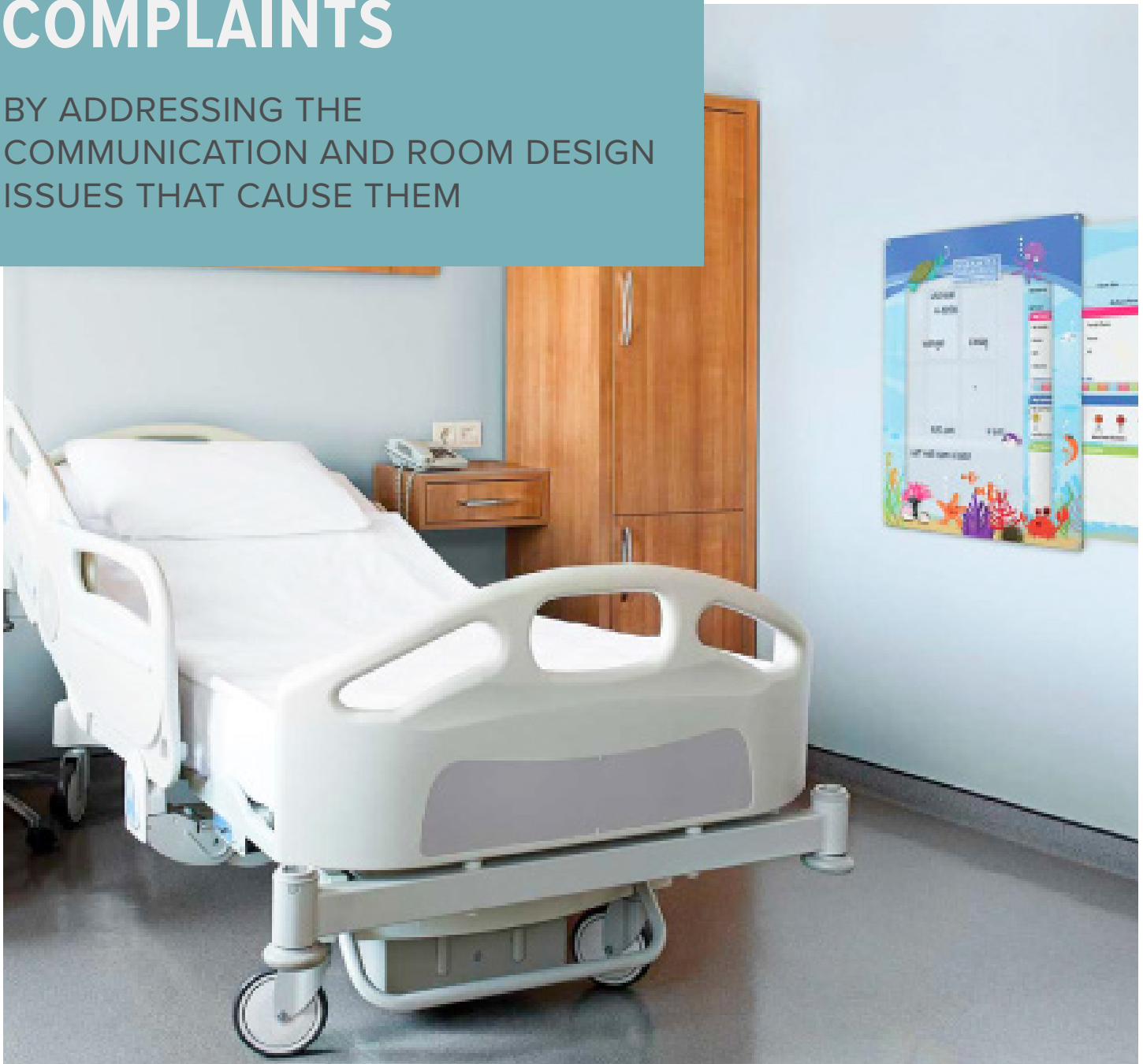


SOLVING THE TOP HOSPITAL PATIENT COMPLAINTS

BY ADDRESSING THE
COMMUNICATION AND ROOM DESIGN
ISSUES THAT CAUSE THEM



Solving The Top Hospital Patient Complaints

By Addressing the Communication and Room Design Issues that Cause Them

What do patients want from healthcare providers? The easy answer is quality care, but that's not the subject of a majority of patient complaints. When research is done regarding patient feedback surveys, it has been found that care quality is relatively low on the list of patient concerns. Some studies have found that **only 11% of patient complaints** are related to quality and safety, a noticeable trend when looking at the data from multiple sources.

This is a good sign for the healthcare industry, as patients clearly feel they are receiving quality care, but healthcare is as much about communication and service as it is about medical treatment. Even if the care patients receive is of the highest quality, they aren't guaranteed to be happy with the service they have received. At the end of the day, patients are also guests within healthcare facilities.

What do these guests want? The data indicates they want better communication.

Most Patient Complaints Stem from Communication Issues

When it comes to patient complaints, it's poor communication, not poor care, that tops the list. **A major study** regarding patient experience found the highest number patient complaints and grievances are related to challenges in two areas:



1. Communication with hospital employees (25%)



2. Patient perceptions that their medical care and/or safety were compromised (14%)

Other notable causes were issues related to appointments and access to care, responses to/delays regarding medical care, and medication communication/pain management. The takeaway is that patients need good communication more than anything else.



More than Half of the 29 Questions on HCAHPS Surveys Can Be Impacted by the Level of Communication in the Hospital Setting

Nurse communication (questions 1, 2, 3)

Doctor communication (questions 5, 6, 7)

Responsiveness of hospital staff (questions 4, 11)

Communication about medicines (questions 13, 14)

Discharge information (questions 16, 17)

Care transition (questions 20, 21, 22)

Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Even patient complaints regarding medical care are not generally the result of poor healthcare outcomes, but poor perceptions of the care they receive. Their complaints are strictly tied to their perception of their medical care—complaints that include allegations of misdiagnosis, inappropriate treatment, and other quality concerns—which can be the result of poor communication by healthcare providers.

