

Hospitals put patients first with Chief Experience Officers

by Anthony Cirillo

I recently returned from the Cleveland Clinic's Patient Experience Summit. It gave me great hope to see almost 800 people enthusiastic about patient experiences. Because while I know various health surveys indicate that patient experience is at the top of the CEO's priority list, I frankly don't see it playing out that way in many organizations. Nevertheless, those in attendance, by and large, were the doers. And as many speakers noted, we were preaching to the choir.

In a TED-Like 20 minutes I covered the role of the Chief Experience Officer (CXO). At the Clinic, that role reports right to the President and CEO, and to me that is the only way it can be.

As healthcare starts to blur, experiences will extend beyond the hospital walls. That is why long-term care is now on the radar. And remote monitoring will now extend your reach into the home as well. Only with a Chief Experience Officer at the top of the organization can you assure that experience becomes and stays a top priority, is enterprise consistent and tied to the hip with marketing. After all, word of mouth is your most important marketing tool and word of mouth is nothing more than offering great experiences that people talk about.

But there is a financial implication to this as well as in VBP--value based purchasing. With 30 percent of your VBP bonus tied to HCAHPS, you could be leaving a lot of money on the table. My simple math calculated as follows.

The average hospital has \$180 million in revenue. Say 50 percent is Medicare. That is \$90 million. By 2017 you will have to hold back two percent of your Medicare revenue for a bonus pool. So you are starting almost two million in the hole. And what would you have to charge to net two? And what happens when other payers follow suit? Do you really want to leave patient experience to chance?

So here are three roles the CXO assumes to enhance patient experience:

Chief Promise Keeper

Hospitals market something people do not want. We can't issue a buy one stent get another free Groupon! So what happens? Over time the consumer is saturated with marketing messages. And people are leaving hospitals bullhorn in hand sending messages. Over time expectations are set. So when the person becomes a patient and enters your hospital, the experience better match the expectation. If not, you're net promoter score will be worthless.

As Chief Promise Keeper, the CXO must assure experiences are consistent across the organization, even the marketing experience. Marketing, especially with social media, is about telling stories. And surfacing great patient stories is a haphazard event in most organizations. But when you have a position devoted to experience management you start setting a culture of storytelling.

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Chief Healing Officer

First go read [this HI blog post I wrote](#) putting forth the notion that healthcare workers are like firefighters. Bottom line: Firefighters have the community of the firehouse to grieve and celebrate and then go home clean. Healthcare workers take it all home and that has consequences, which lead to quality issues.

As Chief Healing Officer, the CXO will ratchet up the notion of your Employee Assistance Program, institute policies like Code Lavender and assure that pastoral care is not on the chopping block as it was for a local hospital in my area, which saw it as a budgetary move to eliminate.

Chief Context Setter

If you buy the above, still experiences have not moved a great deal. Part of it is that we layer experience management on to someone's role, not permeate it into the culture. We spend more time charting than caring. Employees do not grasp their ultimate roll as healers. We then try to map experiences and script people when we simply need to show them the way and let them figure it out.

As the Chief Context Setter, the CXO is an organizational leader who infuses patient experience into the culture. That manifests in the on-boarding processes, orientation and elsewhere.

Certainly I am just scratching the surface here. In a few weeks I will link you to the video of the presentation where you can feel the energy around the topic.

Anthony Cirillo, FACHE, ABC, is president of [Fast Forward Consulting](#), which specializes in experience management and strategic marketing for healthcare facilities. He is also the [expert guide in Assisted Living](#) for [About.com](#). Anthony can assist you in making the case for the chief experience officer and work with you to bring that position into your organization