

cemplicity°

**AN INSIGHTS REPORT:
RETAINING AND ATTRACTING STAFF THROUGH
IMPROVED CLIENT EXPERIENCES**

Happy clients, happy staff

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With an ageing population and changing client expectations, physios are in more demand than ever in Australia. Demand is exceeding supply. Unless something is done to address the shortfall in physios across practices nationwide, plenty are going to miss out.

Here we look at how organisations can attract and retain physiotherapists by increasing their emphasis on improving client experience.

6,000

physios short in 2019

7,600

more job vacancies
from 2019-2024 projected

4.5%

annual increase
in need

The Australian Physiotherapy Council estimated that there was a shortage of 6,000 physios in 2019, even before the COVID pandemic, which worsened the shortage.

The challenge

One of the biggest challenges to come out of the Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) Focus Conference in Melbourne this year is how physiotherapy practices attract and retain staff.

It's well documented that there are not enough physios in active practice in Australia. Pre-COVID-19 projections from May 2019 forecast growth of 24.6 per cent in physiotherapy employment to 2024.¹ This is an increase of 7,900 jobs over the period and equates to an average annual growth of around 4.5 per cent.

1. [APA InMotion - Workforce report shows physiotherapy in demand 01 Oct, 2021](#)

Practice owners are increasingly concerned about the shortage of available clinical staff and the challenge of retaining good people. They either need to attract more staff, effectively retain existing staff or replace those who have moved on. Or, more often than not, all three.

Demand for physiotherapists is growing faster than supply can keep up.² As Australia's ageing yet still active population grows, more and more people require physiotherapy services. This creates increased stress on resourcing, particularly in sparsely populated rural areas.

Unless something is done to address vital retention factors, demand will continue to outstrip supply and accelerate an attrition rate that is already among the highest of all the health disciplines.³

There are several potential ways to overcome this issue. The Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) has called for more considered investment to address the staff shortages. They've also identified the need for funding to help ensure that organisations have the right skills to address client's needs.

In this paper, we're focussing on the one area often overlooked in terms of physio and staff welfare, engagement and retention – your clients.

Happy clients = happy staff

There's a plethora of evidence proving that staff are more engaged when clients are happier.⁴ Research undertaken in 2022 demonstrated that companies who boast the best customer experience also boast the best employee engagement. Happy customers make staff happy as well.

2. [Australian Government Labour Market Information Portal Vacancy Report \(August 2021\)](#); and [Ahpra Physiotherapy Board Statistics](#).

3. [Jobs Summit is a critical moment for health workforce in peril - physiotherapy has reform solutions APA 2022](#)

4. [Love, Love Me Do: New Data Proves the Value of Customer Love](#). Darci Darnell, Alison Leibovitz, and Stephen Caine 2022

Research specific to healthcare reinforces these findings. A study in 2012, based in an NHS maternity ward, concluded that client experiences positively influence staff motivation, effectiveness and wellbeing.⁵ A 2018 Spanish study went further and proved the mutually beneficial advantages of developing a person-centred therapeutic relationship in a physiotherapy health setting.⁶

This is supported by Canadian research highlighting that the connection between physiotherapists and their clients is vital in sustaining a therapeutic relationship that thrives throughout treatment.⁷

Key drivers of an outstanding client experience

There is a consistent and clear correlation between measured client experience and the engagement and retention of physiotherapy staff. The clinical and operational impacts of client experience is well-researched. Based on an evidence-based list, the core drivers of superior client experiences are as follows:

1. **Confidence in their professionalism**
2. **Being kept informed**
3. **Respect and compassion**
4. **Felt like they are listened to**
5. **Clear explanations**
6. **Decision involvement**
7. **Personalised care**

Putting the focus on measuring and sharing these core drivers within the physio practice will generate a positive impact on the client experience and in turn, on staff happiness.



5. Exploring the relationship between client experiences of care and the influence of staff motivation, affect and wellbeing. Maben, Peccei, Adams, Robert, Richardson, Murrells, Morrow – National Institute for Health Research (UK) 2012
6. Clients' experience regarding therapeutic person-centered relationships in physiotherapy services: A qualitative study. Jaume Morera-Balaguer, José M. Botella-Rico, Daniel Catalán-Matamoros, Olivia-Raquel Martínez-Segura, Marina Leal-Clavel & Óscar Rodríguez-Nogueira 2018
7. A framework for establishing connections in physiotherapy practice. Maxi Miciak 1, Maria Mayan 2, Cary Brown 3, Anthony S Joyce 4, Douglas P Gross 2019.

