

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.

Is Analysis Paralysis Stifling your Patient Experience? Try our 7 Ways to Move Beyond this Affliction

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

It's the current conundrum of healthcare (just ask the VA). Arguably every member of every healthcare organization would tell you that they want to deliver a positive patient experience, yet many organizations continue to fail to do that. Why?

In our experience, much of the problem can be placed at the door of paralysis by analysis.

As we work with organizations around the country and meet with teams of practitioners and staff, we'll often hear great ideas raised by those in the room. But, in many cases, very quickly after those great ideas are raised, we'll also hear, "But...what if?," "What if?," "What if?," "What if?," and then a great deal of discussion will ensue around all of the potential bad things that *might* happen *if...*

I call it "swirling the drain"—talking around and around in circles without reaching any consensus and, most importantly, without coming up with a plan to move forward in a positive and proactive way to impact the patient experience. It's immobilizing—it's paralyzing. This is the essence of analysis paralysis.

At times like that, if I'm leading the discussion, I will throw up my hands and say, "You know what? I promise you that no lives will be lost if you move forward. I promise you that."

The Medical Model Doesn't Apply

Here's the thing, healthcare professionals, particularly clinical professionals, are grounded in the medical model. That's a very good thing when they're working with patients from a clinical perspective. But that foundation can hold them back when it comes to the "personal side" of healthcare. While there is certainly real risk involved when providing patient care, the biggest risk in providing exceptional service is *doing nothing*.

No lives will be lost from trying to hard-wire your standards among your staff. No lives will be lost when taking steps to embed service excellence into every decision made in your organization.

I promise you. No lives will be lost.

In our experience, we find that most organizations know what they need to do it, but their paralysis keeps them from moving forward. There are plenty of "a-ha moments" that occur every day that point to opportunities to make a

positive difference. Here are 7 things you can do to help move beyond paralysis toward a more positive patient experience:

1. Take a hard look at your culture to determine if a punitive approach to ideas and innovation may be keeping staff from sharing their great ideas.
2. Make a move to avoid “editing in process” as you meet with teams. Accept all inputs without paralysis by analysis. Turn away from a “What if we did?” mentality to a “What if we don’t?” perspective.
3. Try things. Pilots can help to identify opportunities, generate key learnings, and generate data that can be used to spread the pilot throughout the organization.
4. Encourage input without filtering. Gather input and ideas from all staff, patients, and family members. Those inputs are gold when it comes to learning about ways to improve the patient experience. And remember: every perception is a reality. There is no right or wrong when it comes to peoples’ opinions.
5. Use your data! Data is valuable but often overlooked. Anecdotal inputs and immediate information can be used, along with longer-term data on patient satisfaction, to identify areas of best practices and point to real wins that can be replicated.
6. Celebrate successes—even when the success is learning what *didn’t* work. A culture that rewards risk-taking and learns from every effort is a culture that drives positive patient experiences.
7. Share the wins. Talk to others, inside and outside your organization, about what has worked for you, what hasn’t, and why.

There are ample great ideas living within the walls of your organization. You just have to unearth and use them. Don’t let perfectionism and the inappropriate application of the medical model hold you back. Do something!

Phone communication is an essential part of the patient experience and is often the first part of the patient experience. In just seconds, your patients are deciding if you are friendly, knowledgeable, concerned, and willing to help. In fact, research shows that after just a 2-minute phone encounter, patients are clear about whether or not they would return to your organization or recommend it. Patients rely on phone encounters to make appointments and seek clinical advice. Other callers rely on phone encounters to gain vital information about a loved one. In both situations, it’s important that you create a positive, trust-building experience. To engage your staff in essential phone skills, look toward the tips and tools in [You’ll Have Them at “Hello”: Phone skills that will WOW your callers every time](#). For only \$199, you’ll receive the following: the video recording, presentation slides, a transcript of the recording, a participant guidebook, a moderator guidebook, a quality assurance tool, and additional handouts! This session is also available as a live training workshop.



Transforming culture. Shaping patient experience.

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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.