



Wendy Leebov's

HeartBeat



On The Quality Patient Experience

www.quality-patient-experience.com

Wendy's Soapbox

Regular Features

- Wendy's Soapbox
- FREE Webinar Link
- Ask Your Team This Cage-Rattling Question
- Quoteworthy
- I Love This Article—And The Book Too!
- Patients Speak
- Newsbyte
- Stress-Buster
- Coming Up

In Tough Times, How Can We Elevate Morale and Stay on Course with Service Excellence at the Same Time?

People send me such burning questions that my Inbox should be smoldering. In the last few weeks, my Inbox delivered this question (in various words) three times. One example: "We are downsizing staff due to low census, eliminating positions when a staff member retires or resigns (right sizing), etc. Staff are feeling the effects and morale is dipping. Do you have any resources you can direct us to? Thanks for your guidance as we continue to move upward. You were right, it is a journey. How can we elevate morale and stay on course with service excellence at the same time?" That's the question.



I wish I had a *recipe* for accomplishing this. I don't. But I do have a few ideas some of which I implemented successfully at Albert Einstein Healthcare Network; and others I learned about from wonderful clients.

Four Approaches

1. Bring people together for quick fun.
2. Keep people connected to the meaning in their work.
3. Introduce Careboard Conversations with inpatients.
4. Instead of cutting back on staff development, step it up.

1. **Bring people together for quick fun.** I think it helps to start by thinking about people's emotional states and their inclinations during tough times. During tough times, people typically withdraw; they get MORE task-oriented and connect with others less. In part, this happens because they are or feel that they are busier. It also happens because they feel demoralized. Their dampened spirits diminish their energy for relating to others. I feel strongly that a key strategy (not an easy one) is to **arrange for more FUN while at work.**

At Einstein, we did lunchtime/cafeteria Karaoke and a talent show, and competitive contests and campaigns -- methods for getting people out of their doldrums and into **GROUPS** even for short periods. We also had guerilla theater on patient care units (a little squad of people who traveled around and enacted humorous, awareness-raising scenarios related to service). Just recently, my friend Susie held a "Who Can Blow the Biggest Bubble Contest" (with an entry fee) to raise

FREE LINK

to Wendy's Recorded Webinar
 "Accountability Nuts and Bolts for Healthcare Leaders"
 ([Click here for details](#))



Wendy Leebov Welcomes You to...
 Accountability Nuts and Bolts
 for Healthcare Leaders
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In Tough Times, How Can We Elevate Morale and Stay on Course with Service Excellence at the Same Time? (continued)

money for Haiti. One of my very creative clients held a "Stressbuster Contest". They invited people to submit 5-minute stress-busting ideas for work teams. They then circulated one a week for a year to all managers for use with their teams. People looked forward to them and could always count on a few UP minutes every week -- UP minutes TOGETHER. For 40 free and short "ice-breaker" activities, [click here](#).

2. **Keep people connected to the meaning in their work.** While people's original motivation to join a helping profession might be buried under work overload, pressure and the sheer complexities of life, that motivation is still there. We can proactively help people reconnect or stay connected by bringing the meaning of their work to the forefront. [Tune-In Conversations](#) are quick and effective for this.

One of the most gratifying things I did at Einstein was conducting story-writing workshops for demoralized nurses in which I asked them to describe in detail on paper an experience when they felt, "YES! THIS is why I wanted to be a nurse!" I asked them to write about ONE time when they felt they had really made a difference. And then we shared those stories. The Chief Nursing Officer in one of my client hospitals decided to PERSONALLY conduct these story-sharing sessions. For the session plan and an uplifting letter that explains this process to staff, see [Share This with Your Chief Nursing Officer and/or CEO](#). P.S. If you institute story-writing sessions as a regular process, you can create a monthly magazine that's heartwarming to read and a real antidote to the doldrums.
3. **Introduce Careboard Conversations with inpatients.** My wonderful Associate Jill Golde is helping one of our clients get these started. These are short conversations at the start of a patient's stay that jumpstart trust and rapport and help the nurse and patient (and family) connect personally without even trying. Not only are patients much happier with their care, but also, nurses feel more connected, less alienated and more effective and appreciated. [Click here for a description](#).
4. **Instead of cutting back on staff development, step it up** -- so people are growing, not stagnant. During tough times and cutbacks, developmental opportunities (except for the required ones) tend to stop ("We can't afford it! And who has time!"). We stop supporting learning at the very time when our teams and the individuals who comprise them really need to be moving forward personally and professionally in some way. When we stop supporting and encouraging learning, stagnation sets in, making a person's demoralized state even worse. My video-based skill-building systems (*The Language of Caring* and *GREAT Every Time*) work really well as an example of *ongoing* learning and improvement. Managers lead their teams in the employee workshop portion which takes just 30 minutes a month and includes not only instruction but also a lot of connecting and humor. They then engage their teams in one or more hands-on hardwiring activities that turn the learning into action. [\(For information, click here.\)](#)

