

# Keep Your Nurses

& HealthCare Professionals

*The 4 Imperatives of  
How to Inspire, Retain,  
Motivate and Empower,  
Patient Focused Nurses  
& Everybody Else.*

**for Life!™**

**Brian Lee, CSP**  
*Health Care's*  
**"Mr. Customer Satisfaction"**



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*Larky Blunk  
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***“Very down to earth with realistic strategies. Brian is more grounded in reality than most who deal with this topic.”***

*Terry Scherl  
Director, Women's & Children's Services*

# Keep Your Nurses & HealthCare Professionals *for Life!*<sup>™</sup>

*4 Imperatives to Retain, Inspire and Empower  
Patient Focused Nurses (& Everyone Else!)*

**BRIAN LEE, CSP**

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Mission:

TO PROVIDE HEALTHCARE  
LEADERSHIP WITH AN  
IMPLEMENTABLE BLUEPRINT TO  
SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE  
NURSE RETENTION.



- Brian Lee, CSP is one of North America's leading experts in the field of Healthcare Patient Satisfaction and Change Leadership and is author of "Satisfaction Guaranteed . . . How to Master the 6 Secrets of World Class Customer Satisfaction."
- For two consecutive years, the International Customer Service Association Conference has evaluated Brian as the number one rated Customer Service Speaker in the World.
- Healthcare's Mr. "Customer Satisfaction" travels over 150,000 miles a year, delivering over 120 keynotes and seminars, and has spoken in 58 states and provinces and 12 countries worldwide.
- As both a speaker and implementation consultant to over 100 Healthcare Organizations and Fortune 500 corporations, Brian is sought after as an advisor/coach to senior management, specializing in long term strategic solutions.
- He has been awarded the National Speakers Association Professional Designation CSP (Certified Speaking Professional), becoming one of less than 20 in Canada, and less than 500 in the world.
- Brian Lee founded Custom Learning Systems Group Ltd. (CLS) in 1984. Headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, CLS has offices in Winnipeg and Toronto, and serve it's client roster of 6,000 organization with a team of 32 world class trainers and communication professionals.
- Brian and his wife, Valerie Cade Lee, reside in Calgary, Alberta.

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Dedication:

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO  
NURSES EVERYWHERE  
WHO MAKE A PROFOUND  
DIFFERENCE IN OUR HEARTS,  
OUR HEALTH AND IN OUR LIVES  
EACH AND EVERY DAY.

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JOHN SIMMONS

ROBERT LEE

# Keep Your Nurses & HealthCare Professionals *for Life!*<sup>™</sup>

***4 Imperatives to Retain,  
Inspire and Empower  
Patient Focused Nurses  
(& Everyone Else!)***

## Table of Contents

Foreword		1
Introduction		5
<b>The Big Picture in Staff Retention</b>		<b>11</b>
Chapter 1	Focus on What's Really Important	13
Chapter 2	The Trends in Healthcare	19
Chapter 3	The Facts in Nursing Today	23
Chapter 4	Why Nurses are Leaving	27
Chapter 5	The Link Between Employee Morale and Customer Satisfaction	33
Chapter 6	Excellence IS the Answer	35
Chapter 7	Learn From "O.P.S."	43
<b>K. - The Key is Culture</b>		<b>47</b>
Chapter 8	Change your Culture	49
Chapter 9	Reinventing Culture	53
Chapter 10	Defining Employee's Cultural Expectations	57
<b>E. - Empowerment is the Way</b>		<b>61</b>
Chapter 11	Unlocking the Mystery of Empowerment	63
Chapter 12	The six steps of Empowering Leadership	73
Chapter 13	Five Employee Attitudes	77
Chapter 14	The 12 Imperatives of Exceptional Employee Morale	81
Chapter 15	Respect	87
Chapter 16	Communication	91
Chapter 17	Alignment/Trust	99
Chapter 18	Recognition/Feedback	103
Chapter 19	Empowerment	113

## Table of Contents

<b>E. - Education and Engagement</b>	<b>129</b>
Chapter 20 Insider/Information	131
Chapter 21 Coach/Champion	133
Chapter 22 Mentorship	135
Chapter 23 Training/Tools	139
Chapter 24 Leadership	145
Chapter 25 Empathy	149
Chapter 26 Fun/Friendly	155
<b>P. - Physician Acceptance</b>	<b>157</b>
Chapter 27 What Nurses Would Change	159
Chapter 28 Successfully Involving Physicians	161
Chapter 29 Physician Service Empowerment Policy	167
Chapter 30 Physician Empowerment Satisfaction Survey	175
Chapter 31 D.O. I.T. Action Plan	179
Chapter 32 Make a Commitment	189
<b>Addenda</b>	<b>191</b>

