

## *The Patient Experience Post*

Healthcare's Resource for  
Service Excellence  
October 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.

# Why You Don't Want Satisfied People on Your Payroll

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Popular wisdom leads us to believe that having satisfied employees is a good thing—even a great thing. That philosophy, though, really misses the mark. If you're only focused on satisfied employees, you're at risk of losing your best employees *and* negatively impacting productivity.

Why?

Because satisfied isn't enough. You need employees who are both satisfied and engaged. The trouble is that, too often, that's not what we find. We find somewhat, or very, disengaged employees. These employees come at a high cost.

In fact, [according to a Gallup poll](#), disengaged employees cost the U.S. somewhere between \$450 and \$550 billion annually!

In our engagement workshops, we talk about the danger of the satisfied, yet disengaged, employee. And we help healthcare organizations calculate the costs of disengagement. For example, a group we worked with calculated their loss at about \$30,000 per disengaged employee, per year. In addition, the likelihood of turning a disengaged employee into an engaged employee, is only about one in ten.

Here's another startling fact: organizations are more at risk of losing their highly engaged employees than their disengaged employees. This may seem counterintuitive but consider this; oftentimes, those employees who are satisfied, yet disengaged, are basically "retired in place"—RIP! They're going through the motions; they're showing up; they may even identify as being satisfied. But, they're not engaged. Being disengaged, they erode the morale of those around them.

The engaged employees, when surrounded by the disengaged (who, according to Gallup, can represent up to 70 percent of your workforce), become dissatisfied and begin looking for new opportunities elsewhere. They're driven to contribute, to perform, to achieve results. But when they're stymied because they're surrounded by RIP colleagues, they're likely to bolt.

Disengaged and somewhat engaged employees actually erode leader credibility. When high performers see that their underperforming counterparts keep their jobs and collect a paycheck, they begin to question the effectiveness and sincerity of the leaders who allow this.

From a leadership perspective, if you're not actively taking steps to root out the disengaged, you're contributing to the problem. If satisfied, but disengaged—and non-productive—employees are getting a paycheck every two weeks, they assume that all is well. They show up, go through the motions and, in the process, negatively impact productivity, not only for themselves—but for others, including even the most highly engaged employees.

What to do about it? Stop accepting satisfaction as a proxy for engagement. Identify your highly engaged employees, and make sure that they are getting the support, opportunities and positive experiences that drive their high performance. Root out the

disengaged by either working with them to increase engagement, or to find another opportunity.

The cost of disengagement is high—too high. That's why you don't want satisfied people on your payroll!

Want to calculate the cost of your current engagement level? That's just one of the features of our half day [workshop](#), *Coaching for Engagement and Improved Performance*. Schedule your leadership workshop today.

Improve engagement by enhancing work relationships. Find out how during my [November webinar](#). Reserve your seat [here](#).

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