

## *The Patient Experience Post*

Healthcare's Resource for  
Service Excellence  
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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.

## Lessons from the Field: Labels Can be Sticky

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At the approach of a new year, many people reflect on the year that is ending to capture what went well and where there might be opportunities for improvement. I was doing just that as I was wrapping gifts and I had an epiphany of sorts. I take great pains to buy gifts that I hope my friends and family will both enjoy and use. I wrap those gifts in beautiful paper, adding ribbons and bows to make the package that much more appealing. And then, I slap a boring, if not down-right ugly label – you know, the kind you use on file folders – on what, as my husband pointed out, might otherwise be considered a work of art.

My husband's comment brought to mind a current coaching client, who may be the most emotionally intelligent person I have ever met. His self-awareness is surpassed only by his eagerness to learn and his willingness to step outside his comfort zone to become the best version of himself possible. And yet, during our coaching session, he often makes some self-denigrating statement, diminishing the progress he is making toward his goals. He calls himself "Mr. Smiles" in reference to his belief that he doesn't handle difficult situations well. When I asked him about it, he said, "It's just a silly little nickname I gave myself." He can't see the potential damage he is doing to himself with that label. The truth is, he is new to his leadership role and doesn't have a lot of experience in dealing with difficult situations. That doesn't mean he can't, it just means he doesn't know-how. But "Mr. Smiles" has convinced himself that this is a major short-coming he can't overcome and his ugly label is helping to reinforce that belief. If this goes on long enough, that label will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Another of my coaching clients is struggling with how her team is dealing with changes that the newly hired team lead wants to implement. One staff member, who was offered the team lead role and turned it down, seems to be having a particularly hard time. My coaching client refers to this staff member as "the resistor." "The resistor" is someone who my client thought highly enough of to offer the team lead job. True, that person opted not to take the job and may have other ideas about how things could be done, but that doesn't mean her ideas are less valuable today than they were yesterday. That "resistor" label is covering up everything else of value that this person brings to the table and is interfering with my coaching client's ability to effectively address the issues underlying this person's behavior.

These are but two examples that serve as lessons from the field. Before you go slapping a label of any kind on yourself or your team member, make a list of the positive attributes you or your teammate possess. Then speak to yourself or that other person from a position of respect and appreciation about behaviors that you would like to see change. If you aren't sure you have the skills to do that, contact us at the Baird Group about leadership coaching and



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how we might help you honor yourself and your team for the people you are and the people you can become.

To learn more about the [Baird Model for Service Excellence](#), employee engagement or leadership development workshops, or to sign up for her FREE newsletter, write to [info@baird-group.com](mailto:info@baird-group.com).