## Forward

***Our Job #1 is to keep the good people  
we've already got."***

*Brian Lee, CSP*

***"We were once thought to have the best  
care in the world but it can't stay that way  
unless we're willing to make changes."***

*Canadian-raised, Dr. Martin  
Shapiro, UCLA Faculty of Medicine*

Imagine ten years from now. You're riding your bike through a scenic city park, skillfully meandering in and out of pedestrian traffic and you come towards a steep gravel decline. As you descend, your wheel catches the corner of a large rock, causing your bike to spin out of control. Sliding sideways, your bike falls out of your grasp, leaving you lying bruised, battered and bloody while pedestrians watch in horror. Shaken and light-headed, you pick yourself up and notice a significant gouge in your left arm that obviously needs stitches. Someone offers to take you to the hospital but it's the weekend. The waiting room is thick with dozens of patients and there is no room to sit down. You wait and wait. Twelve hours pass and you're still waiting. The lineup of patients has not depleted, in fact, it's

increased. The unit clerks are visibly stressed and snap at everyone who comes in. There is only one nurse on duty. She is in her fifties and her face wears a permanent scowl. Doctors can be heard barking orders but there's nobody there to answer them so they have to take blood, fill nebulizers and attach electrocardiograms themselves.

Unrealistic? The healthcare sector in North America is facing its potentially greatest challenge in a century. For every one nurse entering the healthcare profession, four are leaving. And its going to get much worse before it gets better.

Why? Just for Starters:

Too few nurses for too many patients, mandatory overtime policies requiring nurses to work through physical exhaustion, early release of un-recovered patients in lieu of needed beds or because insurance companies won't pay for longer stays are all facts of today's hospital environment. While these are just a few of the contributing factors, most nurses will tell you the main reason people are leaving the profession in droves is that they feel devalued and unappreciated.

A recent poll of 1,000 of the largest companies in North America by Robert Half Corporation showed that lack of recognition and praise is the number one reason employees leave an organization.

This exodus will soon reach epidemic proportions.

One of the healthcare industry's biggest enemies is its culture and rooted behaviors. Unless leadership and staff make a concentrated effort to change their culture and transform their environment, they are doomed to repeat the past. Band-Aid treatments, "Flavor of the Month" training incentives and policy disclaimers do not work.

Our goal in ***Keep Your Nurses & HealthCare Professionals For Life*** is to focus on an immediately implementable leadership strategy that works. A process that will create a quality of life so supportive in the current workplace that nurses would never think of leaving or working anywhere else.

It can happen. But after reading this book, what you might do is take this information, stick it in your in-basket to be dealt with at some future date. Then you'll forget about it. When you think about it again you'll feel guilty. Guilt leads to depression and depression leads to suicide and as you know, there is already a nurse shortage. I want you to finish this book and create your own game plan. I guarantee you'll find the contents invaluable.

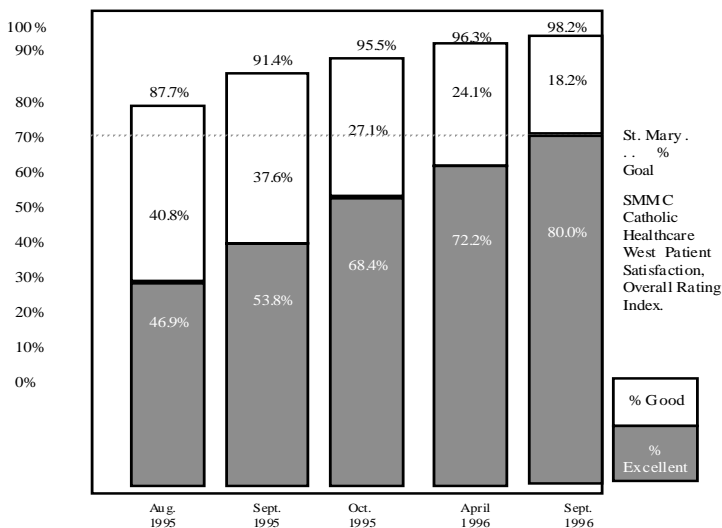
## Introduction

***“Difficulties exist to be surmounted.”***

***Ralph Waldo Emerson***

A quick bit of history: In 1995 - 1996 my training company, Custom Learning Systems Group Ltd. achieved a dramatic breakthrough for increasing patient satisfaction scores at St. Mary Medical Center in Long Beach, California.

