



Best Practice Champions Book

Delnor Chapter Rough Draft

A cultural change model for achieving excellence in the five pillars of:
service, people, quality, growth and financial performance.

Summary

This case study describes the key principles and administrative structure used by Delnor-Community Hospital to:

- Transform its organizational culture
- Improve internal and external customer service
- Achieve growth in patient volumes and operating margins
- Enhance the quality of patient care

Under the leadership of a visionary senior management team and through the coaching of a leading health care consultant, the hospital has emerged as a national leader in service excellence and patient, employee and physician satisfaction.

The hospital has also enjoyed significant growth in inpatient admissions and outpatient visits, while, at the same time, improving its operating margin to near record levels. Quality measures have been steadily on the rise, and the entire Delnor culture has been revitalized in ways that many beleaguered hospitals can only hope to achieve in today's challenging health care environment.

How has Delnor done it? By structuring the administration and operations of the hospital around the five pillars of: service, people, quality, growth and financial performance, and by integrating the following nine principles into the fabric of the organization:

- 1) Commit to excellence
- 2) Build a culture around service
- 3) Measure the important things
- 4) Create and develop leaders
- 5) Build in accountability
- 6) Align behaviors with goals and values
- 7) Focus on employee satisfaction
- 8) Reward and recognition

9) Communicate at all levels

Delnor's experience in implementing these pillars and principles provides a fascinating case study and valuable insights for other health care and non-health care organizations attempting to transform their culture to achieve higher levels of performance.

Introduction

It was the fall of 1999, and Delnor-Community Health System President/CEO Craig Livermore knew his hospital had reached critical point in its history. For years, Delnor had enjoyed a reputation in its service area as a “good” community hospital. Patient satisfaction was good. The quality of patient care was good. Employee relations were good. And the hospital’s financial picture was good. The problem was that “good” was no longer good enough.

“Simply put, we made the decision that we wanted to become the ‘best of the best,’” recalls Livermore. “As a Board of Directors and senior management team, we committed ourselves to taking Delnor to the next level and becoming one of the top hospitals not just in our region or state, but in the entire United States.”

What was the driver for this ambitious goal? “First and foremost,” says Livermore, “we felt we had a responsibility to provide our community with not just good, but exceptional patient care and service. That’s the heart of our mission and is our fundamental reason for being. But beyond that, we knew that in order to continue to be successful in the future we were going to have to establish the right niche for ourselves in the marketplace – something that would distinguish Delnor from other area hospitals,” Livermore said.

After careful deliberation, the senior management team chose “service excellence,” and began focusing their energies on improving patient satisfaction throughout the hospital. But as they embarked on their journey, they quickly learned that achieving this goal was going to take much more than implementing quick fixes or a “customer service program.”

“The deeper we got into the process, the more clear it became that what we needed to do was far bigger than focusing strictly on how to improve patient satisfaction,” recalls Chief Nurse Executive Linda Deering. “To become the excellent hospital we were striving to be, we realized that we needed to make major organizational changes that would transform the very culture of the hospital and impact every aspect of patient care and operations. It was a huge challenge, with the future success of the hospital riding on the outcome. But I knew we were up to the challenge and had the determination it would take to get the job done,” said Deering.

Over the next three years, Delnor implemented a winning formula for success that propelled the hospital into the spotlight as a national leader in patient, employee and physician satisfaction. The following case study will provide insight into the key elements of this formula and offer a “how to” approach for implementing “built to last” changes in your organization.

It Starts with a Top-Down Commitment to Becoming the “Best of the Best”

When discussing organizational change, many businesses make the mistake of focusing first on finding the right change management model, but at Delnor hospital leaders found its first key to success was something far more basic and fundamental.

“The best system or model in the world isn’t going to do your organization a bit of good unless you have a top-down commitment to making it work,” said Livermore. “To me, that’s where it all starts. Your board of directors, CEO and senior management team have to be firmly and passionately committed to becoming the ‘best of the best.’ They set the tone and direction for the entire organization. It’s absolutely imperative that they recognize the need for major change and be the catalysts for making it happen. This creates a trickle-down effect throughout the organization. Once mid-level management and line-level employees see top executives leading the way, most of them will begin to support the initiative as well,” Livermore says.

