

News Release

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“Boot Camp” Offers Insights on the Patient Experience

Eau Claire, Wis. – Jan. 15, 2010 –

Few would argue that now, more than ever, the health care industry needs sound leadership. There are many leaders in health care environments – each with an opportunity to exert positive influence on those around them. Not all are equally effective in their roles, however.

Kristin Baird, R.N., is a health care professional with 30 years experience working inside – and now as a consultant with – the health care industry. Working with administrators and clinicians (primarily nurses) around the country Baird has seen what works, and what doesn't, in terms of cultivating organizational climates that lead to engaged employees and satisfied patients.

Baird is on a mission to “raise the bar” of service excellence in health care organizations. For those in a position to shape and guide the behaviors of those around them, she offers seven important steps they should take immediately:

- 1) **Set the expectation.** Leaders may have strong commitments to patient service and quality care, but they sometimes fail to explicitly convey those commitments – along with their expectations – to others. It can't be assumed that your staff members will know what is expected of them. You need to clearly communicate your expectations.
- 2) **Get out of your office and talk to patients and staff. Leaders can't influence from behind their office doors.** You need to get out of your office and interact with patients and staff both to help you convey your expectations and commitment to a positive patient experience and to listen and learn about the needs and expectations of those you serve as a leader.
- 3) **Have an attitude.** Attitude is everything. As leaders we have to get into the mindset of service excellence ourselves – we need to first do an attitude check on ourselves and say: “Do I have an attitude that conveys that I expect excellence?” Saying it is one thing. But it is what we *do* that most influences those who follow us. Do you have a crusader mentality – an attitude that communicates to everyone around you that a positive patient experience is a must and that you're going to do whatever it takes to make it happen?
- 4) **Get out of the way.** It's an old term and it has been over-used, but organizations that really, truly, *empower* their staff to make decisions on a day-to-day basis, and on the spot, to provide exceptional service to patients are organizations that create exceptional patient

experiences. They are rare. Get out of the way and let your employees do their jobs and do whatever it takes to create exceptional patient experiences.

- 5) **Recognize and reward the behaviors you wish to see.** Catch people doing something right. And when you catch them, recognize and reward them. This can happen in large and small ways. A simple, sincere and specific “thank you for...” means a lot to an employee and reinforces the behaviors and actions you want to see again and again from each and every individual in your organization.
- 6) **Hold people accountable.** The flip side to recognizing and rewarding the behaviors you want to see is addressing the behaviors you *don't* want to see. As leaders we need to have a zero tolerance for things that overtly conflict with our organization's mission, vision and values. If we've hired people who reflect our mission, vision and values; clearly and explicitly communicated our expectations; and provided the training and tools they need to meet those expectations then we need to hold them accountable. This may be both the most challenging – and the most impactful – leadership action we can take. “Nobody likes to think of themselves as being deceptive. But, for every day that we tolerate behavior that is inconsistent with our mission, vision and values, we're being deceptive,” says Baird. “We are deceiving people into thinking that these behaviors are okay. They are not.”
- 7) **Create a cultural expectation** that everyone in the organization is responsible for spotting, recognizing or correcting actions and behaviors they see every day. Anybody walking through the organization from the housekeeper to the CEO that sees something amiss should feel a sense of responsibility to do something about it. “Just as our collective consciousness was raised after the tragedy of September 11, 2001 to be alert to suspicious activities that might suggest terrorist behavior, as health care leaders we need to have a heightened awareness of the patient experience – really seeing and experiencing every interaction through the patient's perspective,” says Baird.

“Whenever we fail to convey our expectations, model our expectations or hold people around us accountable for meeting those expectations, we fail our patients,” says Baird. “We owe it to them – and to ourselves – to take our role as health care leaders seriously and to take steps every day to build a culture of service excellence.”

About Kristin Baird (www.baird-consulting.com)

With more than thirty years of experience in patient care, health care marketing, business development and administration, Kristin Baird is a talented speaker and consultant with a passion for service excellence. The president of Baird Consulting, Inc., Baird earned a BS in Nursing from UW-Madison and an MS in Health Services Administration from Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee.

In 2009 Baird was appointed by the Secretary of Health to serve on an advisory council for the National Health Service Corps in Washington DC.

Baird is the author of *Raising the Bar on Service Excellence*, *The Health Care Leader's Guide for Putting Passion into Practice*, *Customer Service in Health Care; A Grassroots Approach to Creating a Culture of Service Excellence*, (Jossey Bass and American Hospital Association Publishing - 2000), and *Reclaiming the Passion; Stories That Celebrate the Essence of Nursing* (Golden Lamp Press 2005).

Baird is also the creator of *Raising the Bar on Service Excellence—Step by Step*, a five-part leadership development course designed to help health care leaders implement five essential competencies for building a service-centered culture. Baird has worked with hundreds of health care clients including hospitals, medical practices and long term care facilities to improve the customer experience.

For more information, visit www.baird-consulting.com.

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