

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.

What Are Your Power Moves for 2014? Resolve to Take the Patient Experience to New Levels

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

How many patients (or other customers) do you see in a day? Ten? Twenty? More?

On the other hand, how many medical encounters do patients have? If they're a typical patient probably no more than three—in a year! And during each of those medical encounters, they will come in contact with several people. Each contact or touch point may be the 1000th one for the healthcare worker but the first and only for the patient. It can be a challenge to keep a fresh and focused perspective when you have so many encounters, but it's not impossible. Consider this...

The huge difference in the number of encounters that healthcare workers have compared to those of patients may lead to desensitization for the worker, and dissatisfaction for the patients they serve. Due to the sheer number of encounters healthcare workers have, there can be a tendency to take these interactions for granted. Anything done over and over can become somewhat routine. We perform the actions automatically and, because they're familiar to us, we sometimes fail to remember that they may not be at all familiar to the patients we serve.

One of the tools we use to help our clients and their front line staff increase their attention to service in daily encounters is called the "Power Moves Plan." During our "Power of One" training sessions, we ask participants to map out what a typical customer interaction is like for them by listing the various touch points that they have. These moments of truth are crucial to the patient experience. Participants think about how they currently interact during moments of truth, then they consider how they can upgrade their current actions with a "power move" that adds something special to these crucial encounters— and hopefully move beyond the patient expectations.

For instance, consider the typical medical office practice. A medical assistant might write down these touch points:

- Open waiting room door and call out the patient's name
- Smile and say hello, then walk with the patient back to the exam room
- Enter the exam room and invite the patient to sit
- Take vital signs
- Hand the patient a gown and tell them to undress
- Let them know the doctor will be in soon
- Leave the room

Each of these steps is a routine touch point that the medical assistant performs

over and over again throughout each day. They're routine to the medical assistant and to a certain degree, any patient who sees providers regularly. Yet these touch points are also moments of truth - moments when the patient is deciding if the individual and the organization is invested in them and their care. And each moment of truth is an opportunity to insert "power moves" to enhance the patient experience and boost satisfaction.

For instance:

- When calling the patient, the medical assistant might come out into the waiting room and shake hands with the patient, saying something like: "Welcome." Or "It's great to see/meet you!" and making some other relevant comment: "Do you have any special plans for after your appointment?" or "What do you think about our new...?"
- When walking back to the exam room instead of saying "Follow me," walk with the patient and make some small talk, engaging them in conversation and demonstrating your interest in them.
- When telling them about what's about to happen, perhaps saying something like: "Are there any particular questions you have for the doctor today?" Or "What questions can I answer so far?"
- When providing the gown and indicating that the doctor will be in soon, perhaps "managing up" the doctor by making some positive personal comment. If they've never seen the doctor before, perhaps something like: "I know you're going to love Dr. Jones! S/he is so energetic and does such a great job of explaining things to patients." If they have seen the doctor before, maybe something like: "Dr. Jones is looking forward to seeing you again."

The point is that there is a wide range of relatively small things that staff can do to make the patient encounter more personal, more meaningful, and more satisfying. By letting them think of them and share with their peers, they'll begin taking ownership and will be learning from others.

Here's our challenge for you in 2014: Have your staff think about their most common patient interactions. Map out the touch points and ask them what they are currently doing then think about the power moves that would make the touch point feel special for the patient. Then plan how and when you will implement those power moves. For instance: Week 1 I'm going to... Week 2 I'm going to... Week 3 I'm going to...

Because accountability is so critical in helping to change behaviors, we encourage staff to share their power move plans with their supervisor or manager. That way the manager can check in with them from time to time to see how they're doing and give encouragement.

If you are the service champion - get into the act. Ask everyone to send you their power moves and then share them or circle back to help them stay on track. You'll benefit from learning some of the creative ways that others are inserting power moves into the patient experience. And you'll be able to share best practices and spotlight your stars.



Transforming culture. Shaping patient experience.

Let's make 2014 the "Year of the Power Move!"

Attention all Patient Experience Champions!

Start 2014 off with a foolproof plan that leads to the action and accountability you want!

Sign up for "Patient Experience 2014!—6 Vital Steps for Achieving Stellar Results" on Tuesday, January 21 from 1:00-2:30pm CST

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more and register!

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 *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.