

*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.

## From the Head to the Heart: 5 ways to cement service mindedness throughout your organization

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

The Baird team is frequently asked to consult with hospitals and systems that want to improve their HCAHPS scores. The first thing we evaluate is whether or not the focus is on the scores or the experience behind the scores. Exceptional patient experiences are not the result of a one-time training event or award ceremony. To be sustainable, great scores require ongoing communication, coaching, modeling, monitoring, and reinforcement. Following are 5 ways to cement service mindedness throughout your organization:

1. **Set expectations through a clear mission:** Simply stated, a mission statement says why you exist and what you're doing today, at this moment in time. If your mission statement is "to provide quality healthcare," how are you doing right now? Do your employees feel connected to the mission? Do they believe this is what they are doing right now? Do your *patients* believe this is what you are doing right now?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, you need to find the disconnect. As you strive to bring your mission to life in your organization's daily work, it is important to understand that delivering consistent customer service is no longer something that's just nice to do—it's necessary. Make sure your employees understand your mission and how it drives your expectations of them. Help your mission come to life through ongoing communication and reinforcement. Taking these steps to strengthen the connection to the mission will ensure that your mission remains a vital, living part of the organization and not just words on a wall plaque. In this new era of public accountability, the patient experience is mission critical.

2. **Gather data, not just through surveys but by listening:** We all do surveys to find out how we're doing—to learn what our employees, our patients, and our community think of us. And that information is certainly important. But, we can't overlook the value of data that can come through more qualitative channels.

In your organization, do members of administration or senior management regularly make patient care rounds? Does the department manager make daily rounds to patients?

Rounding is an ideal time to engage patients in conversations about their care. Ask for specific information about any problem areas indicated by the numbers on your satisfaction surveys. Find out what is most important to the patient or resident. Use rounds as an opportunity to find out not only how your team is doing but what

great care means to that patient or resident. Then share that information with your staff.

3. **Use the data:** What are you doing with the data that you collect from various sources? Are you sharing it with staff? Are you using it to make identified improvements? Data must be shared in order to put it into action. Ask yourself: “What useful information do my people need to drive exceptional patient experiences?” You’ve worked hard to communicate, demonstrate, and reinforce your mission. Make sure that employees are armed with the information and opportunities they need to understand their role in putting the mission into action.
4. **Capture their hearts:** You won’t nurture passionate people if you don’t exude passion yourself. You can’t beat passion and a sense of purpose into people simply by showing metrics and pushing goals. They have to feel that what they do matters, that they make a difference. That task should be easier in the healthcare industry than in other fields, yet we often hear of the passion and commitment that companies like Zappos (shoes!) generates in their employees. Shame on you if you’re not doing the same!

One great way to capture the hearts of your staff is through storytelling (watch [here](#)). Storytelling helps put values into action in meaningful ways that resonate with employees. Tell your stories—and listen to theirs. That’s a great way to capture their heads and their hearts! And remember that a picture paints a thousand words. Some stories resonate deeper with photos (see why [here](#)).

5. **Reward and recognize excellence:** As you work to instill your culture in all levels of the organization, it is vital to recognize that it’s not easy for everyone. For those frontline employees who prefer to cling to the way things have always been, acknowledge that change is difficult, and recognize those who are visibly working to incorporate the organization’s culture into their daily work. Spotlight their efforts and publicly thank them.

There is an endless array of tactics that you can use to reward those frontline employees who are living the culture. It’s not important how you choose to reward and recognize your employees, it’s only important that you do it. When you recognize those on the frontline in a visible and public way, you demonstrate to their peers that the culture is an important organizational priority.

Ambroise Paré, an uneducated son of a country artisan who became a great surgeon in the 16th century, is credited with the words: “To cure sometimes, relieve often—and care always.” In my [Patient Experience Boot Camp](#), I start out with exercises on how to create a shared vision for a positive patient experience. This is the foundation on which all else is built. Set the course by setting the vision. Hire and nurture a caring environment because we can’t always cure, or even relieve suffering. But we can—and should—always care.



Transforming culture. Shaping patient experience.

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).