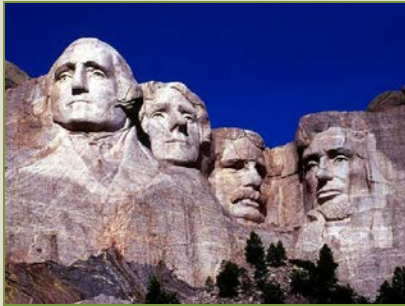


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Since the mid-1990s, Baird has helped healthcare organizations nationwide improve the patient experience and enhance organizational culture. Baird's culture assessment and diagnosis include experience mapping, medical mystery shopping, and focus groups 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.

Leading with Passion: 3 keys to sharing your enthusiasm

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Martin Luther King. Franklin D. Roosevelt. Gandhi.

When these leaders spoke, their followers did more than listen—they became infused with a shared passion and fully engaged in a common cause.

When it comes to leadership traits, "passion" is hard to pin down, but it is vital to engaging the hearts and minds of followers—or employees. Passionate leaders have the spark that can foster commitment and determination in their employees.

Leaders who understand and embrace passion in their organization have tremendous opportunities for empowering and engaging their employees to meet meaningful goals. They have the ability to create the kind of work environment where their employees share their enthusiasm and drive to achieve organizational goals. Organizations should also understand that, if they are setting goals, there should be one person—a "champion"—within the organization who is passionate about each goal. Without that driving force, the road to the goal will be full of potholes and pit stops.

I firmly believe that, in order to be an effective leader, you need to have passion for your work. This passion stems from believing that your work has significance and loving what you do. Passion breeds enthusiasm in others.

The Passionate Leader

Some degree of passion is innate, but I believe that you can develop it and foster it like any other characteristic. This is in part a personal mission for leaders. Do you feel it in the core of your very being? Leaders need to love what they do; otherwise, where are they leading their followers? If you lead with passion, your followers will learn from you.

You can grow your personal passion for your work. Reflection and introspection are great tools for growing your passion. Think about the following:

- What energizes you at work?
- What makes you want to go to work?
- What keeps you going on a busy day?
- Even when you are exhausted, what is it about your work that makes you still feel it is worthwhile?

Passion without direction can be misguided, or possibly, schizophrenic, leaving managers scrambling to understand priorities. No matter what goal or endeavor is the focus of your laser-like attention, there are some strategies you can employ that will help transfer your passion to your employees and move everyone in the same direction.

Create a Place Where Employees Want to Work

Employees want to be part of a passionate work environment. In an impassioned workplace, absenteeism and turnover decrease, and, at the same time, the organization is better able to recruit top-notch employees who want to be part of something special.

Passionate leaders naturally create an exciting work environment that energizes others. But they understand that it takes more than excitement to fully engage their employees for the long haul. They know that key ingredients for a place where employees want to work include employee involvement, communication and transparency.

Employees also want to work in places where their leaders are not only passionate, but communicate that passion every day in a myriad of ways. Whether it's face-to-face personal communication, a stimulating meeting, or a quick memo or e-mail, passionate leaders let their enthusiasm shine through. They also let the organization's triumphs and challenges shine through, and they know to communicate this to their employees before there's any chance of the public getting hold of the same information.

Employees who feel trusted and involved come to share their leaders' passions and solidify their dedication to their organizations.

Make Work Meaningful

Are your employees coming to work to put in 40 hours and collect a paycheck? Would they stay at their jobs if their paychecks were reduced by even 10 percent?

Passionate leaders instill a sense of meaning and focus in their employees. Passion is the ingredient that keeps employees connected to the bigger meaning of their work. Leaders who make the work about more than a paycheck have instilled passion in their employees.

When we are fully engaged in the work we are doing and understand how it is vital to the pursuit of our goals, our passion activates our minds and challenges us to think outside the box. Passion breeds innovation and creativity.

In a culture of service excellence, innovation and creativity are prized as crucial components in improving the customer's experience. Employees who believe their work is valuable—and valued—feel empowered to make meaningful changes for their customers. Employees who believe they are just another warm body don't have the commitment or passion necessary to open their eyes to the possibilities.

Keeping Your Employees' Eyes on the Prize

While creating a culture of service excellence doesn't happen overnight, a passionate champion can create the sense of urgency needed for employees to embrace the culture. The champion is usually dissatisfied with the status quo and uses his passion to hold his co-workers and employees accountable for

raising standards of performance.

The passionate champion never wavers from the goal and will tolerate no less than the same full-blown dedication from everyone around him.

When other tasks and strategies may distract employees, the passionate leader has the perseverance to steer them back on track. The passion of a customer service champion is contagious and spreads throughout the organization, engaging and empowering employees along the way.

Above all, leaders need passion. Leading with passion sends a clear message that permeates every crevice of the organization. But the bottom line is that passionate leaders spend time with their employees. They learn about their employees' needs and desires, they know how best to communicate with their employees, and they know what makes work meaningful to them. Employees who feel the passion of their leader have more of their hearts and minds actively engaged in their work. And a passionate leader with an engaged workforce has a tremendous opportunity to create powerful change within an organization.

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).*