“When our CEO and other top administrators began the drive to become the ‘best of the best’ what most impressed me was their dedication to taking Delnor to the next level,” says Hasi Smith, team leader for the Information System Department. “I think it really showed us, as managers, that they were totally committed to the changes that were being implemented. Their enthusiasm was contagious. Not only did that help us buy-into what was happening, but it also helped our staff buy into it as well,” Smith says.

Selecting the Right Coach Is Key

Just like in sports, having the right coach to guide your organization through cultural change is another vital key to success. At Delnor, the administration turned to Quint Studer, who was building a national reputation as a service excellence and change management consultant. Studer – who is president of the Pensacola, Florida-based Studer Group – had helped guide Holy Cross Hospital in Chicago and Baptist Hospital in Pensacola to new heights in patient satisfaction as CEO during the late 1990’s.

Studer offered a proven model for change, and, just as importantly, he brought a dynamic coaching style that made him the right fit for Delnor. “Quint has a real passion for improving health care and patient satisfaction,” said Deering. “And that really shines through in his work with clients. He has a motivational way of presenting to groups that really captures their attention and makes his message compelling. That really helped us in rolling our initiative out to hospital leadership and staff and gave credibility to what we were doing.”

Implementing the Right Model for Organizational Change

Delnor's success in achieving cultural change and nationally-recognized results can be attributed to the hospital's adoption of Studer's 9 key principles and five organizational pillars.

9 Principles

- Commit to Excellence
- Build a Culture Around Service
- Build Accountability
- Create and Develop Leaders
- Recognize and Reward Success
- Focus on Employee Satisfaction
- Align behaviors with goals and values
- Communicate at all levels
- Measure the important things

5 Pillars

- Service
- Quality
- Cost
- People
- Growth

“Once you have a top-down commitment and have selected the right coach, the next essential element is implementing the right model, or system, for change,” says Livermore. “Quint’s nine principles and five pillars proved to be the right fit for Delnor. They provided us with the roadmap for improving every aspect of hospital performance and operations. From a communications standpoint, the simplicity of the “principles” and “pillars” helped us in communicating the model to both leaders and staff. It was something everyone could understand, remember and relate to. And I think that was very important. If the design of your change management system is too complex, your leaders and staff won’t “get it,” let alone be able to implement it,” says Livermore.

The “9 Principles”

Principles #1: Commit to Excellence

When Studer began working with Delnor, he told hospital leaders that establishing “a championship culture” begins with a commitment to excellence. “When excellence is reached,” he said, “employees feel valued, physicians feel an organization is the best, and the patients feel the service is extraordinary.”

One of the first things Livermore and the board of directors did to “hard-wire” this first principle into the organization was build a commitment to excellence into the hospital’s mission, vision, values and strategic plan.

Mission statement: To provide excellence in health care and to promote lifelong wellness in the communities we serve.

Vision statement: Our community will turn to us first for health care and wellness. We will develop a tradition of service excellence. Patients and consumers will experience their care as connected and whole. Physicians will regard us as a trusted partner. Together, we will build a regional reputation for clinical excellence

Values: Excellence, service, compassion, respect and integrity

Strategic plan: “Service excellence” became one of the eight driving strategies in the hospital’s new strategic plan.

“By integrating this principle so deeply into the fabric of the organization, we sent a clear message to leaders and staff that our commitment to excellence was going to be a fundamental to the new hospital culture we were building,” Livermore said.

To facilitate this process, the administration used a variety of strategies, including:

- Employee forums led by the chief executive officer and chief operating officer
- Employee, volunteer and physician newsletters
- Banners, posters and flyers
- Presentations to Leadership and unit/departmental meetings
- A contest in which employees throughout the hospital were challenged to creatively display the word “excellence” in their departments

“We wanted leaders, staff, volunteers and physicians to hear and see our commitment to excellence everywhere they went in the hospital. This was the first step in getting them to live the principle and make it a reality in everything they do,” Livermore said.

Principle #2: Build A Culture Around Service

In today’s competitive health care environment, most hospitals are offering basically the same menu of services for their patients. So, how can a hospital differentiate itself in the marketplace and break ahead of the pack? One of the most effective strategies, according to Studer, is to build a culture around service.

“A nationwide survey of hospital executives a few years ago found that the priorities at the top of most CEO’s “to do” lists were things like buying more up-to-date technology and improving payor reimbursement rates,” says Studer. “What was missing from this list was a very basic and fundamental priority: patient satisfaction.”

