



How Employee Experience Drives the Patient Experience

Brett Wells, Ph.D. | *Global Head of People Analytics*

Lauren Beechly, Ph.D. | *Director, Healthcare Consulting*



Understanding the Patient Experience

As the healthcare industry embraces patient-centered care, it has become a strategic and financial priority to deliver a positive patient experience. Not to be confused with patient satisfaction, patient experience involves assessing how well the healthcare system is engaging in the behaviors of high-quality care that are important to patient outcomes. This includes clear communications, responsiveness of staff, and other vital aspects of the care received.

While providing an exceptional patient experience is a noble goal on its own, there are compelling reasons to focus on this that extend beyond simply ticking boxes off a checklist. When comparing the patient experience to other important outcomes, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality shares [compelling evidence](#) that suggests a strong link, such as adherence to recommended treatment (including medication), better use of preventive services, and impact on resource use of primary and secondary care. Additionally, it's good business: Positive patient experience is associated with higher levels of patient loyalty, lower medical malpractice risk, and lower mortality. In addition, patient experience scores are tied to Medicare reimbursement, and encompass 30% of Value Based Purchasing (VBP) performance (which accounts for 2% of overall Medicare reimbursement).

The benefits don't stop there. When working to improve the patient



experience, we often find a reciprocal relationship between the patient experience and the employee experience. By improving the patient experience, issues in care delivery are improved, enabling employees to be better at their jobs. Better performance leads to an anticipation of success, which is itself engaging and reinforces better performance. Healthcare workers with higher levels of engagement communicate better, are more responsive, and provide safer care relative to their lower-engaged counterparts – allowing them to provide a more positive patient experience.

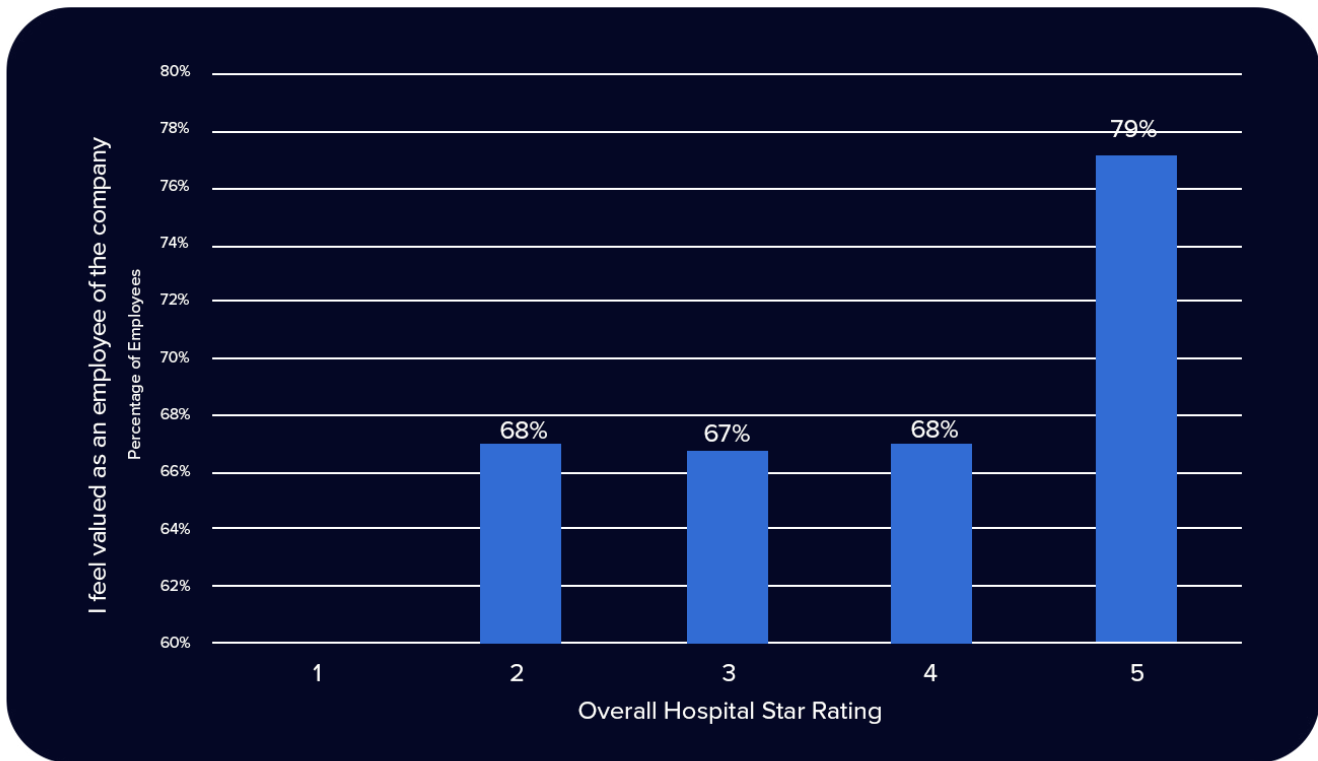
Employee Experience in the Driver's Seat

The Beryl Institute defines patient experience as “the sum of all interactions, ***shaped by an organization's culture***, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care.” Perceptyx defines [employee experience](#) as what it's like to work in the organization and how employees feel about their work experiences. That includes the tangible elements of work such as technology and the physical work environment, but also intangibles like work relationships, autonomy on the job, trust in leadership and their decisions, and opportunities for growth and development. All these elements compose the employee experience and, ultimately, the culture of the organization; the employee experience is a manifestation of the organization's unique culture. There is ample evidence to demonstrate employee experience impacts nearly everything from engagement and productivity to employee retention and, ultimately, profit.

