

Five Resolutions for Improving the Patient Experience in 2013

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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.

It's the start of a new year, and that gets all of us thinking about goals—or, as we call them in the New Year, resolutions. For healthcare leaders, it's a great time to be thinking about 2013 resolutions for improving the patient experience. With HCAHPS well underway and emergency room and CGCAHPS looming, leaders are understandably focused on ensuring a great experience for patients and their families at every point of contact.

Chances are, you probably have set goals for patient satisfaction scores, but now is a good time to think about improving leadership behaviors that can help you achieve these patient satisfaction goals. Here are a few leadership practices that, if you adopt as habit, will help you make strides toward your goals. Any or all of the following can be part of your resolutions:

- Start small. Maybe your initial focus will be on **patient rounding**. You might make a commitment to round twice a week.
- Share **service stories**. This is part of moving information from the head to the heart. In our work with clients, we've found that nothing "heartwires" behaviors better than stories. Look for those opportunities to share service stories at staff meetings or huddles, during report-outs, and at every other opportunity you can find.
- Use **mission, vision, and values** language daily, and make it real by connecting the concepts to actions. For instance, when giving a compliment, say "You're helping us fulfill our mission of...by..." Be specific.
- Be sure to **document progress** daily. Documentation is a discipline that doesn't have to take a lot of time but can have a significant impact. Stating your goals is one thing; committing them to writing increases your odds of achieving what you set out to do.

Keep track of how you're doing. Writing down your specific goals (or resolutions) is an important step, but another important step is to monitor and measure progress. A documentation tracking sheet can simplify this process and provide you with tangible evidence of results. We've created a simple tracking sheet to help you do this easily. Click [here](#) to receive this customizable tracking sheet to better track your results in 2013 and increase your odds of success.

One, two, or all of these above behaviors done on a regular basis will make a difference in staff performance and your credibility as a leader. In keeping with the season, the American Psychology Association (APA) recently posted some tips for making New Year's resolutions stick. While their focus was more on personal goals (like losing weight, quitting smoking), the tips apply to hospital leaders' efforts to improve the patient experience as well. The tips include:

- Start small
- Change one behavior at a time

- Talk about it
- Don't beat yourself up
- Ask for support

Our recommendation is to pick one primary area of focus to start with; communicate clearly, broadly, and frequently to everyone who has the ability to impact success; recognize that there may be setbacks and use those setbacks not as reasons to stop the initiative but as learning opportunities; and ask for support from staff and others to help boost your chances of success.

Finally, let's add one additional item to the APA list: **celebrate** your successes! Improving the patient experience is hard work and requires effort at a number of different touch points. As you measure the positive impacts of your efforts, take the time to recognize, reward, and celebrate.

Happy New Year! Here's to a better patient experience in 2013.

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.

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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.