

The Patient Experience Post
 Healthcare's Resource for
 Service Excellence
 August 2011



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.

A Good (Two) Reads: *Coaching* and *The Speed of Trust*

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

I often go back and re-read books that have made a difference to me in leadership. This month's review is actually one of those times when I am going back to a couple of books that are worth a second look.

Ferdinand Fournies' *Coaching* and Stephen M.R. Covey's *The Speed of Trust* are two great resources for leaders in coaching staff to deliver great customer service and also build relationships that foster an optimal service environment. In *Coaching*, Fournies brings to light a popular problem in today's stressful work economy: if your employees aren't motivated and appreciated, they won't elicit respect and happiness in their jobs. In keeping with our focus on phone encounters, you can conclude that disgruntled phone operators will deliver a less-than-desirable first impression. So the solution sounds simple: keep your workers happy and your patients who phone in will be happy, too. This is easier said than done....

Keeping employees encouraged and engaged can result in increased productivity, a rise in quality of service, and more creativity at work. These positive consequences are only reached through proper recognition of employee work. Fournies points out that all types of consequences need to be acknowledged. How does a worker know he's doing well if you don't tell him? The same goes for employees who need to work on their customer service. Get to know your employees and get to know their behaviors. You can't change people, Fournies points out, but you can change their behaviors at work. By laying out guidelines for service at your organization, employees will have a clear structure of the service they know to offer. When these gold standards for service are seen exemplified in your staff, let them know they're on track! In addition, it's important to say how an employee is doing well (or wrong) so no one is second-guessing procedures.

Besides focusing on coaching your employees for excellent service, promote coaching for excellent work environments with other employees. Covey believes there is one thing that drives the whole world to grow: trust. If your employees don't trust you, they won't think they should listen to you. And if this feeling of distrust is carried over to your patients, you can't build loyalty.

Covey explains the positive consequences that result when trust is established in a work environment: confidence (not suspicion) and speed (not second-guesses). When workers are motivated with the confidence of trust, they increase their speed of service without any feeling of distrust or dissatisfaction to hold them back. It is important to create a sense of trust when new employees are hired, but equally as important and easy to rebuild trust with current staff members. Covey believes trust can be achieved through speaking honestly (lies waste time and money), righting wrongs as soon as they happen in a respectful and non-hurtful way, speaking clearly for desired results to

lessen the need for “service recoveries,” creating a shared vision of service for everyone to work towards, and to inspire creativity by acknowledging good work, which increases motivation.

You can’t build a company without employees, and you if you aren’t leading your employees to reflect and symbolize all that your organization stands for, then expect to fall. Coach your workers to embody the essence of service excellence—whether on phones or onsite—and they will know what it takes to be a part of your team. It is then up to you to recognize their work to see continued results and consistently satisfied patients.

Since this issue is dedicated to creating great phone encounters, keep in mind that a great phone encounter is only possible with a great phone staff. And a great phone staff is only possible through a true understanding and recognition of your healthcare organization’s goals and standards. It is the job of leaders and managers to make sure their employees are engaged, motivated, and happy, and patients will take notice. As you take a look at your organization’s approach to customer service over the phone, think about how to take both Fournies’ and Covey’s principles forward through trust and coaching.

Learn more about ways you can ensure that all of your customer interactions, including over-the-phone interactions, support your healthcare organization’s brand, as in [Living Your Brand Promise](#), featuring Kent Seltman, co-author of Management Lessons From Mayo Clinic. As the former Director of Marketing at Mayo Clinic, Seltman was charged with managing the brand for this world-renowned organization. During this 90-minute presentation, you’ll hear about crucial elements in aligning the brand promise with the patient experience in order to build trust and credibility with customers. For only \$89, you’ll receive all this: pre-session worksheets, a session workbook, webinar slides, and an audio CD of the 90-minute webinar, complete with the Q&A session.

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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).*