

## *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.

## Want More Engagement? Help Staff Connect to Purpose

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Here's a little good news/bad news about employee engagement according to the most recent research on the subject [from Gallup](#):

- The good news—employee engagement is up, tying its highest level since Gallup began tracking the metric
- The bad news—engagement levels, although rising, are only at 34%, meaning that 66% of employees are disengaged (16.5% *actively* disengaged)

We believe that healthcare organizations have a unique opportunity to drive those numbers up by helping employees connect to purpose. After all, most of those working in the healthcare industry were drawn to the industry because of their passion for helping people. Whether working in clinical roles, or not, employees in healthcare settings have opportunities each and every day to connect to purpose. Healthcare leaders have a responsibility to ensure that they do!

### Head – Hands – Heart

In [Raising the Bar on Service Excellence](#), I talk about what it takes to get people actively engaged. I depict the process as a triangle that involves the head, the hands, and the heart. Do they know what to do (the head or knowledge)? Do they know how to do it (the hands or skill)? And, finally, do they want to do it (the heart or attitude and desire)? If they do, you've got a winning combination!

Without that combination, they're just going through the motions. They may know what they need to do (head), and they may know how to do it (hands), but without the heart they're just performing tasks. There's no passion. No commitment. No sense of fulfillment.

### A Role for Leaders

Leaders have an important role to play here. Rather than leave it to chance that employees—*all* employees—understand the impact they have on patients and the patient experience, leaders can explicitly help them tie what they do to how it impacts the patient.

One of my most favorite examples of this comes from an environmental services staff person who, when asked what he does, said, "I'm the keeper of the first impression." Not "I sweep floors," but "I'm the keeper of the first impression." What a difference that perspective makes!

Leaders can help all team members understand exactly where they fit and how what they do has a positive impact on the patient experience.

- Instead of "I mop the operating room," how about "I'm the keeper of infection control in the operating suite; I keep our patients safe"?
- Instead of "I deliver food," how about "I'm the keeper of our patients' nutritional health"?

Explaining to people exactly how they connect to purpose really drives home the important impact they have each and every day through each and every interaction.

A lot of leaders get this. But, because *they* get it, they assume others do too. That's not necessarily the case. So, it's important for leaders to take advantage of opportunities to explicitly help employees connect to purpose; not just once, but continually reminding staff of the positive impact they have. Leaders can help to support a focus on purpose by sharing stories and giving feedback, kudos and recognition to reinforce the types of behaviors and actions they wish to see. Tie the duties back to the mission, vision, and values of the organization.

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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.