

Brian Lee CSP – “Healthcare’s Mr. Loyalty”

Keep  
Your

**NURSES**

& Healthcare  
Professionals

**for Life**

*The four imperatives  
to inspire, retain,  
motivate and empower,  
patient-focused nurses  
and everyone else*

*Rave reviews for*

# Keep Your NURSES<sup>TM</sup> & Healthcare Professionals **for Life**

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The 4 imperatives of how to inspire, retain, motivate and empower, patient focused nurses, and everybody else.

“Excellent! As a board member and business owner, I plan on using these techniques in my law practice.”

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“Very timely and relevant topic.”

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Keep  
Your **NURSES**  
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*Dee Nishioka – RN/AUM*

“Very in tune with our vision and where healthcare is today. Creates a straight forward structure to implement great ideas.”

*Debbie Gac – Vice President*

“The quality of the material is presented very effectively... with everyday scenarios, applications and solutions applicable to implement.”

*Debbie Firks – Team Coordinator*

“Brian Lee is right on in hitting the issues of healthcare and planting the seeds for individual change.”

*Larky Blunk – Director, Acute Care*

“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™

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*Profile of an author and world-class  
professional speaker*

# Brian Lee CSP



**Brian Lee CSP**

*"Mr. Customer Satisfaction"  
Healthcare's "Mr. Enthusiasm"*

- Brian Lee, CSP is one of North America's leading experts in the fields of Healthcare Patient Satisfaction and Change Leadership and is the 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.
- The healthcare industry'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 fewer than 20 such designated experts in Canada, and one of fewer 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 serves its client roster of 6,000 organizations with a team of 32 world-class trainers and communication professionals.

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# Mission

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To provide healthcare leadership  
with an implementable blueprint to  
significantly improve nurse retention.

# Dedication

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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.

# Acknowledgement

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Robert Lee

# Keep Your NURSES & Healthcare Professionals for Life™

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The 4 imperatives of how to inspire, retain, motivate and empower, patient focused nurses, and everybody else.

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# Foreword

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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 that it's ten years from now. You're riding your bike through a scenic city park on a peaceful Saturday afternoon, skillfully meandering in and out of pedestrian traffic, when suddenly you come upon 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, the bike falls out of your grasp, leaving you lying bruised, battered and bloody as by-passers look on in horror. Shaken and light headed, you pick yourself up and notice a sizable gouge in your left arm that obviously needs stitches. Someone offers to take you to the hospital, but because it's the weekend, you find the waiting room filled to standing-room-only capacity with dozens of patients and no room to sit down. You wait, wait, and wait some more. Twelve hours pass and you're still

waiting. The lineup of patients has not depleted; in fact, it has 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 bears 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 electrocardiogram leads themselves.

Unrealistic? Unfortunately, not at all. Scenes like this play out in hospitals and Healthcare facilities all too often.

Why?

Just for starters:

- Understaffing due to budgetary restrictions
- Mandatory overtime policies requiring nurses to work through physical exhaustion
- Early release of un-recovered patients in view of needed beds or because insurance companies won't pay for longer stays

While these are just a few of the contributing factors, most nurses will tell you that the main reason people would be leaving the profession is that they feel devalued and unappreciated.

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

One of the healthcare industry's most formidable enemies is its culture and deeply rooted behaviors. Unless leadership and staff come together to make a concerted 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. This book will detail a process that will create a supportive organizational culture that promotes a quality of life so profoundly satisfying that nurses would never even think of leaving or working anywhere else.

It can happen.



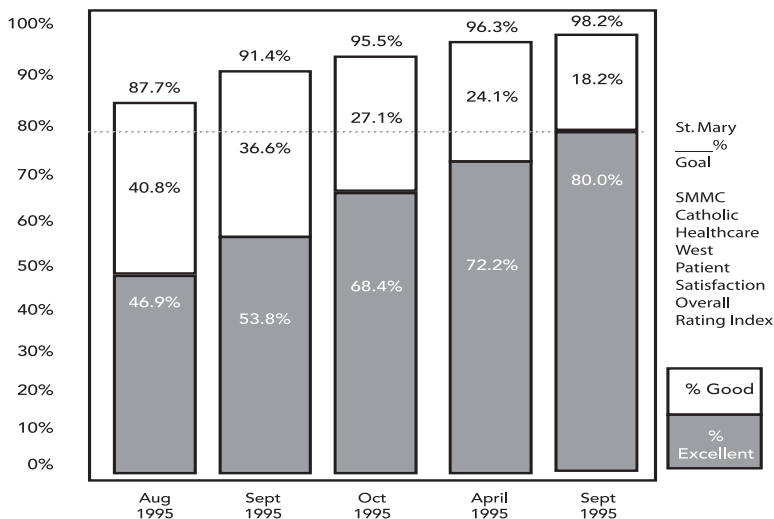
# Introduction

"Difficulties exist to be surmounted."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

To begin with, a quick bit of history: in the period 1995-1996, my training company Custom Learning Systems Group Ltd. was able to achieve a dramatic breakthrough in the area of 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.