This revelation struck a chord with leaders at Delnor, confirming a strategic direction they had already decided to pursue. “We knew that for our hospital to continue to be successful in the future we had to find the right niche in our local market. And for us, the one that made the most sense and was the most consistent with our mission was service excellence,” said Livermore. “So, we established an organizational goal to become the best hospital in the area and one of the top hospitals in the country in patient satisfaction.”

To achieve this lofty goal, Delnor implemented a service excellence initiative inspired by Studer that consisted of three critical elements: 1) Creating customer satisfaction teams; 2) Scripting “words that work” for employees in their interactions with patients and visitors; and 3) Teaching service recovery.

Creating Customer Satisfaction Teams

(Editor’s note: An exhibit could be included here showing a diagram of the customer service teams and how they revolve around the customer.)

To put the necessary organizational focus and resources behind the patient satisfaction initiative, Delnor established a series of seven action teams, each charged with addressing a different aspect of the customer experience:

Behavior Standards: This team established standards of performance that support the mission and values of the hospital and foster excellent customer service. (*For more about the behavior standards, see Principle #8, page 17*)

- Removing Irritants: Identifying and addressing barriers to providing exceptional service to hospital patients and visitors is the focus of this team. “So often, there are things – big and small – that we do in the course of providing patient care that are irritants to our customers. But unless an organization has a means of identifying these and correcting them, nothing gets done about them,” says Mickey Damron, team chairman. “It makes so much sense to have a team in place whose mission is to look for these barriers and do whatever we can to work with hospital departments to remove them. It’s a win, win – it makes the patient’s experience at Delnor better, and helps to improve our patient satisfaction scores,” Damron says.
- Reward and Recognition: Rewarding and recognizing top performers is vital to both encouraging employees to provide excellent service and to achieving high levels of employee satisfaction within an organization. At Delnor, this team is responsible for developing and overseeing the hospital’s formal reward and recognition programs. (*For more information, see Principle #5: Recognize and Reward Success, page 13.*)
- Physician Satisfaction: “At Delnor, doctors are viewed as important customers just like patients,” says Kathy Domalick, team chairman. “Without our physicians, we wouldn’t have any patients. So we felt it was important to establish a team whose sole focus is to enhance the physician experience at Delnor, whether that’s making it easier for them to practice medicine here, or recognizing their contributions to patient care and the hospital,” Domalick says. To accomplish the former, the team has worked

with doctors to identify and address barriers they face at the hospital. To achieve the latter, the team instituted an innovative “Distinguished Physicians Awards” program.

- **Measurement:** To monitor the hospital’s progress in improving patient satisfaction, the hospital formed a Measurement Team that is responsible for administering all patient satisfaction surveys and publishing and interpreting weekly, monthly and quarterly data.

“It’s our job to analyze and report the data at a hospitalwide and individual department level,” says Michael Kittoe, a vice president and team chairman. “We help hospital leaders and staff understand their surveys and results so they can proactively take action on the data and work on areas that need improvement. We make the whole patient satisfaction survey process very visible throughout the organization. That keeps it top-of-mind for everyone and helps hold leaders and teams accountable for their scores,” Kittoe says.

- **Leadership Development:** This initiative is led by a steering committee and three sub-committees that are responsible for putting together the training and tools managers need to improve their leadership skills. (*For more information, see Principle #4: “Create and Develop Leaders, page 10.”*)

Scripting

(Editor’s note: We could include an exhibit here with a sample of Delnor scripting.)

Another key element of building a culture around service is providing staff with scripting, or “words that work,” for critical interactions with customers. “The goal is to teach employees how to use the words or phrases with patients, visitors, physicians and internal customers that are conducive to customer satisfaction,” says Deering. “By standardizing how staff interact with customers in certain situations, we’re able to provide better service more consistently throughout the organization.”

The most widely used example of scripting at Delnor is the phrase, “Is there anything else I can do for you? I have the time.” Nurses, aids, housekeepers and others ask a variation of this question every time they leave a patient room. The phrase has even caught on among employees in administrative departments when dealing with their own internal customers.

Service Recovery

(Editor’s note: We could include an exhibit with this section diagramming the ACT service recovery process.)