“St. Mary Medical Center (Long Beach California) increased its “Excellent” Rating of overall Customer Satisfaction by 21.5% in less than 120 days”, and continues to improve it to a remarkable 98.2% overall Excellent and Good.



Overall Patient Satisfaction skyrocketed from 46% excellence to 80% excellence in less than 18 months.

We named the process “**The Service Excellence Initiative**”. Since then we’ve been discovered by one hospital after the other. Because of our success, I decided to devote our training practice to healthcare, especially hospitals.

The evolution began with teaching customer service to front line staff. Based on previous experience we realized that we were wasting our time unless we inspired management to treat their front line differently.

One manager asked me, “If I give you my staff to train for half a day, what guarantee can you give that they’re going to change their behavior?” I replied, “If I train your staff for half a day, what guarantee will you give me that you will lead and inspire them effectively in the other 364 days, to reinforce what I teach them?”

It became evident to me that to successfully train the front line we had to first provide leadership training, especially empowerment. It had also become evident that the organization’s culture had to change. We discovered that to affect meaningful culture change, the front line, the people who actually do the work had to play a leadership role. The way I like to say it is “For culture change to work just fine, it must be led from the top **and** the front line.”

While our efforts were primarily focused on world class patient satisfaction, we noticed an interesting by-product. Greg Harrison, Director of Business Development, Central Region at Sutter Medical Center in Sacramento, California, reported to us that in two years of implementing Service Excellence, staff turnover went down 11 percent. That translated into at least a \$1 million dollar a year saving for a hospital of 5000+ employees and volunteers.

As a nursing crisis stares the industry in the face, it’s occurred to us, that we ought to be sharing this knowledge. We then took the next step... to develop a seminar focused on nurse retention, and the book is based on our live seminar “Keep Your Nurses &

HealthCare Professionals for Life”.

Think of this book as an implementable blueprint for nurse retention. We've created four key imperatives to inspire, retain, motivate, and empower patient-focussed nurses and everybody else. In the following chapters, you will learn how to:

1. Implement these cultural imperatives so those nurses will never want to leave.
2. Unlock the genius of nurse empowerment through front line ownership and accountability.
3. Significantly enhance employee morale and patient/customer satisfaction at the same time.
4. Create powerful incentives to improve productivity.
5. Stimulate your existing staff to become enthusiastic sales people for new recruits.
6. Involve physicians in improving nurses' quality of work life through teamwork, and reducing needless stress and conflict.

There are four key imperatives of the “K.E.E.P.” strategy in “K.E.E.P.” Your Nurses for Life:

K = The Key is Culture

E = Empowerment is the Way

E = Education and Engagement

P = Physician Acceptance

**The Key is Culture:** Culture is an organization's way of life. Programs don't work. Campaigns don't work. We've all been through the flavor of the month and flavor of the year. If you have a staff retention issue, it's likely your culture has a lot to do with it.

Retention will be won or lost, department by department, unit by unit, charge nurse leadership group by charge nurse leadership group. How else can you explain two adjacent departments,

one with a great culture and low turnover, the other with a crummy culture and high turnover? I'm going to provide you with a guideline on how to create a preferred culture.

**Empowerment is the Way:** Another expression I like to use is: "Give your people the gift of adulthood." Until your front line owns your problems, you'll never solve them. The process of getting financially lean has preoccupied healthcare leadership for the past decade. We've stripped almost all meaningful decision making from intelligent front line people who desperately want to be able to use their own wisdom and good judgement. You will be provided with the tools to empower your staff.

**Education and Engagement:** "When your people are learning, they're not leaving." When front line staff is engaged; they're not enraged. How do we empower staff so they're part of the process and not part of the problem? How do we make them our chief recruiters instead of allowing them to get ready to leave? Give your people a cause that captivates their imagination and stirs their soul. Let the provision of quality patient care become their primary focus. You will learn how your front line can become your best recruiters, teachers and role models.

**Physician Acceptance:** I believe Healthcare's dirty little secret is the way too many doctors treat nurses. There are exceptions but it's a sad commentary that so little literature is addressing this critical problem. We achieved significant insights in this area within the past year. I'm going to share with you a model, complete with "how-to" action steps.