In less than 18 months, overall patient satisfaction scores increased exponentially. Previously, only 46% of patients at the hospital rated their experience as ‘excellent’; by the end of the 18-month period during which we worked intensely with the hospital leadership and staff, 80% of patients were rating their care as ‘excellent.’

We named this 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, with a particular focus on hospitals.

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

One manager asked me, “If I give you half a day to train my staff, how can you guarantee 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 for the other 364 days, to reinforce what I teach them?”

It quickly became evident to me that in order to successfully train the front-line staff, we first had to provide leadership training, with special focus on empowerment. It had also become evident that the organization’s culture had to change in order to affect appreciable changes in customer service and patient care. We discovered that to bring about 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 engendering world-class patient satisfaction, we began to notice 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 million-dollar-per-year savings for a hospital of 5,000+ employees and volunteers.

With the up-and-down trends of nursing recruitment and retention numbers, it occurred to us that we ought to be sharing this knowledge with other hospitals and patient care facilities. After consulting with several of our clients who had seen sharp drops in turnover, we began to develop a seminar focused on nurse retention called “*Keep Your Nurses & Healthcare Professionals for Life*.” This book is based on our live seminar, and covers much of the same material in a convenient written format, so that you can refer back to it again and again.

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

- Implement these cultural imperatives so those nurses will never want to leave
- Unlock the genius of nurse empowerment through front line ownership and accountability
- Significantly enhance employee morale – and bolster patient/customer satisfaction at the same time
- Create powerful incentives to improve productivity
- Stimulate your existing staff to become enthusiastic salespeople for new recruits
- 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 that form the foundation of the KEEP Your Nurses for Life program:

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. Short-term programs don’t work. Campaigns don’t work. We’ve all been through the “flavor of the month” change initiative that reflects the latest HR fad. If you have a staff retention issue, it’s likely that your organization’s culture has a lot to do with it.

Retention will be won or lost on the issue of culture, department by department, unit by unit, charge nurse leadership group by charge nurse leadership group. How else can you explain a situation we often encounter: two adjacent departments, one with a great culture and low turnover, the other with a lousy culture and high turnover? In this book, we are 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 staff owns your organization’s 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 power from intelligent front-line staff who want desperately to be able to use their own wisdom, experience, and good judgment. Throughout this book, you will be provided with the tools you need to empower your staff.

**Education and Engagement:** “When your people are learning, they’re not leaving.” To put it another way, when your 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 pushing them out the door? 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 quickly learn how your front-line staff can become your organization’s best recruiters, teachers, and role models.

**Physician Acceptance:** I believe healthcare’s dirty little secret is the fact that way too many doctors treat nurses in an unprofessional – and wholly unacceptable – manner. There are exceptions, of course, but it’s a sad commentary on the profession that there is so little literature addressing this critical problem. Fortunately, we have been able to achieve significant insights in this area over the last several years. I’m going to share with you a workable model to turn this problem around, complete with “how-to” action steps, over the course of the next several chapters.

Finally, I want to share with you the Keep Your Nurses & Healthcare Professionals for Life “DO IT” Action Plan (DO IT stands for Daily Ongoing Improvement Tactics), a step-by-step action blueprint to help you identify and achieve the goals you set for yourself as a result of this input.

To further clarify the scope of this book, let me identify a few of the topics I will not be covering.

I will not spend time discussing:

- **Legislative lobbying**

While building political support for increased funding and healthcare reform is critical, national and state healthcare organizations are aggressively pursuing the necessary changes. I have, however, provided an addendum that

lists the names and contact information of nursing associations in the belief that all members of this worthy profession should actively support the advancement of their field.

### ■ **Government or Managed Care**

Although 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 to the above-listed demurrals to discuss legislative issues).

