

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.

What drives employee engagement? It depends

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

When it comes to employee engagement, one size truly doesn't fit all—or even a majority of—your employees. Each of your employees has different motivations and drivers that impact how engaged they are with their work, with their colleagues, and with your healthcare organization. The challenge for leaders, of course, is determining what those drivers are, and then finding ways to provide employees with what they need to stay connected to their work.

Four Levels of Engagement

Through our partnership with the Center for Talent Retention, we have found that virtually every workforce can be categorized into four distinctive segments:

- 1) The disengaged
- 2) The somewhat engaged
- 3) The engaged
- 4) The fully engaged

You can determine which category each person falls into by their behaviors, the results that they produce, and the impact that they have on those around them.

For instance, the disengaged individual will be the low performer who only works when he has to, barely squeaks by, and tends to have a negative impact on those around him. The somewhat engaged person is the master of distraction. She will work when someone is watching. The engaged individual is a solid performer. She does good work, but may not be as consistent as you'd like. This person is reliable but just doesn't go beyond the expected. The fully engaged person, however, consistently goes above and beyond, takes ownership, and continually finds new and better ways to do things.

Your goal, of course, is to have as many employees as possible reflected in the fourth category—the fully engaged. But, few organizations have as many fully engaged employees as they would like to have. In working with healthcare organizations on employee engagement and retention issues, our goal is to move as many employees upward along this continuum as possible.

We know, though, that this movement represents a process that takes place over time. We won't, for instance, move a disengaged employee to a fully engaged employee in one step. But, we can work to progressively move employees from one stage to another. The challenge is to harness energy.

To successfully engage employees, we need to start from where they are. By fully understanding what things are most important, critical, or meaningful to them, you can begin to create a more optimal work environment. These things

will vary for each of your employees; there is no “one size” that fits all. What we can consider, though, are various drivers of employee engagement.

50 Drivers of Employee Engagement

The Center for Talent Retention has identified 50 drivers of employee engagement, which we’ve grouped into four categories:

- 1) Employees’ relationships with their managers
- 2) Their view of the organization
- 3) Their view of the work that they do
- 4) Their view of the work environment

How the drivers are distributed across and within categories is unique for each individual. One employee may say that the most important thing for him is his relationship with his manager. Another may say that the most important thing for her is the value of the work that she does. For somebody else, the drivers may be related to benefits or flexibility in work scheduling.

The challenge for managers is to consider what drives individual employees. One of the exercises we use in our engagement workshops to help leaders gain a deeper understanding of what drives their employees is The Retention Card exercise. We have a card for each of the fifty drivers, and we lay them out on the table and then ask individuals to look at the cards and pick out those that are most critical to them. This exercise can then prompt a discussion between managers and employees.

Once the leader is aware of the drivers that are most important to each individual, the next steps are to consider how you are currently performing on those drivers and to create an action plan to bridge any gap between the current reality and the ideal. You must have an action plan in order to foster engagement. It won’t just happen by default.

The process is straightforward, but we find that leaders are often challenged to listen openly and non-defensively while employees share their perspectives. It is important to be non-defensive and to resist the urge to interrupt or explain the reasons for deficiencies. These reactions can cause the employee to shut down.

Engaging Employees During Challenging Times

While engaging employees is always important, it can become even more critical during tough economic times. In fact, a recent study by Watson Wyatt/WorldatWork points to the not-so-surprising conclusion that the actions that many companies have taken during the recession—hiring freezes, pay cuts, even layoffs—have had a negative impact on morale and engagement. More surprising, though, is that these actions have had a disproportionately negative impact on high-performing employees—exactly the employees we wish to keep engaged so that they stay. A recent article in *Human Resource Executive* online offers some practical advice on how to combat this problem, including transparency, one-on-one support, and coaching and recognition. But like any other essential leadership skill, there is an art and a science involved in employee engagement.

The science includes learning to use the tools that will help you identify current levels of engagement and understand the financial impact on your organization (We use a pretty cool formula to calculate this). The science also involves knowing the seven actions that managers can take to increase engagement.

The art, on the other hand, is the skill, consistency, and style the leader uses in actually implementing action plans that will cause their good people to engage, stay, or stay longer.

To learn more about full-day employee engagement workshops offered by Baird, call 920-563-4684. We'll come on site to teach the fundamentals for creating and sustaining an engaged workforce.

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.

Invite Baird to speak at your next leadership development event! To learn more about the [Baird Model for Service Excellence](#), employee engagement workshops, or to sign up for her FREE newsletter, write to info@baird-group.com.

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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).*