Here are a couple of other resource suggestions:

- Jo Manion's new book on **Creating a Positive Workforce**. It's a rich explanation of positive psychology that applies always, but even MORE when times are tough. And it includes a load of great ideas for stamping out negativity by fostering positivism.
- Subscribe ALL managers to *HeartBeat* so they get tools and shots in the arm every few weeks too. (<http://www.quality-patient-experience.com/wendy-leebov-e-zine.html>)

In short, in tough times, we can elevate morale and stay on course with service excellence by implementing spirit-building interventions mixed with service excellence content when possible.—WL

"Accountability Nuts and Bolts for Healthcare Leaders"

FREE LINK

Available for ONE WEEK ONLY
45-Minute Recorded Webinar with
Wendy Leebov, Ed.D.
\$299 Value

(Recorded January 27, 2010)

**Your FREE LINK
to Wendy's
Webinar**

*Thank you to all who attended this webinar. For those of you who were unable to attend, we are offering you a **second chance** to benefit from this tool-packed learning opportunity and to share it with your colleagues.*

Please act fast. This recording will only be available thru Tuesday, February 9, 2010.

Description

To achieve breakthroughs in the patient/customer experience and satisfaction, leaders need to raise the bar on performance and proactively manage employee performance with clarity, courage and conviction.

In this webinar, Wendy provides an intensive refresher on best practices in accountability and shares concrete tools to help you coach and support your employees so they demonstrate a higher and more consistent level of service excellence.

Wendy shares concrete tools that help you:

- Raise the bar: The difference between good and GREAT
- Get clear about higher expectations: The Gray Zone
- Coach for exceptional performance:
 - How to communicate raised expectations
 - How to plan and give caring feedback
 - How to improve performance one coaching conversation at a time
 - How to handle employee resistance and excuses and hold your ground caringly

Attendee Testimonial:

"Wendy, you did an excellent job conveying your information in a clear and concise manner. I had several "Aha" moments as you were talking. The role playing exercise you did was very helpful in modeling your discussion points. This was a very worthwhile educational event. Thank you."

Carol Moore, MS, RNC
Education Specialist

Peninsula Regional Medical Center

**For the PDF of
Wendy's Slide
Presentation**

[CLICK HERE](#)

Who will benefit?

- All levels of leadership - people who supervise others
- Champions, strategy leaders and teams intent on advancing patient-centered care, service excellence and the exceptional patient experience
- Specialists in human resources, education and staff development

BREAK THROUGH to the Next Level of Employee Performance!

Feel free to share this link with friends and colleagues.

<http://www.quality-patient-experience.com/accountability-webinar>

(Remember, this recording will be available thru Tuesday, February 9, 2010.)

**[Click Here](#)
for the
Webinar**



Ask Your Team This Cage-Rattling Question: A Trigger For Crucial Conversations

What needs to happen during your work day in order for you to leave and go home with "a good tired"?

In a team meeting, ask people to talk about this in small groups and then pose the question: "How can we help each other create the conditions for "a good tired"?"



Quoteworthy:

"The antidote to exhaustion is not rest. It is whole heartedness."

-David Whyte



I Love This Article — And The Book Too!

The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right, by Atul Gawande

Atul Gawande is a surgeon at Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute.

National Public Radio made available on the web a terrific article about Dr. Gawande, called "Atul Gawande's Checklist for Surgery Success."

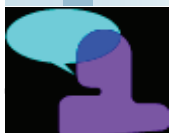
I read it and was excited. Dr. Gawande goes well beyond discussing surgery. He shares powerful anecdotes that demonstrate how complexity in health care today makes it impossible to provide consistent quality unless we use tools that help us remember all the key things we need to do and in what sequence. Gawande describes amazing improvements in health outcomes when surgeons and staff members use a simple checklist to ensure that they take all the appropriate steps in a person's surgery. But the same points apply to how we deliver service and how we communicate. I find it very frustrating that many managers have backed away from the concept of engaging their teams in developing key words at key times or as I prefer to call it *key message points* for quality communication at important touchpoints between staff and patients. After all, every member of the healthcare team is dealing with complexity---work overload, multiple responsibilities, multi-tasking, and the challenges and stresses not only in their work but in their personal lives. So, how can we possibly expect consistent quality in pivotal communications unless we have Gawande's equivalent of a checklist of the key message points that define quality communication?

