

**HCAPS: Purple Cow: Transform Your Hospital by Being Remarkable...**

I just spend the day in another seminar learning about the 'new' government initiative called H-CAPS. In a nutshell, this is about patients rating us after their care - and the government adjusting our reimbursement up (or down) accordingly. In a wonderful way, it really is about nursing care. You remember: nurses? the caregivers? the one's who always get folded into the overhead? The invisible ones? Well, now they represent the possibility of increasing reimbursement by up to 5%...not to mention their impact on errors, patient safety and so forth...but this soft stuff, the relationship stuff, the perception of quality stuff: well, now it has a price tag on it. And it's not just marketing anymore!

This evening over dinner, a friend mentioned that someone she knew had recently visited a relative in Fort Hamilton Hughes Hospital outside Cincinnati, Ohio. And this person wasn't just anyone. This person was a nurse...and would you believe that she raved about how friendly all the personnel were, and how people went out of their way to be helpful and kind?! "And guess what else," she said. "They served the patients food on real china and with real knives, forks and spoons...It was wonderful." Now that is worth its weight in gold. In today's hospital world it is truly remarkable!

The essence of the purple cow is that it must be remarkable...And this book is about the why, what and how of 'remarkable'! Something remarkable is worth talking about. Worth noticing. Exceptional. New. Interesting. It's a purple cow. Boring stuff is invisible. It's a brown cow.

Remarkable health care is the art of building things worth noticing right into your care or service. Not slapping on something extra as a last minute add-on, but understanding that if your service isn't remarkable, it's invisible. ... it fades into the background because it's just like everything else.

In *Purple Cow*, Seth Gordon urges us to put a purple cow into everything we do to create something truly noticeable. It's a manifesto for marketers who want to create something worth marketing in the first place. This is a book about why YOU need to put a purple cow into every thing you build, why advertising on TV to mass markets alone no longer works, and why the art of marketing has changed forever. Today, people must experience your service. And if that experience isn't worth talking about...isn't remarkable...well, you know the rest!

Over the past 20 years, a quiet revolution has changed the way some people think about marketing. Tom Peters took the first whack at it with *The Pursuit of WOW*, a visionary book that explained why the only products with a future were those created by passionate people. Too often big institutions are scared institutions, and they work to reduce any variation, including the good stuff that happens when people who care create something special. Peppers and Rogers in *The One to One Future*, took a simple truth -- that it is cheaper to keep an old customer than it is to get a new one -- and articulated the entire field of customer-relations management.

In *Crossing the Chasm*, Geoff Moore outlined how new products, services and ideas move through a population, and in *The Tipping Point* Malcolm Gladwell clearly articulated how information spreads throughout a population, and now Seth Godin completes the work in *Purple Cow*. You may not think you need marketing, but even if you are right, this book has a lot to teach all of us...And with H-CAPS, we just might get an extra 5%!

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## Are You Happy?

What do social survey data tell us about the determinants of happiness?

First, that the psychologists' set point model is questionable. Life events in the non-pecuniary domain, such as marriage, divorce, and serious disability, have a lasting effect on happiness, and do not simply deflect the average person temporarily above or below a set point given by genetics and personality.

Second, mainstream economists' inference that in the pecuniary domain "more is better," based on revealed preference theory, is problematic. An increase in income, and thus in the goods at one's disposal, does not bring with it a lasting increase in happiness because of the negative effect on utility of hedonic adaptation and social comparison.

A better theory of happiness builds on the evidence that adaptation and social comparison affect utility less in the non-pecuniary than pecuniary domains. Because individuals fail to anticipate the extent to which adaptation and social comparison undermine expected utility in the pecuniary domain, they allocate an excessive amount of time to pecuniary goals, and shortchange non-pecuniary ends such as family life and health, reducing their happiness.

Practice Tip: Re-focusing on significant others adds to happiness. Happy feelings that are due to family life or personal health are much less affected by adaptation and social comparison and bring more lasting feelings of happiness.

### Reference:

Easterlin, R. A., "Explaining Happiness," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences U S A*. 2003 Sep 16;100(19):11176-11183. Epub 2003 Sep 04.

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## To Reduce Errors, Pair Technology with Cultural Change

The fact that IT can improve patient safety and reduce errors has been proven repeatedly - in applications such as CPOE, automated error tracking, bar coding, decision support with clinical alerts. But technology alone cannot ensure continued progress on the safety front. We must also change our professional culture...Shift the emphasis from blaming persons to a more integrated approach to patient safety and nurses are in the ideal position to pinpoint ineffective work processes that could contribute to errors. Nurse managers can then take the following steps to involve nursing staff in patient safety initiatives.

- Encourage nurses to make suggestions for improving high-risk processes, such as administering medication. When someone raises a question or concern about current methods, initiate a formal review of the process in question.
- Work with hospital administration to develop a confidential error reporting system that strips identifying information from reports circulated for review.
- When an error or near-miss occurs, refrain from taking punitive actions - nurses afraid of losing their jobs are less likely to comply with mandatory reporting policies.
- Take steps to foster a culture of teamwork among all members of the care team. Traditionally, nurses have been afraid to question a doctor's judgment. But this is another area where nursing can take a lesson from the aviation industry, in which pilots willingly accept feedback from and cooperate with other team members.

Keeping patients safe is a fundamental part of nursing's mission. While IT offers nurses a unique set of tools to combat medical errors, we should supplement technology with the humanistic approaches of watchfulness, questioning current work processes, and being open to suggestions from every member of the care team.

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## A line from "What the Books Don't Tell You about Leadership"

*"You may have the right to be angry,  
but you never have the right to be  
cruel!"*