

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.

Leadership Competency: Are you checking a box or becoming more capable?

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A client recently asked me if Baird offered a leadership competency model. The question confused me because every product we offer contains a leadership competency component. As I asked more probing questions, I realized what the client was after was an off-the-shelf set of leadership skills and behaviors that encompassed all possible skills and behaviors a leader might need. In other words, a checklist from which they could choose.

What the client described sounded a little like ordering from a pre-set menu at a posh restaurant where you get to choose one appetizer from section A, a soup or salad from section B, one entrée from section C, and two sides from section D. Sadly, the client didn't dream up this approach! Since somewhere around the 1990s an entire industry has blossomed around the idea that leadership can be boiled down to some set of skills and behaviors that, if demonstrated, would declare a person an effective leader. An organization simply has to choose which skills and behaviors they think will work best for them.

I'm not here to poke holes in the theory - it's the process I have issues with. I do believe there is a fundamental set of leadership skills and behaviors that all leaders must possess or people simply won't follow them. The real question that every organization must answer is, "Where should the leaders be headed?" In other words, I would argue that an organization's leadership competency model has to be tied to the organization's specific goals and strategies. Otherwise, leaders are a little like Alice, in Chapter 6 of [Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland](#):

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where—" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"—so long as I get SOMEWHERE," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

Tying leadership development to goals and strategies is the foundation of what we do at Baird. We start with the organization's vision of the culture of the future. From there, we look for alignment of that vision with the organization's mission, vision, and values and assess where the organization is today. Then we build a map of organization and leadership development to close the gap between today's reality and the vision of the culture of the future. We also assist the organization in creating measures of effectiveness to help the organization track progress toward that culture of the future.

Lest you think that our work is based on a conversation between two fictional characters, know that the Baird Model is evidence based. Deloitte and Zenger Folkman, two recognized leaders in human resource related research, have both published studies that validate our approach. In their study, "Leadership capability modeling: Introducing the next-generation competency model." Deloitte confirms that there is a fundamental set of leadership capabilities that apply across industries and that the real work an organization should be doing is tying those capabilities to organizational goals, culture, and norms. Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman take that idea one step further. In "Leadership Development 6.0: Connecting leadership development with drivers of business results." they outline a process for building measures to identify the necessary leadership skills and behaviors and assess leaders' effectiveness in driving outcomes.

Do leaders in your organization know where the organization is going? Do they have a clear understanding of the leadership skills and behaviors that they need to lead the organization there? Or are they wasting time checking off competencies from a list that has no guarantee to drive meaningful change?

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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.