

Designing Positive, Memorable Experiences ...in Healthcare

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Modern healthcare has become a complex set of individual mechanics. Healthcare providers are confused as to who the customer is and teamwork is a challenge. Now is the time to refocus on Patient healing. Experience Design is the best methodology to systematically coordinate the efforts of the whole organization.

THE FOUNDATION PRINCIPLE: HEALING AS A SYSTEM

After years of engineering and organizational consulting in a host of industries, I have recently witnessed some extraordinary transformations in healthcare. As dramatic as these changes are, they are not mysterious. They come about because of the operation of a simple, foundational principle: *the core work of healthcare is healing as a system.*

Viewed through the lens of this principle, the crisis in contemporary healthcare can be seen more clearly.

For all the unprecedented scientific and technical innovation of modern medicine, its practices are disconnected and sometimes redundant. Its systems are stressed by regulation, competition, and cost. Patients are increasingly disaffected, burdened by unnecessary tests or procedures or by errors or omissions that undermine trust and satisfaction. They have chronic health conditions they can't manage or afford

to treat. Too often, treatment leaves them feeling less than well and dismayed by care that seems rushed, impersonal, and mechanical.

Even expert healthcare providers know that something is amiss. They find themselves dislocated in a medical world of astonishing technological power and they sense—without being able to explain precisely why—that this isn't the vocation they were called to.

But the surprisingly simple truth is that when healing is reestablished in its rightful, central place in healthcare, all participants are enriched. When there is a clear and shared understanding of what enables and disables healing, medicine works as it should. Doctors, nurses, Patients, and families are reconnected in a relationship that strengthens and restores.





Experience Design Fundamentals

Be Relevant

Learn. Understand to be person-centered. Anticipate and act on the needs and concerns of Patients, their families and associates. Become proactive throughout the whole process.

Engage

Trigger intended awareness through behaviors, physical elements, and impressions. Provide more than what is expected. Create desired memories. Eliminate the negatives.

Connect

Provide flow to all the elements in a predictable way. Link the Patient to the care team, to the next procedure, to information, service, time, and place so that the Patient never becomes “lost” or worries.

Adapt

Share learnings easily. Innovate regularly. Continually improve and sustain. Evolve based on all kinds of learning.

(Selected from work with various clients, including a U.S. hospital during a recent implementation of Experience Design)

A TRANSCENDENT LESSON FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

What strikes me as most remarkable in this transformation of medicine is the way it is reenacting a dynamic familiar in organizational development across many different fields. I have worked with organizations as diverse as consumer goods manufacturer Procter & Gamble, pharmaceutical developer Eli Lilly, research institutions like the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Disney’s Imagineering, and dozens of municipalities, schools, hospitals, and other service providers across the United States.

In all cases, excellence flows from inspired vision and a culture that brings it alive. The larger the goal and the deeper the shared commitment, the greater the value the organization is able to realize throughout its enterprise. The more likely it is that it will be able to achieve success, the more sustainable the success will be, and the more adaptable the organization will be to new challenges.

I have seen this truth demonstrated over and over again. I am an engineer and have been an expert in automation. In years past, I have known how to build fast, efficient systems designed for rapid production. But I also know that the most sophisticated technical processes require the balance and integration that come from inspired leadership encouraging good process and engaging a healthy culture. Few environments can match healthcare for the concentration of human intelligence and expertise, exquisite technological creativity, and critical time- and risk-sensitivity.

So the stakes could not be higher.

Nor could the business challenges be greater. Patient healing must be achieved in an organization that is able to respond adroitly to its market environment. One that is able to secure and maintain competitive advantage, to be both innovative and nimble. One that invests wisely in the culture of its people, ensures that they have the best tools, and integrates its systems to maximize efficiency, reduce waste, and eliminate error.

These are not conflicting goals—Patient healing and business excellence. Both

flow from the same set of organizational priorities: an inspiring vision, trusted leadership, a relevant culture, good process, and pervasive, proactive openness to improvement. Just the elements that Experience Design enables.

EXPERIENCE DESIGN: IMAGINE A PLACE

Imagine a place intentionally designed to best meet users’ needs. It could be a factory, a hotel or restaurant, a theme park, or a school. But let’s say it is a hospital. Imagine it was configured within a framework that viewed the Patient as a whole person, rather than as something to be fixed. In such a place, care would be personal and proactive, anticipating the Patient’s needs, reducing risk, improving efficiency—all with the empathetic intention to improve healing—in body, mind and spirit.

