

The Patient Experience Post

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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.

This One Thing Improves Employee Engagement and Patient Experience

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Trust is at the foundation of any relationship, and certainly at the foundation of the patient/provider relationship. But, for that relationship to be strong, it has to be supported by a strong culture and support network. It truly does take a village to deliver high-quality care and an exceptional patient experience.

Unfortunately, as we work with healthcare organizations around the country doing culture assessments, we sometimes find a significant lack of trust. When employees don't feel they can trust their leaders, employee engagement is diminished. When employee engagement is diminished, so is patient engagement—and the overall patient experience.

Trust leads to greater engagement and patient satisfaction. So what are your organization's leaders doing to diminish trust and what could they do to build it? Here we take a look at both sides of the equation.

Leaders Diminish Trust By:

- Not following through on what you say you will do. This can happen in both big and small ways—both diminish trust. If you say it, do it.
- Doing one thing but saying another—you don't follow your own rules or policies. This includes adhering to the principles espoused in your mission, vision, and values.
- Letting behaviors "slip" instead of confronting issues. Every time a leader overlooks an instance when an employee isn't following stated values or processes trust is diminished. People are watching.
- Talking to others about employee performance issues rather than talking directly to the employee.
- Taking credit for others' work.
- Placing blame on others, especially in a public setting.

Leaders Can Build Trust By:

- Exhibiting integrity—by doing what they say they will do and being reliable
- Answering emails in a timely manner—being responsive. Your employees often can't move forward without direction or input from you; your delays impact their performance.
- Being clear about expectations. Make both expectations and feedback explicit.
- Action. Tackle the trust issue head-on. Have a dialogue with your team about what trust looks like in your department and what it takes to earn trust.

- Taking an interest in, and learning about, employees. What skills do they want to develop? What opportunities do they value? Individuals like what skills each person wants to develop and give them an opportunity. Work to help employees succeed.
- Not tolerating gossip. Employees need to know that you have their backs and their best interests in mind.

It's important to point out that trust is not static. As David DeSteno, a professor of Psychology at Northeastern University and the author of *The Truth About Trust* says [in a Harvard Business Review article](#), trust is an "evolving thing that ebbs and flows." It's not a destination, but a journey. A journey that Baird Group is adept at leading healthcare organizations and their leaders and management staff through.

This month's Good Read *The Trust Edge* is a great resource to help leaders develop the skills and the mindset to build an organization with a foundation of trust—a foundation that will fuel both positive employee and positive patient experiences.

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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.