

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.

MIA: Why your strategic plan should be focused on *doing* not *planning*

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Strategic planning may not be the favorite activity of many healthcare leaders, but it is arguably one of the most important. Unfortunately, too often the plan is created and then pushed aside—in the “old days” gathering dust on the shelf, these days more likely in an electronic file somewhere. When it comes to planning for your future patient experience and culture, think of it as a type of strategic plan. Many, if not all, of the principles apply.

Strategic planning is not, or shouldn't be, about the development of the plan. It should be about the implementation of the plan. Think MIA: *Make It Actionable*, not *Missing In Action*.

“Strategic planning works,” says Linda Pophal, author of [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Strategic Planning](#). “And,” she adds, “it doesn't have to be the laborious, time-intensive, analysis-paralysis activity that many people believe it to be.”

How can you ensure that your plan will be actionable? There are a number of important steps you can take:

1. Pick the right leader for the effort. The leader should be the person who will ultimately be responsible for the implementation of the plan.
2. Select a non-biased facilitator to help you through the planning process. This might be someone from outside your organization, but it could be someone from inside who has the necessary skills.
3. Importantly, throughout the process you should always be thinking of the desired end result. As Stephen Covey so famously told us, “Start with the end in mind.” The end, in this case, is the successful attainment of the strategies you develop in support of your measurable objectives and overall goals.
4. Make sure the results of the plan are embedded in your overall organizational processes—budgeting process, work plans, etc.
5. Keep it real. Verify that your stated mission, vision, and goals reflect reality. If you've found yourself addressing the same issues year after year and not making any progress, maybe those issues as you've identified them don't really reflect your strategic priorities. What are you getting done? That will give you a clue as to what is really important to your organization.
6. Finally, communicate! Don't keep your plan—or the planning process—a secret. If your staff isn't fully aware of what you're doing

and why, how do you expect them to help you achieve desired results?

“It is not enough to just develop the plan—you have to work the plan,” says Pophal. “This requires that the right people will be working on the right things at the right time, often in collaboration.”

It requires ongoing focus, measurement, and—sometimes—course correction.

The magic of strategic planning isn’t in the creation of the plan, although that’s an important step. The real magic is in the implementation of the plan: the doing. That’s why, when you embark on your next strategic planning effort, you should focus on the acronym MIA: *Make It Actionable*. From the very outset of the planning process, you should take steps to ensure that the plan will actually be implemented.

Make sure that your planning is followed by doing. MIA.

*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).