

The Patient Experience Post

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Let's Get Personal – celebration isn't recognition

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

We've just celebrated Hospital Week and Nurses Week, two of many national recognition events designed to recognize the efforts of those involved in providing healthcare services to others.

These events are important and they serve as reminders of something we should be doing every day—taking time to celebrate, recognize, reward and appreciate those around us. But, it's equally important for healthcare leaders to recognize the differences in these four terms; they do not mean the same thing! Let's take a look at what these terms do mean, as defined by Merriam-Webster:

- Celebrate: to observe a holiday, perform a religious ceremony, or take part in a festival
- Recognize: to acknowledge or take notice of in some definite way
- Reward: something that is offered or given for some service or attainment
- Appreciate: to value or admire highly

Very often as I work with healthcare leaders I will hear them throw these terms around interchangeably. I most notice it during events like Nurses Week. I'll hear comments like: "Yeah, we recognized our nurses during Nurses Week." Well, actually, you may have celebrated Nurses Week, but recognition isn't a commemorative event—it's a personal, and personalized, interaction.

We celebrate as a group, and we take part in various commemorative events as a society, but individuals need to feel appreciated, valued and recognized for the work they do. That takes place on a far more personal level.

That personalization is also important because people feel valued in very different ways. While one employee may simply love to have their contributions shouted from the rooftop, or have the opportunity to walk across a stage in front of an admiring crowd, another may find this kind of attention embarrassing. That individual may far more appreciate a

private, personal, and sincere “thank you for what you did; I can see you made a huge difference to that patient.”

Of course, it’s not just the caregivers that we need to take time to recognize. We need to recognize the efforts of all of our staff members. The billing clerk who took the time to explain a bill to a patient. The marketing staff member who spent the weekend staffing a booth at a community event. The volunteer who sat with a patient’s family in the waiting room while they were undergoing a procedure.

Yes, we should take advantage of opportunities to celebrate, recognize, reward and appreciate. But we need to make sure we understand the differences between these terms and take the time to connect with staff, individually, in ways that mean the most to them.

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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.