a customer and know how you expect to be treated. You know how it feels when you receive great service as well as how you feel when you get poor service. And you tend to easily recall your most memorable experiences.

Third, every patient is also a customer and, like you, has their own set of expectations. The line has been blurred between patient and customer, and it is your role to serve the needs of both while recognizing that without customers you do not have a practice where you can treat patients.

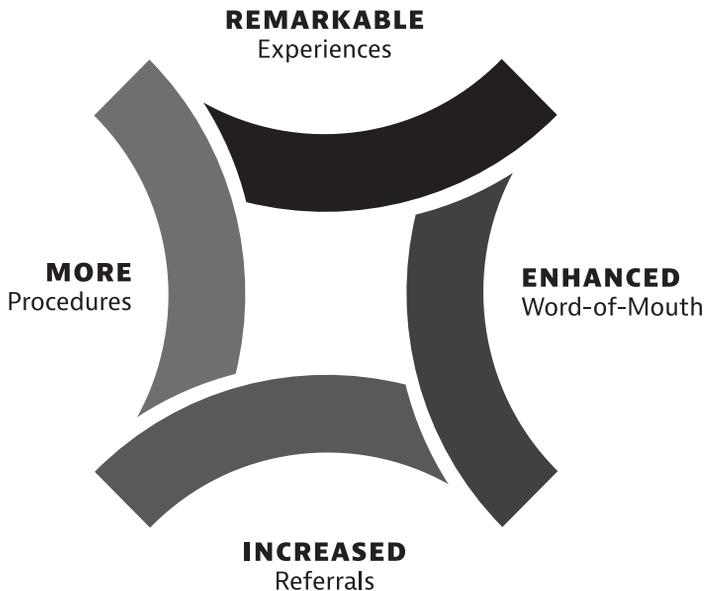
The next section contains insights that reinforce these three points, putting you on the path of developing a practice that is as exceptional in its customer care as it is in its patient care. This is what it means to be perfecting the patient experience.

As you embrace the concept of people coming to you as both patients and customers, everything you do in your practice going forward flows from the question, "Is this good for the customer?" Inspiration for your practice can come from outside of healthcare, drawing upon retail, hospitality, dining,

and entertainment – all industries that are highly focused on meeting the needs and wants of their customers.

By learning from companies that have long worked to perfect their customer experience, you will be ahead of the game when it comes to your practice. And you will discover what they already know: Memorable customer experience creates the virtuous cycle that will build and sustain the business.

THE CYCLE OF GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE





—ONE—

What Business Are You In?

From a professional standpoint, this is perhaps the single most critical question you need to answer. Perhaps you never thought of your career this way, given that you went into medicine. But every doctor in practice benefits by thinking about how patients view what they do, and those criteria extend far beyond the clinical interaction. With the rise of the consumer comes an increase in their expectations surrounding all their encounters, including seeing the doctor.

If you've never consciously considered this question, now is a good time to do so as you contemplate what you want the patient experience in your practice to be. And if you have answered this question, it's worth revisiting as you have an opportunity to upgrade your response. Do you provide a service? Do you also intentionally design a customer experience? Or do you go even further and serve to guide a patient's transformation? How you answer this question impacts most

decisions you will make from here on out as to how to run your practice. Ultimately, it defines the value you are able to create as you grow your practice.

Done well, the answer to “What business are you in?” or (more likely) “What do you do for a living?” can serve equally as well at cocktail parties and as a mission statement for you and your team. Indeed, it should aim to be aspirational rather than simply functional.

“ EVERY DOCTOR IN PRACTICE BENEFITS BY THINKING ABOUT HOW PATIENTS VIEW WHAT THEY DO, AND THOSE CRITERIA EXTEND FAR BEYOND THE CLINICAL INTERACTION.”

One of the best examples is from an audiologist who answered this question, “I’m in the communications business.” He is one of the top customers of a major hearing aid manufacturer and practices in a rural community in Oregon. While he could have simply described the goods (“I sell hearing aids”), the service he provides (“I test hearing”) or the benefit provided from a great customer experience (“I help people hear better”), this audiologist understands that at a higher level, he is helping people communicate better. For those with hearing loss, the ability to interact with the world more fully through improved communication is the ultimate value proposition. The audiologist serves as the guide in a transformational experience.



This description of the business is far more powerful and has resulted in a bigger, better and more profitable practice.

So, what business are you really in?

Elevate the description of your business to better reflect the ultimate value you bring to the lives of your patients. This requires thinking beyond the functional services you provide – similar to what others of your specialty do – and heading towards the benefits, as well as the value your patients receive.

Fellow CEEE (Certified Expert on the Experience Economy) Kevin Dulle takes this concept a step further by stating that the business you are in is defined by the primary question you ask your customer. Because healthcare is a services business, the basic question would be “What can we do for you?” As you strive for greater value, an experience-focused practice would ask the patient, “What do you want to do?” An even higher level of value can be attained if you recognize that you are in the transformation business, where the key question your practice would ask is “What do you want to become?”

