

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.

Intentional Culture

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there," is an often-repeated quote from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Paraphrased, it simply means that without goals and a plan, you could end up wandering aimlessly. It makes a compelling case for planning. Most businesses spend ample time planning to ensure financial success. The most successful businesses have clear missions, visions, and strategic plans. In spite of all that vital planning, many have not defined the desired culture which can leave a significant void. Sure they've defined the vision for the business, but that isn't the same as defining the vision for the culture of the future. Without intentional effort, your culture can easily get away from you, morphing into something that may or may not reflect the organization you desire.

As we work with clients, we spend time helping them to define and create intentional cultures. It's a concept that resonates, not just in healthcare, but across many industries. In fact, [Forbes recently ran an article](#) that talked about how creating an intentional culture that engages employees can create big benefits for organizations.

The Baird Model provides a four-phase pathway for sustainable culture improvement that starts with assessment. It is critical that organizations first understand their current culture and then define where they want to go. Then, based on their desired culture, they can begin to develop strategies that will close the culture gaps and ultimately align behaviors to mobilize and reinforce. Four critical phases of the Baird Model include:

1. Assessment
2. Strategy
3. Mobilization
4. Reinforcement

Critically, each of these phases must be driven by intention.

I was [recently interviewed for an article in Becker's Hospital Review](#) about my thoughts on the role that culture plays in driving employee engagement and satisfaction in healthcare organizations. Specifically, the writer was looking at Google's culture and asking whether healthcare has anything to learn from what they have achieved. Of course we can.

What has Google achieved that sets their culture apart? They have created an intentional culture. Their workplace environment didn't just happen by chance; it was created by design. The leaders purposefully fashioned an environment defined by fun and what some might call "off-the-wall" activities that would drive the behaviors they were looking for—creativity and innovation.

Getting to the intentional culture involves four crucial steps:

1. Engage key stakeholders in a meaningful discussion about the ideal.
 - a. Use a facilitator that can help them think outside the proverbial box. After all, they may not know what they don't know.
 - b. Identify key elements that align with the business mission, vision, and values
 - c. Craft a working statement.

2. Seek to understand the current reality
 - a. Conduct a culture assessment to reveal beliefs and attitudes among key stakeholders.
 - b. Identify strengths and opportunities in context of weaknesses.
3. Conduct a gap analysis and identify shifts needed.
4. Refine the culture vision statement and key roles in achieving the shifts needed.

Consider your organization. What kind of culture do you want to create? A culture of exceptional commitment to a positive patient experience? A culture of teamwork and innovation? If that's the case, look around—what are you doing, explicitly, to drive that desired culture? Is your environment, and the actions of your leaders aligned with your desired culture?

The intentional culture doesn't happen by chance. It must be achieved by design.

The bottom line: define your desired culture and create a plan to achieve it. Once you define the desired culture, you can hire for it, train for it and rally support for it. With that level of clarity, you'll be able to spot people, processes, and behaviors that aren't aligned and screen crucial decisions through that culture lens.

Phone communication is an essential part of the patient experience and is often the first part of the patient experience. In just seconds, your patients are deciding if you are friendly, knowledgeable, concerned, and willing to help. In fact, research shows that after just a 2-minute phone encounter, patients are clear about whether or not they would return to your organization or recommend it. Patients rely on phone encounters to make appointments and seek clinical advice. Other callers rely on phone encounters to gain vital information about a loved one. In both situations, it's important that you create a positive, trust-building experience. To engage your staff in essential phone skills, look toward the tips and tools in [You'll Have Them at "Hello": Phone skills that will WOW your callers every time](#). For only \$199, you'll receive the following: the video recording, presentation slides, a transcript of the recording, a participant guidebook, a moderator guidebook, a quality assurance tool, and additional handouts! This session is also available as a live training workshop.

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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.