

The Patient Experience Post

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Since the mid-1990s, Baird has helped healthcare organizations nationwide improve the patient experience and enhance organizational culture. Baird's culture assessment and diagnosis include experience mapping, medical mystery shopping, and focus groups to reveal the real customer experiences within your organization. Using your patients' experiences, Baird and her team prescribe critical next steps for improving patient satisfaction and HCAHPS scores.

Coaching for Engagement: 3 Keys to Success

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Employee engagement is top-of-mind in the healthcare industry these days with a confluence of factors impacting the industry—from consumerism, value-based care, mergers and acquisitions and the growth of telehealth, to an aging workforce that has already reached traditional retirement age. The outflux of baby boomers from healthcare organizations will continue to grow as the competition for a diminishing supply of competent employees and clinicians heats up.

Compounding the situation are declining rates of engagement among employees in all sectors. Willis Tower Watson research from 2014 revealed low levels of highly engaged workers—and close to 25 percent of employees actively disengaged. That disengagement has a significant impact on the patient experience—and it's not a positive impact!

It's a topic we cover in our half-day workshop, [Coaching for Engagement and Improved Performance](#).

First Key to Success

One critical action for managers is to spend time assessing the engagement level of *each of their employees*. We use four levels of engagement:

- Fully engaged
- Engaged
- Somewhat Engaged
- Disengaged

The difference between fully engaged and disengaged is a matter of scale but, chances are, you can quickly identify those employees who are engaged in their work (who are productive, proactive and positive) from those who are disengaged—who are negative, non-productive and often absent, either physically or mentally. But identifying them and addressing their unique needs is another thing. Employees at each level will benefit from different coaching objectives.

Second Key to Success

While it might seem logical to focus most of your efforts on your disengaged and somewhat engaged employees to help them become more engaged, don't ignore your engaged and fully engaged employees! That

happens far too often. In fact, [Gallup research](#) emphasizes the importance of focusing on your *strong* performers, not just those who need improvement. It's like a family situation where the "problem child" gets all the attention while the "good kid" gets ignored.

Don't overlook the value of the fully engaged and engaged employees on your team, assuming that because they're solid they don't need your time and attention. Just the opposite! These employees are the backbone of your team. Know what they need. Take time to understand their aspirations and how you can provide a supportive, encouraging environment.

Third Key to Success

Nip disengagement in the bud! When you see something, say something. It's dangerous to allow disengaged individuals to their own devices; their negativity can quickly spread to even your best employees. That cancerous behavior can erode morale, trust and even leaders' credibility if not addressed.

Too often we have a tendency to overlook the symptoms of disengagement. We think, "oh, it's not that big a deal," or "oh, it's just this one time." Tune into the excuses you may be making in your own mind. It could be avoidance behavior. Avoid those tendencies. Be vigilant in spotting, and responding to, signs of disengagement.

Lack of engagement costs healthcare organizations a lot in terms of lost productivity, turnover—and the impact on the patient experience.

Do you need help spotting and acting on the signs of disengagement in your workplace? Learn more about Baird's leader workshop, [Coaching for Engagement and Improved Performance](#) here.

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Nurse, author, and consultant Kristin Baird, "Healthcare's Customer Service Guru," is the author of *Raising the Bar on Service Excellence: The Health Care Leader's Guide to Putting Passion into Practice* (Golden Lamp Press, 2008), *Reclaiming the Passion: Stories that Celebrate the Essence of Nursing* (Golden Lamp Press, 2004), and *Customer Service In Healthcare: A Grassroots Approach to Creating a Culture of Service Excellence* (Jossey Bass, 2000). The Baird Group provides consulting, mystery shopping, and training services for improving the patient experience. To learn more, please visit <http://baird-group.com> or call 920-563-4684.