The Impact Poor Communication Has on

The Impact Poor Communication Has on Hospitals

Patient complaints are more than bits of negative feedback for hospitals and healthcare facilities to ponder as they try to improve their services. They can be a detriment to a business's reputation, bottom line, and much more.

1. Reimbursements:

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) puts a lot of emphasis on factors other than treatment outcome when distributing Medicare reimbursements. The organization also takes into account customer satisfaction (particularly HCAHPS scores) and readmission rates. In order to get the maximum amount from CMS reimbursements, facilities must take the initiative to drive up patient satisfaction rates while keeping readmission rates low.

2. Malpractice risks:

Patient complaints have been found to increase malpractice lawsuit risks. These complaints include patient dissatisfaction with interpersonal behaviors, care and treatment, and access. Addressing and resolving patient complaints can reduce the risks of lawsuits and costs associated with legal fees and insurance.

3. Provider health and wellness:

Patient complaints can have a profound impact on the provider who is the subject of the complaint. Impacted physicians have been found to have suffered from insomnia, nightmares, stress, and anxiety. At the professional level, they have doubts about medical decisions, fear, anxiety, and the tendency to avoid patients with severe diseases.



4. Provider performance:

Reducing complaints and increasing compliments has had many beneficial results that include improved patient relations, more thorough documentation, increased referrals, and many others. The detrimental impacts of patient complaints on provider performance include breakdowns in patient relations, increased defensive practices, and early retirement.

5. Reputation damage:

87% of consumers have indicated that reputation is important when selecting a hospital. In an age where the Internet has made it easy to publicly review any business, patient complaints can be detrimental to the reputation of a facility. Facilities with high patient experience scores tend to score highly on reputation metrics, and "Communication with Nurses" was the strongest driver of both the "Overall Hospital Rating" and "Recommend Hospital" categories in an analysis of over three million HCAHPS surveys.