It's important to note that all staff have an impact on delivering the client experience. Staff interactions play a considerable role in defining the client experience, far more than factors like car parking or up-to-date magazines in the waiting room.



Credentials



Empathy



Listened to

Connection and trust

To establish connection and trust, physios should clearly communicate their credentials with each client on the first meeting and demonstrate suitable pre-knowledge about their client's medical or injury background.

Empathy

Physios who receive the best feedback - and who find their clients adhere to treatment the best - are those who demonstrate empathy. Genuinely caring about the client's condition and investing fully in helping them improve their quality of life goes a long way towards building a superior client experience. This is not a surprise, but it should be effectively measured.

Engagement

Empathetic interactions address the core drivers of engagement - ensuring that clients feel they have been listened to, involved in their own decision-making and have had their unique needs met. Each of these factors, when measured over time, provide trends and insights to improve future care delivery, enhance client experience and encourage happier staff.

Mutually beneficial

The key drivers of an outstanding client experience are reciprocal in nature. When a client is satisfied with the communication between themselves and a physio, generally the physio will be too. Clients have better outcomes when they feel more connected, understand their condition, the treatment needed, their prognosis, and the expected outcomes. These are contingent on clear and constant communication.

If the client experiences kindness and respect, it is also reflected and experienced by the physio and staff. This enhances the work environment and culture.

Commercial benefits

Net Promoter Score (NPS)

When you get the client experience right, clients feel more connected with their physio and the practice. The NPS for your business, and your consultations, will increase. NPS is a top-line benchmark measure of customer satisfaction – it asks each client, typically after their second or third appointment, how likely they are to recommend the service to others on a scale of one to ten.

A high NPS score means that your clients are talking about you in favourable terms to their friends and family – client churn goes down, loyalty is high, and referral business is maximised. This brings significant commercial benefits to a practice which offers opportunities for greater financial rewards and career growth for staff. Another string to the bow in retaining your staff.



Client churn
decreases



Loyalty increases



Referral business
is maximised

Staff retention, acquisition, and motivation are three of the biggest challenges facing physio practices. The constant and practical engagement and measurement of client intrinsic experience measures will improve staff morale and in turn make it easier to retain existing staff and attract new people to join the team.

The process of real-time experience measures will also improve operational performance and increase adherence to treatment, meaning less no-shows and fewer self-termination.

In fact evidence suggests that just the act of receiving an invitation to share feedback, and then completing it, actually increases the connection between the client and their physio. It reminds them of the value of continued adherence.

So feedback doesn't just capture past or existing engagement, but actually helps drive it.

Where to start

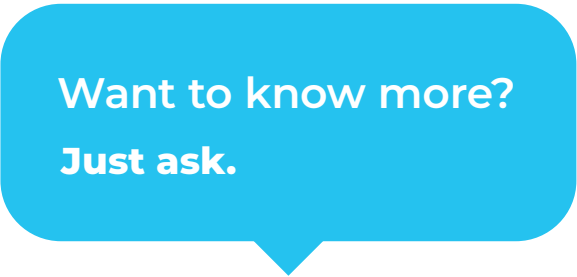
The old adage of “you can’t manage what you can’t measure” holds true here.

Many practices are not capturing their client experience beyond informal anecdotal feedback such as Google reviews or basic forms embedded within their website. Relying on these methods is passive, reactive and provides little in terms of real relevance or value to the practice.

A robust and evidence-based client experience improvement program gives organizations the ability to constantly assess how their client experience varies across domains and locations. Improvements and positive recognition can then be properly measured and managed and the proven improvements in staff retention and engagement can be fully realised.

Cemplicity’s client experience platform has been specifically configured to make it easy for physio practices to enhance staff engagement, effectively connect with clients and increase adherence to treatment.

With industry benchmarks and best practice improvements to measure against, you can make your clients happier and your staff more engaged.



**Want to know more?
Just ask.**

That’s what we’re all about.

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