

Feeling and Expressing Gratitude – Two Leadership Essentials in a COVID-19 World

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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.

As we approach Thanksgiving during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to recognize the healing power of gratitude, both for ourselves, and for those we lead.

Gratitude is both something we feel, and something we express. Leaders intent on building an engaged, high-performing workforce AND having high personal satisfaction will benefit from both.

Feeling Gratitude – The “Inside” Game

Let's start with feeling gratitude. That's the inside game. Robert A. Emmons, PhD, a psychologist from the University of California - Davis, is a leading expert on gratitude and its effect on the body and mind. In his article, [Why Gratitude is Good](#), Emmons identifies how gratitude improves physical, psychological, and social wellbeing. I have included Emmons' summary below. As you read the lists citing the physical, psychological, and social benefits, I encourage you to put the information in context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We all need these benefits to nourish our weary minds and bodies, especially as we face another surge.

Physical Benefits of Gratitude

- Stronger immune systems.
- Not as bothered by aches and pains.
- Lower blood pressure.
- Exercise more and take better care of their health.
- Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking.

Psychological Benefits of Gratitude

- Higher levels of positive emotions.
- More alert, alive, and awake.
- More joy, optimism, happiness, and pleasure.

Social Benefits of Gratitude

- More helpful, generous, and compassionate
- More forgiving
- More outgoing
- Feel less lonely and isolated.

Reading this list, I couldn't help but feel that, especially now, we could all benefit from a large dose of gratitude.

Showing Gratitude through Recognition

Feeling gratitude has the potential for making YOU feel better. Showing gratitude to others will give both you and the recipient a boost.

One of the best ways to show gratitude to your employees is through personal recognition. It is a low-cost, no-cost, yet effective method of generating employee engagement, but sadly underutilized.

[According to Gallup's analysis](#), only one in three workers in the U.S. strongly agree that they received recognition or praise for doing good work in the past seven days. At any given company, it's not uncommon for employees to feel that their best efforts are routinely ignored. Further, employees who do not feel adequately recognized are twice as likely to say they'll quit in the next year.

In our Be the Leader Nobody Wants to Leave course, we teach the 3-Ps of recognition. Recognition should be prompt, personal, and plentiful in order to be most meaningful.

[Gallup conducted a workplace survey](#) where employees were asked to recall who gave them their most meaningful and memorable recognition. The data revealed the most memorable recognition comes most often from an employee's manager (28%), followed by a high-level leader or CEO (24%), the manager's manager (12%), a customer (10%) and peers (9%). Worth mentioning, 17% cited "other" as the source of their most memorable recognition.

The pandemic has placed additional stress your employees who are likely dealing with stress about physical safety, finances, and parenting, making it all the more vital that they feel valued for their contributions.

Gratitude is good medicine. Take a large dose and pass it on.

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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.