

The Patient Experience Post

Healthcare's Resource for
Service Excellence
November 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.

Love the Ones You're With!

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

No one will argue that empathy is at the heart of a great patient experience. In fact, many healthcare organizations provide empathy training to enhance awareness and build essential verbal and nonverbal skills. But empathy is just as important to good co-worker relationships. Just think about how many times you have felt misunderstood by a co-worker or boss. Maybe you felt that you just didn't get the other person. Or that they didn't understand you.

The bottom line is that when people understand one another better, they're more engaged and will be more open to collaboration which, in turn, leads to better patient care.

Amy Gallo, author of *Fixing a Work Relationship Gone Sour* (Harvard Business Review, August 2014), says that empathy is the foundation of healthy work relationships. Her article suggests that empathy allows you to make room for emotions like curiosity about and compassion for your coworker by asking yourself a series of questions: "How does she see things? Is he feeling embarrassed, put upon, misjudged, or misunderstood?"

Whether or not you're trying to repair a strained work relationship, or you just want to build positive ones, it's worth the time and effort to explore your different perspectives, and how you react normally and under stress. After all, we spend more of our waking hours with our co-workers than we do our family members and friends. What if you could understand and communicate more effectively with your co-workers? What if they understood you better? Chances are, you'd enjoy your work environment more, collaborate more, and get more done. And happy employees create happy patients.

Press Ganey has done extensive research linking employee and physician engagement to patient satisfaction and the bottom line. In their Performance Insights article: *Every Voice Matters: The Bottom Line on Employee and Physician Engagement*, they conclude:

Hospitals with highly engaged employees also perform better on core measures and earn more VBP points than hospitals with disengaged employees (Figure 2). Hospitals scoring in the top 10% of employee engagement average 38 VBP points higher on HCAHPS, 12 points higher on core measures, and 16 points higher on total performance than hospitals in the bottom 10%. During the course of a year, one hospital increased its percentage of "highly engaged" employees from 49% to 55%, increasing its VBP score from 61 to 69 and resulting in a 13% higher VBP payback.

It's all about teamwork—collaboration—and understanding. These are the three pillars upon which great patient experiences are built. If we can learn to understand our co-workers, their perspectives and motivations (and they can better understand ours), we can become better collaborators which leads to more effective teamwork.



Transforming culture. Shaping patient experience.

Developing emotional, relational team intelligence is the key. The path begins with introspection—identifying the attributes of your own personality that cause you to think and act the way you do. The second step is learning about, and seeking to understand the motivations of others.

You can learn more about what you can do to build important work relationships. On Tuesday, November 15th, we'll be presenting a webinar - "Love the Ones You're With - 3 Keys for Strengthening Work Relationships." Not only will you gain valuable insights about enhancing relationships, you'll get to sample a tool that can take your organization to a higher level of emotional, relational and team intelligence. [Join us!](#)

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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.