

The Patient Experience Post

Healthcare's Resource for
Service Excellence
June 2016



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 Steps for Engaging Physicians in the Patient Experience

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Face it. Physicians can be intimidating. Patient Experience Professionals (PXPs), though, can't afford to let intimidation keep them from providing the coaching and counseling needed to enhance the patient experience. Yes, physicians can sometimes be resistant. Yes, they can be impatient. Yes, they can even be demanding. But, they're in a critical position to impact the patient experience in both good, and not-so-good ways. We can't be afraid of them!

An important first step when evaluating the physician climate in your organization, relative to the patient experience, is to ask three foundational questions:

- Do they (physicians) know what to do?
- Do they know how to do it?
- Do they want to do it?

Step One: Create and communicate explicit expectations

Sometimes we falsely assume that physicians and other audiences, know what they should be doing with regard to service behaviors. That may not be the case. It pays to check your assumptions here. We can't assume they just don't want to do something. We need to ensure that they have had exposure and education about what the expectations are. What we also often find is that many organization's physician codes of conduct are written from the standpoint of what will happen if they *don't* do something; a focus more on disciplinary action, than positive affirmations of the type of behaviors we wish to see. In our model, we advise that you partner with a few of your star performing physicians to shape specific standards. These should include standards pertaining to patient interactions, staff interactions, and those with other physicians.

Step Two: Teach them how

Once you've ensured that your physicians know what the expectations are, the next critical step is providing them with the training, tools, and education to ensure they know how to do what it is you're asking of them. This might take the form of live training sessions, webinars, podcasts, simulation labs, online help tools, and checklists, etc., providing a range of resources to meet the various learning needs and preferences of your audience. We find that physicians need to first be convinced about why this is important before spending time on the skills. Make sure you cover the business case for improving the patient experience, in addition to the skills needed. Use this as an opportunity to show them their own scores, and how they compare to their peers. This can spark greater interest when they see they are behind the group.

Step Three: Establish a culture that supports a desire to improve the patient experience

The final step in establishing a foundation for powerful patient experience is creating an environment, and a culture, in which physicians *want* to improve the patient experience. Many are already here. In fact, doctors want happy patients too. You may want to consider the messages being sent to physicians about what is most important. For instance, if they are given incentives solely on productivity, it sends the



Transforming culture. Shaping patient experience.

message that volume trumps service. Consider offering incentives on patient experience scores, and their willingness to attend training, or have a shadow/coach for skill development.

Simulation labs can be a great way to engage physicians in patient experience improvement. Simulations can provide an opportunity for them to rehearse and practice new skills. Following the labs, PXPs can engage with physicians through shadowing and one-on-one feedback. [Baird Group works with organizations to teach the skills required to provide effective physician shadowing](#), including tips on how to give feedback in such a way that it will be welcomed, and well received. We train the coaches so they can be self-sustaining. This has to be an ongoing initiative that can't rely solely on outside expertise to show the way. That's why we've worked hard to develop an approach that allows us to train members of your staff to do the shadowing and coaching based on best-practice advice, culled from our years of experience. We'll help you pick the best shadow coaches based on our Baird-identified core coaching competencies. And, we'll teach observation skills around four best practice categories of patient interaction.

The bottom line is building a self-sustaining environment where physicians, and others, know what they need to do, know how to do it, and want to do whatever it takes to boost the patient experience. To learn more about physician shadow coaching, click [here](#).

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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.