“No matter how hard you try, no organization provides perfect customer service,” points out Deering. “We’re all human and make mistakes. But if those mistakes are handled in the right way, you can quickly turn a negative into a positive and convert unhappy customers into loyal ones by following a service recovery process we call ACT.”

ACT is an acronym for “apologize,” “correct,” and “take action.” And at Delnor, it has become the standard process by which staff respond to patient and visitor complaints. When faced with a dissatisfied customer, the first step in service recovery is to apologize for failing to meet his or her expectations. This immediately sets a conciliatory tone and let’s the customer know you take the complaint seriously. The next step is to work with the customer to determine how best to correct the situation in an acceptable way. The final step is to move swiftly in taking action to resolve the problem.

“At Delnor, we train our employees to view complaints as a gift,” says Patient Advocate Mickey Damron. “It may sound strange, but customers are actually doing us a favor when they step forward with legitimate complaints. It sends up a red flag that a customer process is broken and needs to be fixed.” This becomes even more important, according to Damron, in light of consumer studies indicating that for every customer who complains about a problem, there are nine more who don’t complain, but simply choose to go elsewhere for service.

“On the positive side, research has also shown that ___% of customers whose complaints are promptly addressed will return to a company or business for service. These statistics really underscore the importance of service recovery. It’s amazing how powerful the three simple steps of ACT can be in turning a negative customer experience into a positive one,” Damron says.

Principle # 3: Build Accountability

(Editor’s note: We could include an exhibit with this section showing a sample of the performance scorecard Delnor has developed.)

Building a championship culture requires creating an environment of ownership and accountability at every level of the organization. “This principle is absolutely critical,” says Livermore. “From top administrators, to line-level staff, we needed a team that was going to act like ‘owners,’ as opposed to ‘renters’ in their areas. And we needed to put systems in place that would hold everyone accountable for their individual and team performance, as well as the performance of the organization as a whole,” said Livermore.

To help foster an environment of ownership, the importance of this principle was communicated extensively throughout the hospital to both leaders and staff in a variety of ways. It also was emphasized in the employee hiring and orientation process.

Greater accountability was integrated into the culture through the development of monthly scorecards monitoring progress in achieving organizational and team goals. Performance toward these goals was also factored heavily into year-end performance reviews for leadership and staff, and is a key barometer by which the Board of Directors evaluates the hospital’s executive team. Hospitalwide and unit/department specific patient satisfaction scores are widely publicized and posted throughout the building, as are the results of internal customer surveys (in which departments rate the service they provide to each other are posted). Leaders and staff are also held accountable for the

number of process improvement and cost savings ideas they generate annually through the “Bright Ideas” program.

Principle # 4: Create and Develop Leaders

(Editor’s note: With this section we could include an exhibit showing a sample agenda for one of the two-day leadership training sessions, along the “accountability grid” each leader receives as a guide for action steps to take back to their teams to implement.)

“In one of our first coaching sessions with Quint Studer,” recalls Livermore, “he asked our leadership team how many of them had received formal training to become managers. Very few hands went up. And that was a real eye opening experience for me.

“I realized that we, like so many hospitals and businesses, often promote people to management roles based on their knowledge, technical skills and past performance in other positions without providing them with tools they need to become great leaders. “That’s why this fourth principle has become one of the most important factors in creating a new culture at Delnor,” Livermore said.

To implement this principal, Delnor followed the Studer Group’s model for establishing an in-house “leadership institute.” The institute’s goals are to teach both new and existing managers new skills, competencies and behaviors that will help them become better leaders and serve as catalysts for organizational change.

The institute is charged with creating customized, quarterly two-day training sessions for the hospital’s leadership team. Each session has a unique theme and is focused on one of the five pillars of growth, service, people, quality and finance. Presentations are given by a combination of Delnor leaders and professional outside speakers. Program content covers such issues as:

- Leading versus managing
- Dealing with poor performers
- Rewarding and recognizing employees
- Recruiting, interviewing and hiring new staff
- Budgeting skills
- Managing conflict
- Giving positive and negative feedback to employees
- And much more

Following each session, leaders are required to share what they’ve learned and implement new practices with their teams. In addition to the quarterly meetings, monthly “lunch and learns” are offered to provide leaders with additional training opportunities. The leadership development initiative is coordinated by a steering committee and a series of sub-committees consisting of a cross-section of Delnor managers. Together, they develop the goals, theme, content, learning materials and communications for each training session. They also make all of the logistical arrangements.

