

The Patient Experience Post

Healthcare's Resource for
Service Excellence
August 2010



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.

Behavioral Interviewing Techniques to Draw Out the Service-minded Person

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Traditional interview questions ask candidates about what they might do on the job. This can give insight into the candidate's thought process and approach to different types of situations, but it is not highly predictive of what the candidate would really do. That's where behavioral interviewing comes into play.

Behavioral interviewing is technique that was developed by industrial psychologists in the 1970's. It is based on the belief that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. When you're interviewing candidates and hoping to find some top-notch service-minded people, you could ask traditional questions like: "What would you do in a situation where a patient is making a demand you can't meet?" The candidates would reflect and provide a response based on what they think they might do.

Using the behavior-based approach, you would reframe the question slightly and ask: "Tell me about a situation you faced where a patient made a demand you couldn't meet. How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome?" This question requires the candidate to recall an actual situation and tell what they actually did in that situation.

Of course, you can't be entirely sure that the candidate is being completely forthcoming, but the predictability of this response is much higher than in the first example.

Here are some additional questions that can help you learn about job candidates' service behaviors:

- In your current position, who are your customers? What are their needs? How do you know you are meeting their needs?
- Tell us about one of your demanding customers. What makes them demanding? How do you manage the relationship effectively?
- Can you identify a situation where you received some customer feedback that made you re-think the way you were working?
- When asking this type of question, be prepared to give your job applicants plenty of time to reflect on their past positions to come up with a good example. Also, be prepared to ask follow-up questions to probe for the information you're looking for. If a candidate says: "I really can't think of an example," don't give up. Say something like: "That's okay. I know this can be challenging. Take your time."

In some cases, you will have candidates who do not have a great deal of work experience. Offer them the opportunity to use examples from other settings: part-time jobs they've had, classroom experiences, volunteer experiences, etc. Some of the best customer service examples I've gotten during interviews

were about non-healthcare positions such as waitressing. Don't underestimate the value of these types of examples. Even though they are not healthcare, they give an accurate picture of the personality traits and problem-solving abilities.

Once the candidate shares his experience, you may want to prompt for additional details.

Some potential prompts include:

- Can you think of another example?
- What did you learn from that situation?
- In hindsight, what if anything might you have done differently?
- What went well in that situation? What didn't?

The example itself is not what is important. It is the candidate's assessment of the situation that is important. What did the candidate feel he or she did well? Did any personal learning take place? Does the candidate exhibit a willingness to accept responsibility for how he or she may have impacted the situation negatively? Does the candidate exhibit a willingness to share responsibility with others in situations where there were positive outcomes?

If you're interested in cultivating an organization of service stars, behavior-based interviewing can help. For more tips and strategies for interviews that help you recognize service stars, check out the following 90-minute CD....

Hiring Service-Minded People: Red Flags and Diamonds in the Rough

When hiring staff for any position within your healthcare organization, you need to know what to look for—and what to look out for! Raising the bar on service excellence requires a team of service-minded people working together effectively to extend exceptional service to each other as well as to patients and their families. Our recorded webinar gives you the information and tools needed to avoid the red flags and find the diamonds. You'll learn:

- How to use the job description and characteristics of your current stellar performers to establish hiring criteria
- How to develop behavior-based questions that help you get to know who the candidate really is
- How to evaluate candidates objectively based on hiring criteria tied to your hospital's mission, vision and values
- How to spot red flags that can lead to a bad hire

Click [here](#) for more information or to purchase!

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



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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).