

The Patient Experience Post

Healthcare's Resource for
Service Excellence
May 2020



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.

Culture by Design, Not Default - 3 things leaders must do now

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

"The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis.' One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger — but recognize the opportunity." — John F. Kennedy

When we look back at 2020 I hope that we can look with pride at how we, in healthcare, seized the opportunities while dealing with the danger imposed by COVID-19.

Healthcare is under an international microscope. But the microscope that should matter most, is that within your own organization. It is the one held by your own staff. How the COVID situation is managed today is shaping your culture of tomorrow.

When the dust settles, will you have a workforce who is committed, loyal, and fully engaged? Or will you be dealing with massive turnover caused by disillusionment? What you do today will determine the outcome.

Basic triage tells us to focus on the ABCs. In medical terms, that is airway, breathing, and circulation. Using this analogy, let me apply this to culture.

1. Put your people first

This, by no means, implies that you abandon patient-centered philosophy. It means that they are the most essential element in determining your organization's future. They will determine whether you deliver safe, high quality, patient-centered care today and tomorrow. Know what is happening in their departments, not to micro-manage, but to ensure the unit-based leadership is in sync with your vision. Unfortunately, too many front line managers do not have the leadership skills needed. This is the time to make sure these managers get the coaching they need. How? See #2

2. Be visible

Do not let a day go by when you don't walk the departments. Round with intention. This means being out there to touch base on all shifts including weekends and holidays. We all keep using the term, "We're all

in this together.” Stop saying it and show it. When you are out there; connect. Don’t just do a drive-by because you are busy or because you fear questions or comments that might be difficult.

Thank people for their hard work, flexibility, and courage. Whether they are on COVID units or other areas, they are still dealing with multiple stressors and work and home. Know them. Use their names. Ask about their lives outside of work.

3. Stay anchored in mission, vision and values

Leadership is tough in normal times. COVID has added a whole new dimension. Staying anchored in mission, vision, and values (MVV) takes some thought. How are your decisions helping to live the MVV? Tie it back. Just because you, as leaders, get the connection doesn’t mean the woman scrubbing the floors sees the intention. Say it. Show it.

What you do today is setting the stage for the culture of tomorrow.
What’s on your agenda?

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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.