The People Analytics and Healthcare Consulting teams at Perceptyx conducted a research study to identify what aspects of the employee experience have the greatest, positive impact on the patient experience. To answer this question, Perceptyx linked our healthcare employee experience [database](#) to Medicare's publicly reported patient experience database that reports the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems ([HCAHPS](#)) survey results. The Perceptyx employee experience database includes 1,600 healthcare facilities across the country, exceeding 1.3 million respondents over a rolling three-year period.

Focusing on Medicare's most recent patient experience data from 2019, we found strong, positive relationships between [employee engagement](#), as measured by four key elements (pride in the organization, intent to stay, referral behavior, and intrinsic motivation) and the global ratings of care (i.e., likelihood to recommend and overall hospital rating). As one example, facilities with a 5 (out of 5) overall hospital star rating are projected to retain an additional 3% of their workforce annually compared to all other facilities. According to the [2021 National Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report](#), every 1% change in nurse turnover will cost/save the average hospital an additional \$270,800. That is to say, facilities with a 5 overall hospital star rating are saving more than \$800,000 annually in nursing turnover costs alone. As another example and as depicted below, employees at facilities with an overall hospital 5-star rating are significantly more likely to feel valued as an employee of the company.





Overall, Perceptyx results reinforce prior research conducted in this area. Extending these results, we identified three data-driven employee experience areas that can have cascading benefits on the patient experience:

- Safety commitment
- Collaboration
- Recognition

Facilities that perform in the top quartile in these three areas are 2.5 times more likely to have a 5 overall hospital star rating.

Safety Commitment from the Top

Unsurprisingly, when healthcare organizations fully commit to zero harm and make safety a priority, patients consistently take notice. These benefits extend beyond just safety perceptions and impact the holistic patient experience – touching everything from how communications from doctors and nurses are perceived, to the responsiveness and attentiveness of staff, and even to noticing the cleanliness and quietness of their care environment.

Customer Spotlight: UCHealth

With more than 26,000 employees across 12 hospitals, the leadership team at [UCHealth](#) set an objective to increase employee engagement, improve trust and transparency throughout the organization, act with a sense of immediacy, and create alignment throughout the entire health system. They found the best way to achieve these desired outcomes was through [Dialogue](#) by Perceptyx, an employee voice solution that crowdsources ideas and recommendations on actions to improve the employee experience. The results are then discussed in a CEO-led session at each hospital, and trickle down to all employees through each team leader. Since implementation, employee engagement and trust in leadership increased by 15% and 18%, respectively. UCHealth is now ranked in the upper quartile of patient experience, and upper decile in safety outcomes, resulting in fewer hospital falls, infections, and bed sores.



Strong Communication & Collaboration Across Teams

While healthcare workers consistently exhibit strong cohesion and communication within teams, across teams is often more of a struggle. However, it's essential for hospitals to continue focusing their efforts on building camaraderie and collaboration across the organization as our research suggests there's a strong connection between effective coordinated care and the patient experience. Evaluating the effectiveness of handoffs and shift changes and their impact on patient care has the potential to boost patient experience perceptions across dimensions and both global ratings of care – likelihood to recommend the hospital and overall rating of care.

The Power of Recognition

When done well, recognition is powerful in its own right – it informs employees of the types of behavior the organization rewards and expects. In order to reap the benefits of recognition, leaders should focus on providing frequent and authentic recognition. Make recognition a part of the cultural experience for your employees – work it into standing meetings, huddles, and rounding practices. Ensure there's alignment between your safety strategy and your recognition practices, both formal and informal.

Customer Spotlight

Analyzing employee experience data for a healthcare system with nearly 20,000 employees, the Perceptyx platform uncovered that recognition and reward was a key driver of engagement and also mitigated stress and provider burnout – a problem exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Integrating the customer's recognition data (electronic thank you cards) into the Perceptyx platform further emphasized the importance of recognition: Receiving just five “thank yous” annually from one's manager increased the likelihood of being highly engaged by 4% and reduced turnover by 1%, conservatively saving this customer \$3.5 million annually in turnover costs.

Focus on a Few Factors

Altogether, there are many employee experience factors that play a role in delivering exceptional patient experience. While all are important, the industry can strategically focus on those areas – safety commitment, collaboration, and recognition – that holistically impact the patient experience. By using an evidence-based approach to patient experience, we can work smarter, not harder, to achieve high reliability delivery of care, as well as high employee engagement.

These data were gathered during 2019 and do not take into consideration the disruptive effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, the volatility of the environment likely heightens the importance of these factors as opposed to lessening their impact. Additionally, when looking at the Perceptyx database, it should be noted that we work with top-performing healthcare organizations that have stronger levels of engagement. Roughly 3% of facilities across the United States have a 1 out of 5 overall hospital star rating; Perceptyx does not currently work with any of these facilities (and may be a marker that organizations intently focused on the patient experience are also intently focused on the employee experience). We would expect even stronger relationships when looking across the full spectrum of employee and patient experiences.





Since its founding in 2003, Perceptyx has been redefining the employee insights industry, delivering enterprise-level employee listening and people analytics solutions to more than 500 global customers, including one-third of the Fortune 100. With an unrivaled technology platform and a tailor-made, flexible approach, the Perceptyx platform makes it easy for managers, HR executives, and business leaders to discover insights deep within large and complex organizations, driving meaningful action to improve business outcomes. Driven by a deep intellectual curiosity and a culture of innovation, Perceptyx is challenging the status quo — to help people and organizations “see the way forward.”

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