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 Things All PXPs Need to do in 2016 to Advance Their PX Journey

*by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA*

It's a new role—and a challenging one—Patient Experience Professionals (PXPs) have emerged as a new focus of attention for improving the patient experience. But, while many of today's PXPs have come from within their own healthcare organizations, often from clinical roles, they find themselves challenged to make the improvements they have been charged with.

Why? For a variety of reasons. For those coming from within, issues are sometimes related to an inability to move beyond the image of their previous role and gain the credibility they need. For others—even those who have been hired from other organizations—a lack of visible leadership commitment and support can be a barrier. And in other cases, the new PXP is bombarded with requests (or demands) without an action plan in place to guide the journey.

As we enter a new year, it's time for all PXPs to renew their commitment to ensuring that they can advance the patient experience journey in 2016 to not only boost their customer service and HCAHPS ratings but, more importantly, to serve their patients' needs well. How can you successfully get your head around your game plan for 2016?

Here are three things to focus on as you enter the new year:

1. Start with an audit. There's no value in simply moving forward with random activities, even if they seem to be great ideas. Instead, start with an audit of your organization's current state. What's working? What's not? In what areas of your organization are patients highly satisfied? In what areas are there gaps between their expectations and your ability to deliver? What's lacking, or obsolete? As part of this audit you will uncover not only areas of opportunity for improvement but, hopefully, examples of best practices throughout your system that can be replicated in other areas. This audit, though, can't effectively be done without consideration of key stakeholders.

2. Assess stakeholder relations. This is not a journey that you can pursue on your own. PXPs need to develop strong relationships with a wide network of individuals, across departments that are both clinical and administrative—and across roles that range from the top of the organization down to the front lines. How actively are your stakeholders currently engaged? What steps could you take to better engage them through a clearer mission and vision with consistent messaging to convey both expectations and outcomes? For instance, if something is obsolete, who do you have to bring to the table to discuss that so that you're not killing off sacred cows without meaning to or without being aware that this is somebody's "baby"? One of the things that we often find as we work with PXPs, is that those without a

marketing background may struggle to identify all of the relevant stakeholders. We're not talking about just patients here, but any individuals—inside or outside your organization—who might be able to support you in your efforts (or who might serve as barriers to your success)? Some of these stakeholders may have already devoted time and talent to the patient experience and should not be left by the wayside. It's important to identify and honor the work that has been done in the past.

3. Check in with senior leaders to ensure alignment. You'll never achieve your goals if your actions and initiatives are not aligned with the priorities of your organization's senior leaders. There are simply too many moving parts in any healthcare organization. What we often find, here, is that many PXP positions are entry level and meaning they don't have experience interacting with C-suite and may not know how to ask for what they need to achieve desired results. Many people appointed to this role are afraid to ask for help because they fear being viewed as weak or ineffective. But that's not going to help to further the journey for the organization. Make sure you're crystal clear on what your senior leaders want and expect of you. Then do an honest appraisal of where you are now and what support you need from them and how to ask for that support. If your actions aren't aligned with leadership priorities, you are destined for failure. Begin these conversations now to share both what you're learning through your audits and to learn about, and fully understand, organizational priorities, goals, and objectives. Don't take the risk of working in opposition—instead, take steps to unite, gain synergy, and strengthen your role.

An important consideration for PXPs is that, in most situations, they are influencers, not controllers. They don't have control over hiring and firing or ongoing performance reviews, but they do have influence. So how are you going to leverage your influencer with stakeholders to get the job done?

It's a big job, but you can manage it if you follow these, and other steps. These initial steps can help you pave the way for results that might, otherwise, prove elusive.

Need help along the way? The PXP Advisor will guide you through these steps, and more. You'll never find a more comprehensive toolbox for advancing your PX journey and fostering personal and professional development. We're not going to do the job for you; our role is to coach, teach, and give you the tools you need to be successful. We're here to help. Give us a call.

*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](http://baird-group.com) or call 920-563-4684.