“We invest heavily in growing and developing our leaders because they’re the ones who have the ability to implement and sustain organizational change at the team and individual employee level,” says Livermore. “Some executives I’ve talked to at other

hospitals have asked me how we can afford to devote so much time, staffing and resources to this principle. My response to them is, 'We can't afford not to!'"

Managers like Sue Murphy, team leader for the hospital's NewLife Maternity Center, are testaments to the success of the initiative. "I came up through the ranks as a registered nurse," says Murphy. "All of my professional education and training was in patient care. When I was promoted to a nursing management position I had all the clinical knowledge and skills for the position, but I had never received any training in how to effectively manage and lead a team. The training I've received at Delnor over the past three years has given me the tools I need to be a confident and effective leader. It has taken me to a whole new level professionally," says Murphy.

Helping and Supporting Leaders Through Cultural Change

(Editor's note: For this section, we could include an exhibit showing heart rhythms before and after using the HeartMath Freeze Frame technique demonstrating how it can help to settle a person down to think more clearly and convert out of sync heart rhythms into smooth, coherent heart rhythms.)

While leadership development has played a major role in helping Delnor achieve strong results, hospital administrators have also been sensitive to the added stress the cultural changes have created for the management team. To help leaders achieve optimal performance and emotional balance through these exciting yet challenging times, the hospital partnered with the non-profit Institute of HeartMath.

"We knew that the transformation we were going through – while vitally necessary – was creating stress for our leaders, and we were concerned about that," recalls Tom Wright, chief operating officer. "We began to look for ways to provide them with the support and resources they needed to effectively cope with change on both a personal and professional level, and HeartMath turned out to be an excellent solution."

HeartMath is (insert paragraph with HeartMath description, emphasizing its scientifically, research-based approach)

HeartMath workshops designed to teach managers how to better control stress, function under pressure and maintain a proper work/life balance have become a vital part of the hospital's leadership training.

The results for Delnor have been impressive, says Wright. Among leaders and employees who participated in HeartMath workshops in fiscal year 2001, turnover was only 5.9%, while the hospital's overall turnover rate that year was at 21%. "There's no question that the HeartMath workshops have helped our leaders reduce their stress, improve mental clarity and decisionmaking, manage more efficiently, and sustain peak performance. In fact, the program has been so effective that we're now offering it to all hospital employees and physicians," Wright says.

Principle # 5: Recognize and Reward Success

(Editor's note: For this section, we could show a "BoB" award form as a potential exhibit, so the reader can better see how the program works.)

What are the biggest motivators for today's workforce? If you answered pay raises or better company perks, you might be surprised by the results of a study conducted by Dr. Gerald Graham, a management professor at Wichita State University, which found that three of the top four workplace incentives were related to reward and recognition:

- 1) Personal thanks from manager
- 2) Written thanks from manager
- 3) Promotion for performance
- 4) Public Praise

"Never let great work go unnoticed," was Quint Studer's advice as he coached hospital managers on the importance of this principle. Rewarding and recognizing employees for excellent performance is not only the right thing to do, it's also a powerful business strategy, says Studer. "When you praise employees, you increase their job satisfaction and create role models for their peers. In addition, studies show that complimented behavior will be repeated. It's truly a win-win situation for staff and the organization."

At Delnor, top management began integrating this principle through leadership training. "We educated our leaders about the importance of praising their staff and taught them skills for how to do it effectively," says Deering. "It sounds simple, but it's amazing how many managers don't take the time to tell their employees they're doing a good job unless you build it into your culture as an expectation."

The hospital also formed a team to develop new reward and recognition programs, including:

- The Best of the Best (BoB) program. This program involved creating reward certificates that patients, visitors, leaders, co-workers, volunteers or physicians can fill out to recognize an employee for providing excellent customer service. Staff members receiving the certificates can redeem them with their manager for prizes that include meal passes for the cafeteria or gift cards for local stores and restaurants.

"It's great when someone gives me a "BoB," says Cindy Masa, a registered nurse. "It really makes me feel like I'm appreciated for taking extra time with a patient or doing something nice for a co-worker. And the gift certificates are like getting a little bonus. I love it." Masa's comments are representative of the entire staff's response to the program, which has become one of the most successful aspects of Delnor's reward and recognition efforts.

