

## *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.

## Three Ways to Ensure the Success of Your Patient Experience Journey

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

Healthcare leaders know that the patient experience (PX) matters—to patients, to providers, and to the bottom line. Face it; most providers chose healthcare as a career because they are mission driven; they are committed to helping others. Patients, of course, demand high quality and compassionate care. At the same time healthcare organizations are being evaluated—and reimbursed—based on their ability to deliver a high quality care experience.

The collision of these forces means that your patient experience journey needs to get on track and stay on track. Yet, what we are seeing as we talk with PXP's and observe numerous PX journeys, is frustration that they are not able to achieve results as quickly as they would like. Why? For a variety of reasons.

- First, the journey is about the culture. Your culture wasn't shaped in a week, nor will it change in a week just because you've dedicated a position and other resources to the effort.
- Second, in many cases, staff are placed into PX roles and charged with leading the PX effort. Many of them are clinicians or front line staff who have excellent service skills but no leadership experience. On top of that, many are at, or close to the bottom of the org chart, making it difficult to move the culture without senior leadership fully behind them.
- Third, this is change management that requires firm understanding of the steps needed to move an organization. Culture often gets in the way of change.
- Fourth, a strategy for achieving desired results is often lacking, diverting focus to areas not integral to generating desired results. When you chase tactics without a clear vision and strategy, time and resources are wasted.

The role of the patient experience professional (PXP) is a new one for most organizations. Few healthcare organizations know exactly what to expect from the position; they just know they want results—and they want them fast! That's a recipe for disaster and frustration on all sides—for the PXP, for the managers and staff, and, often, for the patient!

What to do? Healthcare leaders need to recognize the inherent challenges in developing a PXP role and provide the key resources, tools, and support that those in this role require to achieve desired results. Here are "Three Ways to Ensure the Success of Your Patient Experience Program:"

1. Choose your PXP wisely. Yes, clinical experience can give credibility, but so do managerial and change management skills.
2. If the person you choose for this role doesn't have the managerial and change management skills required, commit to providing the resources

- to get them up to speed. They have to be able to influence others. Good intentions don't generate results; managerial competencies do.
3. Support the individual in this role in the development of a strategic PXP plan, aligned with the overall plan of the organization—identify realistic desired outcomes and help to pave the way for the internal support the PXP will need to achieve those results.

And, we'll add one more: take the time to celebrate successes, however small! This is difficult work, and often frustrating. You may make two steps forward and then take three steps back. Change is not a destination; it's a process. By supporting the change from a senior leadership level you will ensure that your PXP gets the results you all want.

We know, though, that senior leaders are already being pulled in many different directions. Few have the time or energy to serve as a personal coach and mentor to the PXP. But we do! We can provide training, coaching, and support to your PXP—and a sounding board for senior leadership. We bring knowledge and experience based on helping other organizations audit, identify gaps, and institute plans for improving the patient experience.

**How Baird Group can help.** The PXP Advisor™ is a customized approach to supporting PXPs and their organizations. Face it. In most cases, PXPs are promoted from other, possibly clinical positions, and don't have the managerial knowledge or experience to hit the ground running. Healthcare leaders don't have the luxury of time—or the depth of experience in this area—to provide internal support. That's where we come in. Our experience with countless hospitals and hundreds of PXP professionals around the country has provided us with both the background and the expertise to support your PX efforts. The course has been approved for [18 PXE credits](#). Learn more [here](#).

*Phone communication is an essential part of the patient experience and is often the first part of the patient experience. In just seconds, your patients are deciding if you are friendly, knowledgeable, concerned, and willing to help. In fact, research shows that after just a 2-minute phone encounter, patients are clear about whether or not they would return to your organization or recommend it. Patients rely on phone encounters to make appointments and seek clinical advice. Other callers rely on phone encounters to gain vital information about a loved one. In both situations, it's important that you create a positive, trust-building experience. To engage your staff in essential phone skills, look toward the tips and tools in [You'll Have Them at "Hello": Phone skills that will WOW your callers every time](#). For only \$199, you'll receive the following: the video recording, presentation slides, a transcript of the recording, a participant guidebook, a moderator guidebook, a quality assurance tool, and additional handouts! This session is also available as a live training workshop.*

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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



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*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.

