



Cupcake Man Project Launch Guide

How do I start the Cupcake Man Project at my hospital?

Begin by identifying and understanding the four key stakeholders required to bring this project to life. These include:

- The Cupcake Man Project Team (comprised of volunteers including, but not limited to, students, doctors, and nurses)
- Hospital Information Technology Department
- Hospital Leadership
- Dietary/Food Department

What are the individual roles of each of the stakeholders?

The hospital leadership team must provide approval of the project. Following initiation of the program, the administration can join in the celebration, and arrange for media coverage if desired.

Essential to the success of the program is the cooperation of the Information Technology Department. A daily list serve can be generated, and shared with Cupcake Man Project Team Members. This information alerts team members to hospitalized patients with forthcoming birthdays.

The Dietary/Food Department provides the cupcake for the celebration.

The Cupcake Man Project Team is responsible for coordinating the daily bedside celebration. The tasks include gathering caregivers involved in the patient's care together for the celebration, and bringing the essentials (greeting card, helium balloon, and cupcake).

How do I approach the hospital administration?

Each hospital has an administrative department with focus on patient satisfaction scores and/or provider's job satisfaction. Approach leadership of the department with the following summation:

We would like to start a project that has been successful at other institutions that allows both patients and providers to connect at a personal level by sharing in a simple act of kindness: celebrating each and every patient's birthday in the hospital. For a 500-bed hospital with an average length of stay of 4 days, approximately 25 birthdays would be celebrated per month or about 300 birthdays per year.

The cost of the celebration is \$3 per patient and we know how to make this work through the use of IT department and electronic medical records, based on a model proven to be successful at other institutions.

We also have a survey that has been used at other sites with success that captures quantitative and qualitative measures with a 360 degree viewpoint from patient, family members, doctors, and other staff members including nurses. In summary, the project is already established at other places and successful, not difficult to implement, cost effective, and has measureable outcomes. I think it would really help us continue to connect and heal with equal parts heart and mind.

I have the specifics related to the successful website, IT involvement, budget proposal, and even the surveys here if I may provide further details.

After the hospital administration approves the budget and project, what's the next step?

The next step is to approach the Information Technology (IT) Department. The function of IT is to generate a daily list serve at 6:00 am based on all current admissions to the hospital as of midnight (6 hours previously). Provide the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Exclusion criterion: Emergency Room patients and Newborn babies

Inclusion criterion: All patients admitted to the hospital regardless of current location within hospital and/or actual physical bed assignment that will be having a birthday in the hospital over the next 72 hours. The 3-day window allows the members of the Cupcake Man Project Team ample time to restock supplies (cards, balloons, and cupcakes) in the event there are an unforeseen number of upcoming birthdays.

IT will distribute the list with encryption electronically through e-mail to individual members of The Cupcake Man Project Team with details on patient name, date of birth, and location in the hospital. The exact message will also be sent to Dietary so that a cupcake will be ready for pick up.

What about the role of the Cupcake Man Project Team?

The leader of the Cupcake Man Project Team will form a group of individuals from different part of the hospital including students, doctors, volunteers, and concierge service members. The core group should consist of approximately 5-7 individuals so that they make cover for each other when the need arises.

The balloons, greeting cards, and helium tanks are stored in a single space, preferably near the volunteer/concierge service location. Once the group receives the daily IT report of birthday celebration through encrypted HIPPA-protected message, individuals are assigned for the following tasks:

1. Pick up cupcake from dietary by 9:00 am.
2. Inflate balloon with helium and have greeting card with envelope ready with patient's name by 9:00 am.
3. A medical student member of the team electronically sends out location of birthday celebration through hospital beeper/text message without name of patient or medical record number to other members of team taking direct care of patient and/or all medical students in the hospital. For example, the message may be as follows:

Help us celebrate a patient birthday at 10:00 am on Unit 6B Room 3 Bed 4. We have a greeting card for you to sign, a birthday balloon, and of course a cupcake. All we need is your award winning voice to sing Happy Birthday. Healing begins with Feeling. Hope to see you soon!!

By 9:45, members of the Cupcake Man Project Team gather the cupcake, balloon, greeting card, and make their way towards the unit of celebration. The unit clerk is asked to call the charge nurse as well as the nurse taking care of patient. The card is signed by

multiple members, and others in the Unit are also asked to join in the celebration. If other students and/or doctors directly taking care of patients arrive at 10:00 am, they are also asked to sign the card and join the celebration.

At 10:00 am, the group decides to enter the patient room. I prefer to allow the nurse to have the balloon, the cupcake is carried by the student doctor, and I hold the greeting card. The following introductions are made:

Good morning, I'm _____. On behalf of the wonderful doctors including your own doctors (name and if present) as well as the fantastic nurses on Unit _____ taking care of you especially your favorite nurse _____ (his/her own), we would like to wish you a very happy birthday. We have your own greeting card signed by everyone, the ones you can't read are probably the doctor's signature since we have such horrible handwriting, your own balloon which we are going to tie next to your bed, as well as your cupcake. If you have dietary restrictions related to the cupcake, make sure you give it away to your favorite nurse today. You haven't seen us on The Voice or American Idol because frankly we can't sing. However, we are going to do our best to sing you Happy Birthday. Ready, on three. One, two, three...

Thank you so much for allowing us this humble opportunity to take care of you and celebrate in your special day. It has also become a tradition with patient permission for me to give them a hug on their birthday. Would that be alright with you?

Thank you everyone for coming and once again thank you for all that you do. Remember, healing begins with feeling.

The celebration ends. If surveys are to be filled out, emphasize that the process takes less than one minute. After surveys are completed, they are collected by the leader of the Cupcake Man Project Team.

We've defined the roles of Administration, IT, The Cupcake Man Project Team, but what about dietary?

The role of dietary is simple. The department receives an e-mail from IT every morning of patient birthdays allowing the service to prepare the correct number of cupcakes for

the day. A member of the Cupcake Man Project Team stops by at 9:00 am to pick up the cupcake.

Are there any special circumstances that could affect the celebration? How are these situations handled?

There are some special circumstances. Suggestions related to how to approach them are outlined below:

- **My patient doesn't speak English** – Have a bilingual member of team or a translator to assist and consider singing Happy Birthday in the patient's native tongue including but not limited to "Feliz Cumpleanos a ti."
- **My patient is off Unit for testing** – Drop off the signed card, balloon, and cupcake at the Nursing Station and allow coordination of the celebration for a different time. If this is not possible, the nurse supervisor and patient's nurse can celebrate with the patient later in the day.
- **My patient is in the ICU and is helium safe?** Check with the nurse supervisor to learn about oxygen and helium guidelines specific to units.
- **My patient is in the ICU, intubated, and dying** – Intention vs perception is very important. Be respectful and approach family first. The leader of the Cupcake Man Project Team can explain the goals and ask for permission. We have celebrated multiple birthdays on dying patients in the ICU with family at bedside exchanging hugs of forever memory burn.

Is there anything else we should do to make this successful?

Have fun! Your journey is your destination and we would love to hear about your success stories. Aim to cure, but aspire to heal. Best of luck.