- Monthly Excellence Awards. This is the next level of recognition. Employees go above and beyond what's expected in customer service receive special recognition at a monthly awards ceremony attended by hospital leaders and staff. Cash prizes of \$__ are given to employees receiving these awards.
- Annual Excellence Awards. A select few employees who do something extraordinary for customers or the organization receive these awards, which are given out once a year at an employee recognition banquet. First, second and third place plaques and cash prizes of up to \$1,000 come with this highest level of recognition. "The awards dinner is our most celebrated employee event and is always one of the highlights of the year at the hospital. It's a tremendous way to recognize the very "best of the best" at Delnor.

Principle #6: Focus on Employee Satisfaction

(Editor's note: An exhibit showing the hospital's employee satisfaction results as documented by the national research firm could be included here.)

“What we have found is that there is a direct correlation between employee satisfaction and patient and physician satisfaction,” says Livermore. “By constantly working to keep our staff satisfied, we have been able to improve morale, while at the same time dramatically increasing our patient satisfaction and physician satisfaction scores. It just stands to reason that happy employees are going to provide better care and service to customers,” observes Livermore.

At the macro-level, achieving high levels of employee satisfaction depends, in large part, upon an organization's success in integrating the other eight principles in this chapter. “All these elements must work in concert to create an environment and culture that differentiates you and makes your hospital or business a place where employees feel valued and want to come to work each day,” Livermore said.

At the micro-level, the hospital has taken a number of steps to integrate this principle, including establishing an organizational goal to become the top hospital in Chicago's western suburbs for employee satisfaction. “We built that goal into our strategic plan and formed an “Employer of Choice” team to serve as a catalyst for helping us get there,” says Vice President for Human Resources Michelle McClelland, chairman of the team. Over the past three years, this group has researched and implemented the following successful strategies:

- Developing programs to help staff achieve greater work/life balance
- Enhancing opportunities for career development
- Improving the competitiveness of the hospital's wage and benefits program,
- Offering health and wellness opportunities for employees
- Organizing fun activities that build employee spirit

Thanks to these efforts and the hospital's cultural transformation, Delnor recently achieved the highest score for employee morale in a national survey of hospitals and health care organizations conducted by Sperduto & Associates. The hospital was also the 2002 winner of the Institute for Health and Productivity Management's “Corporate Health and Productivity Award.”

In addition to earning national acclaim, Delnor's “employer of choice” initiatives are also producing bottom line results for the hospital. Staff turnover has declined from 20.5 % in FY2001 to 11% in FY2002, resulting in a savings of \$_____ to the hospital in recruitment, training and other expenses related to hiring new employees.

Principle #7: Measure the Important Things

“If you set a goal but don't bother to measure your progress along the way, how will you know whether you achieve it?” asks Livermore in underscoring the importance

of principle #7. The keys, he says, are determining the most important and meaningful data elements to measure, and making sure something is done with the information once it's collected. At Delnor, the hospital focuses on measuring data closely related to strategic priorities and organizational goals.

“Dashboard of Indicators”

(Editor's note: An exhibit showing the “dashboard of indicators” could be included here.)

“We selected key data under the five pillars of service, people, growth, quality and finance and developed a “dashboard of indicators” to help senior management and the board of directors monitor the hospital's performance,” says Gretchen Parker, director of planning. “Each measure is tied to an objective in our strategic plan, such as patient satisfaction, patient volumes, market share, quality of care, financial performance, and so on.”

Customer Satisfaction

(Editor's note: Exhibits showing samples of the patient satisfaction survey form and the results from the national research firm that document the hospital's national ranking could be used here.)

After making “service excellence” a strategic priority and establishing an organizational goal to reach the 99th percentile in patient satisfaction, Delnor implemented a rigorous system for measuring and reporting patient satisfaction data.

Utilizing Press Ganey, a professional, independent national research firm, the hospital surveys every type of patient it serves (inpatients, outpatients, emergency department patients, etc.) continuously during the year. Patient satisfaction reports are generated and shared throughout the hospital on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

“Establishing a measurement system this extensive is a huge undertaking that requires considerable staff and financial resources, but we have found it to be well worth while,” says Michael Kittoe, vice president and chairman of the hospital's Data Measurement Team. By publishing this data so frequently it really helps our leaders and staff focus on patient satisfaction. What's more, leaders and teams are held accountable for their scores and are expected to utilize the data to identify gaps in patient satisfaction so they can implement process improvements.”