Addressing the Root Cause of Patient Complaints

Designing Solutions with Communication in Mind



What are the top patient complaints? [Surveys show](#) most patient complaints are related to the customer service they receive, specifically in the areas of:

- Staff/Patient Communication: 53%
- Long Wait Times: 35%
- Practice Staff Behavior: 12%
- Billing Discrepancies: 2%

What exactly are the complaints made by patients, and how can they be solved? While most of the research in this field [breaks down the taxonomy of patient complaints](#), separating complaints into categories and buckets, there is little in the way of a comprehensive list of actual patient complaints. There has been some review of published studies, surveys, and other resources that compile patient complaints. [U.S. News & World Report](#) compiled a list of common patient complaints in hospital settings that lines up with the taxonomic (classification) breakdown of patient complaints, all of which can be addressed with better patient communication and small interior design tweaks to patient rooms and other areas of the hospital.

10 Common Patient Complaints in Hospital Settings

1. Sleep Interruptions
2. Noise Disturbances
3. Loss of Personal Belongings
4. Staff Entering Without Knocking
5. Outdated Whiteboard Information
6. Poor Communication
7. Unclean Rooms
8. Feeling Disengaged from Their Care
9. Lack of Understanding of Their Room
10. Unprofessional Conduct

Source: U.S. News & World Report

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#1: Sleep Interruptions

Patients do not like to be disturbed throughout the night, but it is often necessary for providers to enter rooms to perform necessary treatments that include:

- Taking vitals
- Administering medications
- Blood transfusions
- Checking devices and other treatment aids

There is nothing that can be done to avoid necessary medical procedures in overnight settings, but there is something healthcare providers can do from a communication standpoint: set a planned schedule and stick to it. More importantly, ensure that patients are made aware of the times in which they will be awakened and the reason for doing so. Fewer surprise sleep interruptions will result in higher patient satisfaction.

Communication Tip: Sleep Interruptions

Use whiteboards with hourly rounding schedules or similar information fields to note the approximate time providers will enter a patient's room to perform routine tasks. This will prepare patients to be awakened at a specific time before they initially go to sleep for the night.

#2: Noise Disruptions

Hospitals can be loud, and patients frequently hear noises throughout the day and night that disturb their rest. These noises can originate from other rooms, hallways, and nursing stations as people go about their business.

Communication Tip: Noise Disruptions

Use nurses' station boards to keep vital patient information on-hand for staff to refer to throughout the day and overnight. This can help limit conversation at nurses' stations and reduce the number of disruptions caused by conversations in work areas. They also help nurses stay organized and on-task, reducing the amount of disruptive communication, meetings, etc. that need to take place in proximity to patient rooms.

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#3: Loss of Personal Belongings

Patients often complain that their personal belongings go missing while they are in the hospital, whether by theft or misplacement. While patients may not bring much while staying long-term in a facility, what they do bring is likely of physical or sentimental value to them. Ensuring that their valuables are well looked after shows that hospital staff care about the patient and what they've brought with them during their stay.