### ■ **Public Relations/Professional Image**

The image of healthcare as a whole and the nursing profession specifically have both suffered considerably over the course of the last decade, and while there is a significant 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 for the profession 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 in the industry now.

### ■ **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 this initiative will likely produce results in three to five years, the oversight and development of this strategy is better left to local hospitals and healthcare associations.

### ■ **Recruitment Strategies**

When it comes to sophisticated recruitment strategies, including the use of the Internet, there are literally hundreds of cool ideas floating around. I encourage you to

get educated about leading-edge best practices in nursing recruitment and to make use of them. However, in this book, our focus is to help readers begin to create a culture that new recruits and veterans alike 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 alongside them.

By the time you reach the conclusion of this book, I hope you will share my belief that by inspiring, retaining, motivating, and empowering patient-focused nurses and other personnel, your organization – and your patients – will benefit substantially.

Brian Lee CSP



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The  
"Big Picture"  
in  
Staff Retention

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# Focus on What's Really Important

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“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.”

– *Stephen 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 unexpectedly, like this anecdote I was lucky enough to stumble across on a radio talk show a few years ago.

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 that 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 vitally important things to focus on: patient safety, clinical care quality, financial solvency, biotechnology convergence, joint commission accreditation, aging equipment and facilities, physician issues, patient privacy, and on and on.

Why would nursing become such an unappealing profession to a potential or current nurse? The reasons are multifarious

and complex. According to industry experts, it's a perfect storm of occupational, demographic, and workforce factors.

- New nursing recruits often have to navigate a significant learning curve and many physicians lack the tolerance or patience to recognize and accommodate this fact.
- Skyrocketing housing costs have made recruitment difficult, particularly for entry-level positions.
- While many experienced nurses may prefer 12-hour shifts and three-day workweeks, these arrangements can be extremely tiring for newcomers to the profession.
- Learning the new technology that today's healthcare infrastructure demands of workers can be a constant challenge.
- Many nurses prefer assignments in specialized roles, but rising costs have made it very difficult for hospitals to afford these dedicated units. As a result, there is an industry-wide dilution of specialty nursing.
- "Floating" roles and last-minute staffing cancellations can be frustrating.
- All too often, the time, effort, and resources dedicated to recruitment outweigh those that are invested in staff retention initiatives.
- Many hospitals and healthcare facilities have virtually no one available to train new employees.
- There are many attractive career alternatives to nursing. For example, many women are now choosing to become doctors instead of nurses.
- Despite its benefits, unionization of the workplace can also bring with it constraints and restrictions.
- It can often be very difficult to entice recruits to remote locations.

- In many instances, unacceptably low state-mandated minimum staffing ratios have had a negative impact on workload and quality of care.
- A growing number of nurses are worried that the standard level of care has become lacking in the focus on safety.
- Many physicians and administrators are perceived to be disrespectful.
- The average workload volume is regarded as overwhelming and many nurses simply aren't interested in working that hard.
- Many nurses are physically and mentally fatigued, tired, or teetering on the verge of burnout.
- Some hospital departments have unrealistic expectations about what nurses can or should do.
- Patient expectations are increasing exponentially.
- Work/life balance issues are a perennial challenge.
- Nurses believe they spend more time on paperwork than patient care.
- Mandatory overtime can be physically and mentally draining and it may, in fact, endanger patient care.
- Nurses are often required to supervise unlicensed staff, a situation that can detract from their level of engagement and sense of professional pride.
- In many hospitals, nurses are not only expected to work every other weekend, but are too often denied time off for breaks or vacations.
- Many nurses perceive hospital scheduling processes to be unfair.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, is it really any wonder that nursing has come to be known to some as “the reluctant profession”?

Like every other type of worker, medical personnel want to feel valued and appreciated. They want to be understood, affirmed and respected. Take a look at your own personal and professional relationships. How important is it for you to feel appreciated and valued?

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

Why do most nurses go into nursing in the first place? Often, it is 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 achieving world-class patient care and 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 tap into and re-ignite those core beliefs, your organization's potential for top-quality service is virtually limitless.

We need to get better at developing and implementing systems and operations. We need to improve clinical outcomes and focus on customer service – and we need to get the agenda centered on people issues again. In short, we all 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 find a way simultaneously to reduce costs and improve our outcomes, and therein lies the challenge. Like any other industry, people always want more value for less cost. The secret is to achieve cost savings in a way that doesn't alienate the industry's core resource – skilled and engaged nursing professionals.

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