

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.

4 Tips for Improving your On-the-spot-Coaching

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Years ago, Ken Blanchard popularized the notion of “catching employees doing something right” in his popular book *The One-Minute Manager*. Blanchard was on to something. Although he brought the concept to light back in 1982, almost thirty years later we still tend to overlook the positive side of coaching or, as I like to refer to it, on-the-spot coaching.

Every day we have multiple opportunities to catch our employees doing something right—and to let them know about it. As I talk with employees around the country, and review the literature on employee engagement, one thing I find over and over again is that not getting enough feedback and support is a major dissatisfier for employees.

When it comes to employee engagement, a few things really matter:

1. Having their supervisors or managers spend time with them.
2. Receiving regular feedback.
3. Always knowing where they stand.

As leaders, we know these things. But, we have a tendency to think that feedback and development need to be delivered in a formal way. We'll offer a two-hour course on improving customer satisfaction, or building relationships with co-workers, and consider these to be examples of employee development. But, we'll walk right past an employee having a positive interaction with a patient or co-worker and not say a word.

Leaders often discount the importance of on-the-spot-coaching and how those “teachable moments” can really increase an individual's sense of engagement. In addition, we often think of coaching as something we do to correct behavior, rather than reinforce behavior. It can work in both situations.

So, what can we do to become better on-the-spot coaches? We can:

1. Make a commitment to catch employees doing something right, even if it's a seemingly “little thing.” For our patients, sometimes it's those “little things” that are most meaningful and memorable.
2. Round daily. Get out of your office and in front of your staff. Interact with them in their environments.
3. Be concrete and specific when giving feedback. “Good job” is not as motivating for an employee as: “Pat, I liked the way you took the time just now to ask that visitor if they were lost. You picked up on their nonverbal cues and immediately acted to make sure they had the assistance they needed.”
4. Let them know when they've been coached!

As leaders, we need to be explicit. We need to let employees know that they've been coached! If we don't, the moment may be lost. We can do this by

simply ending the conversation with a comment like: “Thanks for the coaching moment!” We may even take a lighter approach and use the phrase “you’ve been coached!” (along the lines of “you’ve been *Punk’d!*”) to help employees recognize and remember these teachable moments.

Whatever your approach, make sure that you’re not missing out on the myriad of teaching moments that present themselves to you each and every day. Your employees—and, ultimately, your patients—will thank you for it!

(P.S. You’ve been coached!)

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).*