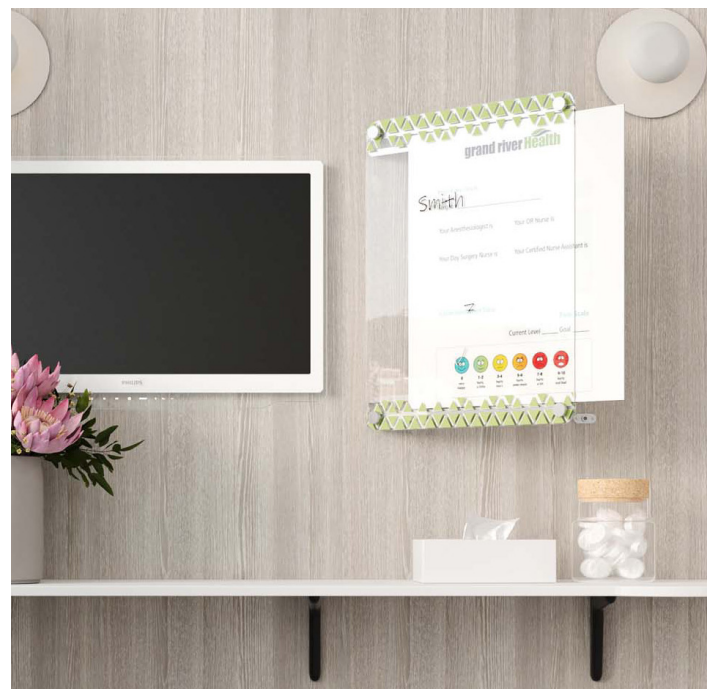
Communication Tip: Staff Entering Without Knocking

Expressly layout schedules with patients so that they know precisely when staff will be entering their rooms, at what times, and what will need to be accomplished during the visit. Focus on the “why” behind the visit. Patients don’t often understand what is happening to them during a procedure (even something as mundane as a vitals check). Explaining what is happening and why can go a long way in reducing patient anxiety and increasing patient satisfaction.

Use patient room whiteboards to communicate times when staff will be entering, what they will be doing, and why they will be doing it.

#4 Staff Entering Without Knocking

Patient rooms are often revolving doors for nurses, physicians, and other staff members, not all of whom knock before entering. This is often seen by patients as a sign of disrespect and an invasion of their privacy. Patient rooms are private spaces; many patients see them more as hotel rooms rather than rooms in a hospital.



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#5: Outdated Whiteboard Information and #6 Poor Communication

Patients and their families want to be kept in the loop regarding their care. Because so much is happening at all times, it's easy for them to become lost and unable to keep up with everything. There's a lot for patients to keep track of (e.g., upcoming schedules to medication times, testing, meals, procedures, and expected discharge dates).

It's vital for hospital staff to keep their patient room whiteboards updated with the most current information regarding patients and their schedules.

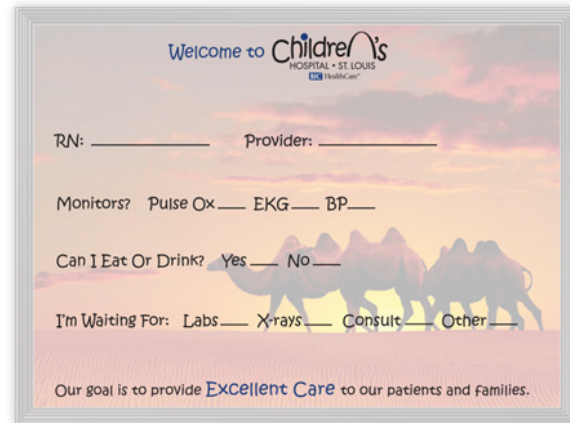
Communication Tip: Outdated Whiteboard Information and Poor Communication

To display as much relevant patient information as possible on whiteboards, invest in custom whiteboards, which allow healthcare facilities to choose the most relevant information fields. Custom whiteboards can be specifically tailored to the floor, unit, or facility where they are placed. The communication fields on them can be configured to cater to:

- Surgical centers
- Emergency rooms
- Memory care rooms
- Maternity centers
- Pediatric centers
- Rehabilitation centers
- Much more.

Create a plan to train nurses and other staff members in how to update whiteboards, with what information, and at what intervals during a patient's stay.