Top scoring teams are recognized and rewarded, creating a celebratory atmosphere that's infectious, says Kittoe. “It creates a healthy competition within the hospital among teams, and constantly challenges them to improve.”

Achieving the 99th percentile (or top 1 percent) in patient satisfaction has become the hospital's rallying cry, and top management emphasizes this goal at every opportunity with both leaders and staff. “Senior management sets the focus and tone for the organization,” says Murphy, “when we see and hear how passionate they are about this goal it really fires up the rest of us to work hard to achieve it.”

In addition to measuring patient satisfaction, the hospital also conducts physician and employee satisfaction surveys and community-based market research. As customer service action plans have been developed and implemented for each of those groups, the hospital has experienced dramatic gains in those scores as well.

“Without a doubt, our achievement of national rankings in patient, employee and physician satisfaction has coincided with our emphasis on measuring the important things and being committed to taking action on the results,” says Livermore.

Principle #8: Communicate at All Levels

Effective corporate communication is always important, especially during times of major cultural change. “Let’s face it, change is uncomfortable, and, at times, even scary,” says Livermore, “That’s why it’s so important for top management to clearly communicate their organization’s vision, goals and strategic direction to leaders and staff. We have an obligation to explain where the organization is headed and why. To fail to do so causes confusion and paralysis.”

To achieve this principle at Delnor the administration used a variety of communications tactics, including:

- Leadership meetings
- Employee forums
- Memos and E-mails
- The Employee Newsletter

In addition, team leaders communicated the changes and addressed employee questions at department meetings

“You can’t communicate something as radical as a new vision and strategic direction once and expect leaders and staff to ‘get it,’” says Livermore. “Our goal was to ‘get the word out’ as often and in as many different ways as possible using consistent themes and messages.” In situations like this, it’s virtually impossible to overcommunicate.”

In addition to top-down communication, Delnor also employs a technique called “managing-up,” in which employees are encouraged to proactively communicate with their supervisor on important issues. “We tell our staff to put themselves in their boss’s shoes and ask themselves, ‘What does he or she need to know about what I’m doing and how can I help the hospital be more successful.’” Managing-up is also an important way employees can make sure their priorities are in line with their boss’s expectations and team and organizational goals.

Principle # 9: Align Behaviors with Goals and Values

“Developing an organizational vision, values and strategic plan is a vital,” says Livermore, “but just as important is putting systems in place that integrate them into the

daily behaviors, decisions and activities of leaders and staff.” Delnor accomplished this most notably adopting a series of behavior standards and by tying department and individual goals to organizational objectives.

Behavior Standards

(Editor’s note: A sample of the hospital’s 12 behavior standards from the employee manual could be used here.)

To clearly define what’s expected of employees, the administration developed a series of behavior standards that emphasize the hospital’s values and address such issues as interpersonal communications, commitment to co-workers, personal appearance and patient privacy.

“At Delnor, we strive to be the ‘best of the best’ in customer service,” says Deering. “This means we must be consistently excellent during every contact with every customer on a daily basis. The behavior standards help us achieve this by making it very clear to employees how we want them to treat our patients, visitors and co-workers. They set the standard for what we expect.”

The behavior standards are spelled out in a manual that’s required reading for all new hires. They’re also publicized and reviewed monthly with all hospital staff through department meetings, bulletin boards, the employee newsletter and other means.

Goal Setting

(Editor’s note: A sample of the organizational and/or team goals and the 90-day action work plan format used by Delnor leaders could be shown here.)

“One of the most effective strategies we’ve employed to achieve the eighth principle is to require every department in the hospital to develop team goals that are aligned with our organizational goals,” says Livermore. “Then we take the process one step further by having managers work with each employee to set individual goals that are focused on achieving the team and organizational goals. This ensures that the entire organization is working in concert to accomplish our vision and strategic plan,” Livermore says.

To help teams stay on track, department heads are required to develop 90-day plans that outline specific actions to be taken each quarter in working toward annual goals. “These plans are a great tool to help leaders in focusing on goals and measuring their progress during the year,” says Livermore.

This principle is also built into the hospital’s review/evaluation system so everyone is held accountable for their performance in achieving individual, team and organizational goals.

Lessons Learned (To follow)

About the Contributor (To follow)

Exhibits (To follow)