With such care, the Patient would understand the purposes and procedures of treatment. This understanding would reduce fear and uncertainty, increase confidence, and promote Patient compliance with the healing process.

In such a place, teamwork, shared focus, and well-connected processes would improve the experience of nurses, doctors, technicians, and administrative staff. Such improvements would in turn produce the results that every healthy organization needs: greater job satisfaction and higher retention.

Organized by the principles and insights of Experience Design, such a hospital would more readily meet its financial objectives because relevant processes lead directly to improved predictability.

The current literature of organizational development is describing the way such places make strategic sense for business. In *The Experience Economy*, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore argue that organizations like Disney, Nordstrom, and Starbucks provide products and services with added value for customers because they are delivered in the context of experiences that are distinctly memorable.

A recent McKinsey Quarterly research report, “A Better Hospital Experience” (2007), discovers the same dynamic potential latent in hospital care. According to

the report, hospitals that hope to succeed in the face of mounting competition will need to “move beyond fixing problems and retaining patients.” Only 20% of a Patient’s choice of hospital is based on the facility’s scores for clinical excellence. A surprising 41% depends on non-clinical elements like punctuality and personalized billing assistance. “It won’t be easy to buy or quickly replicate a distinctive Patient experience,” the report’s authors write, “but knowing how to create one should yield a sustainable competitive edge.”

NOW IS THE TIME

So it seems evident to me—from my recent work with healthcare clients and from observation of the quality challenges facing American medicine—that now is the time. Whether healthcare leaders are envisioning a new facility, contemplating a major new equipment purchase, or planning to revamp existing processes of care delivery, they have the opportunity to establish themselves as leaders in Patient care.

The kind of transformation Experience Design can offer hospitals or medical systems will position them within a growing trend of consumer expectations. Among competing facilities that all offer high quality clinical care, those distinguished by the integrated healing experience they provide Patients will have the new level of value communities require.

Designing the Patient experience establishes the ability to see and better manage the framework for business efficiency and Patient healing.

Art Frohwerk is recognized as an innovator and implementer. With over 30 years of orchestrating team-based solutions, he is known for developing and leading efforts in getting the “impossible” done, always with a strong sense of reality, business savvy, and recognition of human factors. One of Art’s lifelong interests has been in visualization – seeing patterns and understanding complex issues in a simple way. His experience spans key roles of new product, process, and business start-ups, transforming companies for growth, driving high-tech teams in million- and billion-dollar projects, and coaching multidisciplinary teams in utilizing new tools and new perspectives.

Clearpath is “a new kind of consulting company.” The Clearpath team helps leaders achieve breakthrough performance for their organizations by aligning their people, processes, and other resources. To design and implement new strategic and operational frameworks, Clearpath uses discovery tools and interactive methods.

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But, two caveats.

First, it is an arduous and comprehensive task to design a care system so that everything is focused on the systems of Patient healing. It entails some paradigm shifts. It requires bold leadership and institutional maturity. Some organizations might need to prepare their culture, processes, personnel, and operations for the self-examination Experience Design requires. Certainly, leaders need to be ready to commit themselves to the vision they articulate and to provide active, positive, and sustained support for its implementation throughout their organization.

Second, Experience Design is a process and a way to better see, not an end in itself. Employed in the transformation of healthcare, it brings a refreshed perspective to the mission of healing. What will a hospital look like after its people have defined and re-aligned themselves and all their myriad tasks, roles, and systems with inspiring purpose and clarity?

One thing is certain: making “healing as a system” the foundational principle will require doing many of the right things and none of the wrong things. Designing a healthy experience into everything will create the very results that healthcare providers have always wanted to achieve.

More than that.

Healing will look like the vocation they felt called to from the beginning.



Today, many healthcare providers feel alone. We see worn out individuals. Their frustration affects their ability to deliver. They need to see new ways to work as a team and continuously improve.



Imagination and Engineering: The Power of Vision

There were 200 of us at Disney, engineers and designers, brought together, all with superb expertise, all with our skills in distinct silos. We were charged to create EPCOT Center, the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow. The complexity of new systems, technologies, and conflicting requirements was overwhelming. Our timeline was severe, and we weren’t meeting it. Ours is not a unique story. We needed to find a way to collaborate that would integrate the power of our considerable tools and skills to produce the results we were accountable for.

What we needed, it turned out, was a clear, shared vision and a culture to focus on it. Inspiration. A valuable purpose born of radical imagination. The “impossible” quickly became possible, and the story became the place that millions enjoy visiting.