

*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.

## No Crystal Ball for 2021? You Can Still Plan Ahead

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

How you lead in 2021 will be crucial to your team and your own leadership trajectory. Nothing puts a leader to the test more than a crisis, especially when that crisis lasts for months. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic tested everyone, but leaders in particular, were tested on dual levels. First, on a personal level, and second, as a leader.

What I have learned from many healthcare leaders during this pandemic is that their culture played a major role in how they navigated the past several months. One CNO, whose hospital was at the epicenter of the pandemic said, "I'm so grateful for all the culture work we had done in our organization in the two years prior to the pandemic. When we faced the worst of the COVID crisis, people trusted us and stepped up to do what was needed." This leader went on to say that because of the collaborative culture, many of the travelers who stepped in to help during the surge, asked to stay on permanently because they were so impressed with the culture. "This would not have happened in the past," she added.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, I had a discussion with a CNO who admitted that her organization struggles daily with resentment, lack of teamwork, and consistent call offs and no-shows on shifts. She describes their culture as misaligned with their stated mission, vision, and values. What she describes is an, "every man (or woman) for himself" culture. In her case, the pandemic added insult to injury.

In both cases, the stress from the pandemic amplified their existing culture. In a crisis, you are apt to get a magnified view of strengths and weaknesses. That is precisely why it is crucial to understand the strengths and limitations, of both the culture and your leadership skills. After all, the two are inextricably linked.

As we wrap up the year, and look to the future, it is crucial that we leaders take stock of what 2020 revealed about us as people and as leaders. What did the challenges show you about yourself, related to:

- Resilience<sup>i</sup>
- Communication
- Prioritization
- Ability to motivate others
- Ability to stay calm under pressure

When you look at how your team performed, consider:

- Resilience<sup>ii</sup>
- Collaboration
- Flexibility
- Empathy

## A look into 2021

Now is a great time to take stock of what the challenges from 2020 revealed about your leadership and your team's performance. What strengths will you capitalize on moving forward? What weaknesses were exposed that spotlight opportunities for improvement? In order to answer these questions, you will need to know your starting point.

To help you, I've prepared a self-evaluation for reflection that can be downloaded [here](#).

I highly encourage you to take the time to reflect on your personal leadership qualities now, in order to become a stronger, more emotionally-intelligent leader in 2021. I'd love to hear what you learned from this self-assessment. Ping me at [kris@baird-group.com](mailto:kris@baird-group.com) Subject: Self Assessment.

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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.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://hbr.org/2020/09/what-really-makes-us-resilient>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://positivepsychology.com/3-resilience-scales/#work-resilience-scales>