

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.

Medical Mystery Shopping Myth Busters

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

If you think you know all about medical mystery shopping, and that it's not for you, you might be surprised. Mystery shopping reveals key information for improving and maintaining an optimal patient experience at your hospital or practice. It helps you determine if you are fulfilling your brand promise. Read on to learn how we dispel common myths about mystery shopping and show you how much your company can benefit from it....

Seven Myths about Medical Mystery Shopping:

Myth 1: Mystery shopping is used as a "Gotcha!" moment and will make my company look bad. Mystery shopping is not used as a trap or a means to point fingers. Mystery shopping is a valuable method for improving quality, including identifying weaknesses AND strengths, and, ultimately, helping to identify your company's star performers and best practices.

Myth 2: Anyone can be a mystery shopper. At Baird, our mystery shoppers go through Baird Group Certification before they perform phone or on-site visits. Along the same line, a lot of companies think we employ shoppers from all over the country to assess your organization. This is not true. We recruit shoppers within your region so that they are assessing according to what they expect in the market.

Myth 3: "Tailored to your organization's needs" means "Tailored to break your budget." We work with you to provide the information you need and with a budget you can afford. At Baird, we focus on your service goals what your service goals and lay out a plan to reach those goals while staying within your budget.

Myth 4: Mystery patients suck up huge amounts of time that could be spent on "real" patients. Our mystery shoppers never present themselves with life- or limb-threatening emergent conditions that would elevate their priority over your real patients'. When you look at the bigger picture, mystery shopping studies are designed with your true customers' needs in mind. They evaluate your current patient experience to plan for the experiences of future patients who haven't even walked through the doors of your organization yet, or called to make an appointment.

Myth 5: Mystery shopping patients overwhelm our staff. Baird spends time scheduling projects so that shopper encounters are spread out over a certain period to avoid undue burden on your staff. Your staff is trained to treat every patient—on phone or on site—with the same amount of courtesy, compassion, and attentiveness, so every type of encounter is vital to the performance and reputation of your organization.

Myth 6: Mystery shopping is useless—we do patient satisfaction surveys already. Patient satisfaction survey results can only give you so much information. Surveys give you quantitative data that can't always be decoded

for detailed examples. In addition, there is a time lag between the actual experience and the received surveys. By combining mystery shopping with patient satisfaction surveys, you move beyond the what (the scores) and into the why (the events combined with the emotional response). Shoppers dive deep into feelings associated with their experiences at your organization, adding quality to your quantity, and telling you specifically about the first impression your site or staff made, with details from the heart.

Myth 7: I can get the same results if my organization does the mystery shopping itself. Mystery shopping does not have to be outsourced to a company like Baird—it can be done on your own—but you will be missing out on a crucial element that your own staff can't match: objectivity. By using an objective, outside company to handle the mystery shopping, you gain the advantage of unbiased callers or visitors who are not already emotionally connected to the company. Feedback is taken from Baird Certified shoppers and consolidated into one report that highlights common threads throughout every type of encounter at your organization that your staff might miss.

When patient satisfaction data from surveys is bad, everyone wants to explain it away or blame the survey or the methodology. Mystery shopping tells the stories that resonate with the heart. The most important thing that mystery shopping does for an organization is to move information (data) from the head to the heart.

-Kristin Baird

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.

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

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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).