Finally, I want to share with you the Keep Your Nurses & HealthCare Professionals for Life "D.O. I.T." Action Plan, (D.O. I.T....stands for **Daily Ongoing Implementation Tactics**) a step by step action blueprint to assist you to realize the goals you set for yourself as a result of this input.

To be clear, let me clarify the topics I will not be covering in this book.

**I will not spend time on**

**1. Legislative Lobbying**

While building political support for increased funding and healthcare reform is critical, national nursing plus state and provincial healthcare organizations are aggressively pursuing the necessary changes.

I have, however, provided an addendum of nursing associations in the belief that all members of this proud professional should actively support their local voice.

**2. Criticizing Government or Managed Care**

While many believe government policy and managed care are the root causes of the problem, I respectfully refer these concerns to the democratic political process and #1 above.

**3. Public Relations/Professional Image**

While the image of healthcare and the nursing profession has suffered considerably during the past decade, and while there was a massive need to re-educate the public about the noble mission of this occupation, this is clearly a long term problem in need of long term solutions. I believe that every nurse has to become an advocate by speaking in the community and to schools to present a better image of the profession. This book is dedicated to an action process that can make a difference now.

**4. Student Career Orientation**

Nursing leadership clearly recognizes the need to speak directly to junior and senior high school students and to encourage them to consider nursing as a career.

While the initiative can produce results in 3-5 years, I shall defer this strategy to local hospitals and healthcare associations.

## 5. Recruitment Strategies

When it come to sophisticated recruitment strategies including the use of the Internet, there are literally hundreds of cool ideas around available from recruitment experts. I encourage you to get educated about leading edge, best practices and use them. As for the book, our focus is to assist readers to create a culture that new recruits (and old timers) will never want to leave.

We also believe that the most powerful marketing tool you have are enthusiastic, loyal employees who recruit their former classmates, peers and friends to come to work along side them.

By the conclusion of this book I hope you share my belief that by inspiring, retaining, motivating, and empowering patient-focussed nurses and everybody else, your organization and your patients will benefit substantially. After all, isn't that why you chose to work in this field?

Brian Lee, CSP

THE  
"BIG PICTURE"  
IN  
STAFF RETENTION

## Chapter One

# FOCUS ON WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT

***“Satisfied needs do not motivate.  
It’s only the unsatisfied need that motivates.  
Next to physical survival,  
the greatest need of a human being  
is psychological survival –  
to be understood, to be affirmed,  
to be appreciated.”***

***Stephan Covey  
The 7 Habits of Highly  
Successful People***

***To look is one thing.  
To see what you look at is another.  
To understand what you see is a third.  
To learn from what you understand  
is still something else.  
To act on what you learn is all that  
really matters.***

*Anonymous*

Every once in a while a profound insight into life arrives unsolicited in my email inbox, like this conversation the writer listened into on his radio one day.

“Tom and John were having a conversation and John said something about “a thousand marbles.” I was intrigued, so I stopped to listen to what he had to say.

“Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you’re busy with your job. I’m sure they pay you well but it’s a shame you have to be away from your home and your family so much. It’s hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter’s dance recital.”

John continued, “Let me tell you something, Tom. Something that has helped me to keep a good perspective on my own priorities.” And that’s when he began to explain his theory of a “thousand marbles.”

“You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about 75 years. Now, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3,900, which is the number of Saturdays the average person has in their entire lifetime.

“Now, stick with me, Tom. I’m getting to the important part. It took me until I was 55 years old to think about all this in any detail,” John continued. “By that time I had lived through over 2,800 Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be 75, I only had about 1,000 of them left to enjoy.

“So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1,000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside a large, clear plastic container, right here in the sack, next to my gear. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away. I found by watching the marbles diminish, I could focus more on the really important things in life.”

When it comes to healthcare there are so many really important things to focus on: patient safety, financial solvency, biotechnology convergence, joint commission accreditation, aging facilities, physician issues, unfriendly news media and patient information privacy.

Yes, these are all really important, but of what consequences are they if there aren't sufficient nurses to care for the patient.

If only it were just nurses. A dozen other healthcare occupations from Pharmacists to Radiology Technologists are in diminishing supply.