Pediatrics



Welcome to **Children's**
HOSPITAL - ST. LOUIS
Healthcare

RN: _____ Provider: _____

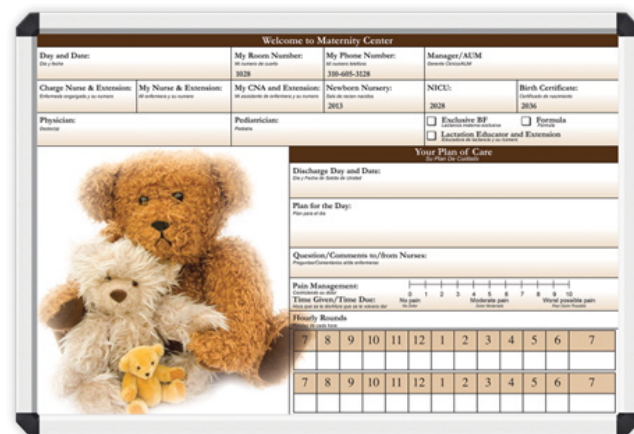
Monitors? Pulse Ox _____ EKG _____ BP _____

Can I Eat Or Drink? Yes _____ No _____

I'm Waiting For: Labs _____ X-rays _____ Consult _____ Other _____

Our goal is to provide **Excellent Care** to our patients and families.

Maternity



Welcome to Maternity Center

Day and Date: Day: _____	My Room Number: My room number: 1028	My Phone Number: My phone number: 310-405-3128	Manager/AUM: My manager: Doreen Doreen
Change Nurse & Extension: My nurse & extension: 2028	My Nurse & Extension: My nurse & extension: 2028	My CNA and Extension: My CNA and extension: 2028	Newborn Nursery: Newborn nursery: 2028
Physician: My physician: 2028	Pediatrician: My pediatrician: 2028	NICU: NICU: 2028	
Birth Certificate: Birth certificate: 2028		Exclusive BF: Exclusive breastfeeding: 2028	
Formula: Formula: 2028		Lactation Educator and Extension: Lactation educator and extension: 2028	

Your Plan of Care
My plan of care:

Discharge Day and Date:
My discharge day and date:
2028

Plan for the Day:
My plan for the day:
2028

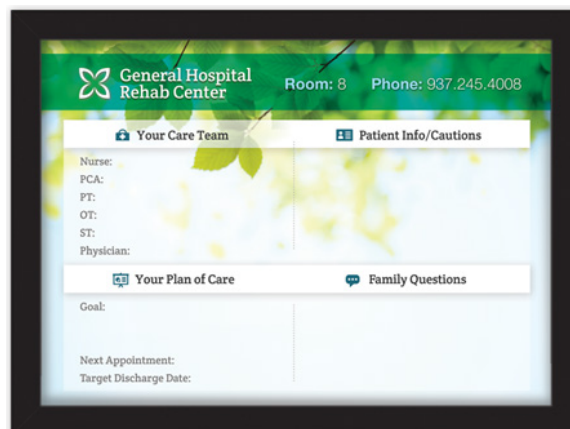
Questions/Comments to/from Nurses:
My questions/comments to/from nurses:
2028

Pain Management:
My pain management:
2028

Time Given/Time Due:
My time given/time due:
2028

Hourly Rounds:
My hourly rounds:
2028

Rehabilitation



General Hospital
Rehab Center

Room: 8 Phone: 937.245.4008

Your Care Team

Nurse: _____

PCA: _____

PT: _____

OT: _____

ST: _____

Physician: _____

Patient Info/Cautions

Your Plan of Care

Goal: _____

Next Appointment: _____

Target Discharge Date: _____

Family Questions

Addressing the Root Cause of Patient Complaints

Designing Solutions with Communication in Mind



Communication Tip: Feeling Disengaged from Their Care

The physical and mental wellbeing of patients can be maintained by keeping them involved in the decisions regarding their care, no matter how small. Use patient room whiteboard to lay out and explain everything that is happening with their care, writing down patient treatment options, and discussing the information to ensure they understand the why, when, and how behind each decision.