Here's one example from Dr. Gawande, and it's a COMMUNICATION example.

"Good teamwork required certain things that we missed very frequently.... Like making sure everyone in the Operating Room knows each other by name. When introductions were made before a surgery, complications and deaths decreased by 35 percent. Gawande explains, "Making sure everyone knew each other's name produced what they call an activation phenomenon. The person, having gotten a chance to voice their name, was much more likely to speak up later if they saw a problem."

So, introducing everyone before surgery is one of several items on Dr. Gawande's suggested checklist.

And he says so much more of value. To read the article and a rich excerpt from his book **The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right** (Metropolitan Books, 2009; \$24.50), [click here](#).



Patients Speak

About Little Things That Make a Big Difference

- "The Chinese woman from Housekeeping had a new story for me everyday about her cat. That woman should have been a stand-up comedian. Such a good soul, always wanting to lift my spirits and make me forget I was in the hospital."
- "I called to complain about my bill. When the billing person took my call, I was sure she would give me a hard time, but she didn't. She was patient and explained everything. It was as if she knew what I was going through from her own experience."
- "I wanted my son to go with my husband and me to the hospital, so my son could park the car and I could stay with my husband until my son got back from the garage. But my son didn't show up. I was upset but didn't want to be late. So, I took my husband by myself. I was so surprised. They have valet parking. So, I got out with my husband and didn't have to leave him alone even for a minute."
- "I spend a lot of time in the cafeteria since I come here every day to sit with my dad. The cashier looks so glad to see me and asks how my father is doing. She makes me feel less alone."
- "I was so scared to go home and told the social worker. She said, 'You're not alone. Everyone gets anxious. I want you to know that your nurse and I are going to work together and help you prepare to go home, so you'll feel confident and safe when you get there. And I will personally check on you within 24 hours after you leave to see how you're doing.' I was so relieved."



Newsbyte

Patient and Family Involvement Emphasized in New NQF Safe Practices

The National Quality Forum (NQF) recently released an updated list of [Safe Practices for Better Healthcare](#), which guides healthcare organizations to provide safe care.

The Safe Practices are a list of 34 recommendations covering issues such as healthcare-associated infections, pediatric imaging, and workforce development. The recommendations have been updated with current evidence-based practices, and many include a greater focus on patient and family involvement in care.

The Safe Practices list was first released in 2003, with updates in 2006 and 2009. The NQF now plans to issue annual updates.

Source: [The National Quality Forum](#) and [HealthLeaders Media](#)

Hear Wendy speak at the 2010 Conference of the Society for Healthcare Consumer Advocacy April 14-16, 2010 in Pittsburgh.

Topics:

- Keynote: *Achieving Breakthroughs in the Patient Experience*
Wednesday, April 14, 1:45-3:00
- Breakout Session: *Dealing with the Difficult-for-You Patient*
Thursday, April 15, 11:00-12:15

For more information and to register, [click here](#).



Stress-Buster The Peace Corps

This isn't one little idea. This is a big, enduring strategy ---a gift to your employees that keeps on giving.

- Organize a squad of volunteers and staff to serve as "Peace Corps Volunteers" who help caregivers relieve stress, take a refreshing break or get a few minutes of pampering. E.g. mobile neck rubs, a stretch break, an inspiring song, etc.
- Create a Peace Corps Room with readings, music, meditation and relaxation.
- Include a Caregiver Library with thought-provoking and supportive poems, articles and books that shed light on the challenges of being ill.
- Engage staff in getting creative about how the Peace Corps could help them.

Thank You!

Thank you for the gift of your feedback last month.

I hope to incorporate many of your suggestions into *HeartBeat* in the coming issues.

I'll always appreciate your honest feedback.

Coming Up

- **Wendy's Soapbox: How Can We Get Our Senior Leaders to Hold People Accountable?**
- **Family Members Speak About Their Experience**



THANK YOU FOR TUNING IN!

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Thank you!

Wendy Leebov

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**Concrete, Sustainable Solutions
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