

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.

Good Read: *The Neuroscience of Trust...Management Behaviors That Foster Employee Engagement* by Paul J. Zak

By Janet Schulz, Senior Vice President – Consulting Division

In every Baird Group educational offering, we talk about trust. How trust, when it exists between physician and patient, leads to better patient compliance and clinical outcomes. How trust, when it exists between staff and patients, leads to better communication and a more positive patient experience.

In the January / February 2017 Harvard Business Review, author Paul J. Zak explores another trust relationship - between employers and their employees. In the article [“The Neuroscience of Trust . . . Management Behaviors that Foster Employee Engagement,”](#) Zak specifically reviews what creates trust. Turns out, there is science behind this emotion. In years of research, Zak found that employees who work in a “culture of trust” have higher levels of the brain chemical oxytocin, which facilitates teamwork.

This then begs the question – what drives high trust? In the article, Zak provides a great recap of eight “key management behaviors” that foster employee engagement. For the purpose of this review, I’m going to focus on three actions that align with key concepts from Baird Group leadership development sessions.

- *“Recognize excellence”* - Zak notes that neuroscience gives us guidance on what makes recognition effective. He states it has the largest impact on trust “when it occurs immediately after a goal is met, when it comes from peers, and when it’s tangible, unexpected, personal and public.” That’s a lot of guidance packed into a single sentence! At Baird Group, we work with organizations to design meaningful recognition programs, and we know it can sometimes be difficult to hit on ALL the criteria Zak noted. This advice does, however, make one key point . . . raising the bar on excellence in an organization works best when the team itself sets the bar and jointly celebrates achievement.
- *“Share information broadly”* - According to Zak, neuroscience also supports broad sharing of company goals. He notes that “uncertainty about a company’s direction leads to chronic stress, which inhibits the release of oxytocin and undermines teamwork.” Zak further notes a 2015 study across millions of employees found that “workforce engagement improved when supervisors had some form of daily communication with direct reports”. These findings reinforce the importance of activities such as leader rounding or daily “huddles,” which provide leaders with ongoing opportunities to share information and connect the work of employees to the organization’s goals, direction and purpose.

- *“Facilitate whole-person growth”* – Zak states that “high-trust workplaces help people develop personally as well as professionally.” Becoming a manager that facilitates whole-person growth takes focused effort, planning and intention. At Baird Group when we teach leaders about “Coaching for Engagement and Improved Performance,” we specifically highlight how to have this type of shared dialog. Doing so not only supports engagement, but also retention of valued employees.

I hope you’ll take a look at the article to learn the other five key management behaviors. It’s an easy read and offers practical guidance on this vital topic. I also hope that just thinking about a workplace that recognizes excellence, shares a vision for the future, and fosters individual growth has raised *your* oxytocin level! If these concepts inspire trust in you . . . imagine how they could benefit your organization overall.

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.