Time is running out. The average nurse's age is between 42 and 48, which means most of them will retire soon. But who will replace them? U.S. nursing school enrollments have dropped 20.9 percent from 1995 to 1998 (Source: Harvard Nursing Research Institute). The proportion of nurses under the age of 30 has dropped from 30 percent to 12 percent. Significantly fewer women are choosing nursing for a career. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1,754,000 nurses will be needed in the United States by 2020 but based on current trends, only 635,000 will be available.

We know that one of the reasons young people do not become nurses is because healthcare is perceived as a less-than-desirable work environment. We hear horror stories in the news almost every day. To the gen Xer's we now depend on as a pool of new recruits, this is almost a nightmare. Why has nursing become such an unappealing profession?

1. New nursing recruits are slower at picking up the workload and physicians lack tolerance towards them.
2. In so many communities housing is expensive.

3. While older nurses like twelve-hour shifts/three days a week/it can be physically hard to work.
4. Learning the new technology of healthcare today is a constant challenge. People are afraid of things they don't know.
5. Nurses like to work in specialty nursing but it's impossible for many hospitals to afford to have a dedicated unit. There is a dilution of specialty nursing as a result.
6. Floating and cancellation of staff is frustrating.
7. There is a group consensus that money spent on recruitment outweighs money spent on retention.
8. There is virtually no one available to train new employees.
9. There are many attractive career alternatives to nursing. Many women are now choosing to become doctors instead.
10. There are restrictions that come with unionization.
11. It's difficult to entice recruits to remote locations.
12. Unacceptably low state-mandated minimum staffing ratios have had a negative impact on workload and quality of care.
13. Nurses are worried that the level of care has become unsafe.
14. Physicians are perceived to be disrespectful.
15. The volume of workload is overwhelming and many nurses don't want to work that hard.
16. Nurses are physically and mentally fatigued or tired.
17. Many hospital departments have unrealistic expectations about what nurses can or should do.
18. Patient/family expectations are increasing.
19. Nurses believe they spend more time on paperwork than patient care.
20. Mandatory overtime is physically and mentally draining and it many, in fact, endanger patient care. Working

back-to-back 12-hour shifts is not uncommon.

21. Nurses are required to supervise unlicensed staff.
22. Hospital-based nurses, not only work every other weekend, but are too often, not getting time off for breaks or vacations.
23. Nurses perceive the hospital scheduling processes to be unfair.

Is it any wonder nursing has become known as “the reluctant profession”?

Staff want to feel valued and appreciated. They want to be understood, affirmed and appreciated. Look at your own personal relationships. How important is it for you to feel appreciated and valued? Nurses take their most productive hours of the week and devote them to a public institution, how would that differ?

Nurse leaders need to create an environment where people actually want to come to work because they're made to feel like they really do make a difference.

There's a story about an alcoholic patient who made frequent trips to the Emergency ward. The staff grew increasingly frustrated with him because he wouldn't take care of himself. They were sometimes less than polite. He later died of exposure and through his obituary, the staff learned about his remarkable life before the bottle. He had served in Europe during World War II and before that, he was a star pitcher for a National League baseball team. He hid from his demons and disappeared into the bottle after the war. He likely didn't set out to be an alcoholic just as healthcare professionals didn't enter the field to become distant or cold-hearted service providers.

Why do most nurses go into nursing? To make a difference in the lives of their patients. In order to inspire staff, we need to give them a cause. What better cause than World Class Patient Care/Customer Satisfaction? We all need to remind nurses that the ideals and beliefs that motivated them to enter the profession are more important than ever. If today's administrators

and nursing leadership can re-ignite those beliefs, then anything is possible

We need to get better at systems and operations. We need to improve clinical outcomes, focus on customer service and we need to get the agenda back centered on people issues. We need to embrace change.

To make these changes, we have to do two things. Like the corporate world, whether it's for profit or non-profit healthcare, we must continue to reduce costs and improve our outcomes simultaneously. Therein lies the challenge. Like any other industry, people always want more value for less cost.

## Chapter Two

# THE TRENDS IN HEALTHCARE

***“Unfortunately people-issues have  
dropped off the agenda in favor of cost-cutting.  
Most administrators, are in a survival mode,  
trying to keep the doors open.”***

***Brian Lee, CSP***

We have to reestablish the Agenda. Regrettably, what you've already read about nursing challenges is a common denominator to nearly every healthcare institution in both the United States and Canada. The following trends reflect today's environment.

1. Nurses do not believe their salaries and wages are keeping pace in today's economy.
2. There is a strong public anti-tax attitude.