

The Patient Experience Post

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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.

3 Surefire Ways to Improve Your Patient Experience in 2020

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Over the past several years, CEOs have named patient experience as a top priority and, yet, many report they are not achieving the results that they would like. At the same time, Value-Based Purchasing is here to stay, and that means the patient experience will continue to be tied to reimbursement. In addition to these facts, hospital CEOs also identify growth as a top priority. Here's the cold, hard truth. You can't achieve growth without a good patient experience. Why? Because growth won't happen if a consumer has one encounter with you and leaves. Real growth happens when patients use your services and then become raving fans, telling everyone they know that you are the best.

When I look back on all of the organizations I've worked with over the years, there are some common elements among the most successful. They include:

Focus on Engagement First

Employee engagement is the core of a great patient experience. When employees feel valued, supported and connected to purpose, they are far more likely to deliver a consistently positive patient experience. In these organizations, leaders have a strong connection to purpose and help others maintain a strong connection as well. It helps build and maintain engagement at all levels.

To help reinforce engagement, leaders take the time to have engagement conversations with individuals throughout the year, not just during the annual review. They know [how to coach people](#) at different levels of engagement and help them set goals for improvement.

In these organizations, leaders recognize the value of speaking the language of and reinforcing the mission, vision and values as a normal part of daily operations. They make sure that the mission, vision and values are living, breathing elements of the culture and not a plaque on the wall.

Develop Behavior-based Standards Aligned with Values

Most organizations have defined their values, but not all have translated those values into observable, behavioral standards for service excellence. The organizations that have enjoyed the greatest success in patient experience have defined their "way" through standards that help everyone live the values consistently. Employees learn the standards as part of orientation, but it doesn't stop there. Managers know how to coach, mentor, and model for service behaviors.

Validate for Accountability

It's never enough to just put out an edict about your expectations. High performing organizations know the value of validating the actual patient experience. They don't rely solely on patient satisfaction surveys to paint the picture of what happens on the front line. These organizations do regular shadowing on the units and conduct [observational research](#) to drill down into the facts and feelings behind the patient satisfaction scores.

The simplest way to validate behaviors is through rounding, but rounding alone won't shed light on every aspect of the patient experience. Doing observational research or mystery shopping, you can learn more about what happens during every aspect of an encounter.

Plan to make 2020 the year you achieve all of your patient experience goals. Start by learning from the top performers.

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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.