#7: Unclean Rooms

Patients spend nearly all their time in their personal room, so keeping rooms clean is integral to their comfort during their stay. Hospital acquired infections (HAI), [one of the top 10 leading causes of death in the USA](#), also pose a danger to patients. Keeping rooms germ-free is not only important for patient satisfaction, but also for their health.

Communication Tip: Unclean Rooms

Choose whiteboards and other furniture made from materials that are easy to clean and disinfect. Glass and other non-porous materials are naturally resistant to harboring bacteria and can be easily wiped clean with most common medical-grade disinfectants.

#8: Feeling Disengaged from Their Care

Patients often feel helpless when they are in the hospital, mostly because of a lack of engagement with their care. They are present but completely out of the loop when it comes to their care. This can be the result of many factors:

- Lack of communication
- Limited involvement in healthcare decisions
- Rushed interactions with physicians and nurses
- Inadequate information provided to them
- Complex healthcare terminology
- Frequent changes in care plans

This disengagement often leads to anxiety, poor health outcomes, and lower patient satisfaction.

Addressing the Root Cause of Patient Complaints

Designing Solutions with Communication in Mind



Communication Tip: Lack of Understanding of Their Room

To mitigate this create clear and concise instructions for operating the TV, call buttons, bed controls, etc. on whiteboards. This makes it easy for patients to refer to these instructions without having to disturb nursing staff throughout the day.

#9: Lack of Understanding of Their Room

From operating the television and remote to how to order food, cleaning schedules, etc., patients want to know their way around their own room, including how to operate devices necessary for their recovery, comfort, or enjoyment. The problem is that hospital rooms can be complicated. There's a lot of things that cannot and shouldn't be touched, resulting in anxiety in patients simply trying to make themselves comfortable.

#10: Professionalism

Some patients believe hospital workers act unprofessionally in their communication, mannerisms, and actions. They also associate this unprofessionalism as a reflection of the level of care they receive. This perception of unprofessionalism can be both the cause and the result of breakdowns in communication. Patients are less likely to open up to providers they do not trust. Conversely, a lack of healthy communication can cause patients to lack trust in providers, resulting in decreased satisfaction with their care.

Communication Tip: Professionalism

Improve physician/patient communication by using patient room whiteboards to their fullest extent. Research has shown that patient satisfaction and HCAHPS scores can be improved when whiteboards are used. The use of whiteboards has significantly increased the proportion of patients who knew their physician, goals for admission, estimated discharge date, and more.

Make them a daily part of any treatment plan for the best results.

About Ghent Healthcare

For more than 40 years, we've been crafting and serving our customers' needs with innovative and customizable products, exceptional customer service, and on-time, hassle-free delivery. As a premium supplier of visual communication tools, Ghent is your one-stop shop for blended solutions to enhance your office, conference room, workspace, or classroom.

Quality: With over 95 percent of our products made in the USA, we know what quality looks like. Our products feature durable materials and surfaces that are resistant to scratches, stains, ghosting, and wear. We outlast the competition and back our products with up to 50-year warranties.

Customization: Every whiteboard, glassboard and bulletin board that leaves our dock is made to order by men and women who understand the importance of quality craftsmanship. We feature near endless customization options that include size, shape, color, materials, fonts, images, and so much more.

Easy to Use and Clean: Our products are manufactured to make writing on them a breeze. They are also easily cleaned and disinfected. Surfaces and materials are specifically chosen to adhere to BIFMA's guidelines for performance as it relates to typical cleaners, disinfectants, and methods for cleaning and maintenance.

Secure Shipping: We ship our products on time and guarantee that they arrive damage free. We have taken the time to master all the complexities that go into shipping and have developed custom packaging specifically molded to protect our products, which is why we have the lowest damage rates in the industry.

Incredible Customer Service: As a team of passionate and qualified individuals, we work to follow through on our promises, from marketing and customer service to production to shipping. We are confident that you will find the perfect visual communication tool that is perfectly customized to meet your needs.

From our people to your people, you can count on us.



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