



## **Boost Workforce Vitality**

John Hagan - 9/26/11

St. Luke's Hospital & Health Network emphasizes workforce vitality, in which all leaders, staff and volunteers feel valued and recognized, view themselves as company advocates and the organization as the employer of choice.

In June 2007, St. Luke's conducted its first formal network-wide employee opinion survey. Managers were presented with scores to indicate their employees' perceptions on their performance as a supervisor, their opinions of their workgroup's health and their views of the organization as a whole.

Upon receiving the results, managers were asked to attain positive survey scores that fell into the good to very good range — 65 to 74 percent — when benchmarked against other best-in-class hospitals.

In 2008, St. Luke's conducted a second survey, which indicated significant improvement. However, approximately 25 percent of managers were unable to achieve the improvement goal. Those scores fell into fair/mediocre — yellow- and red-flag areas. Robert Weigand, director of management training and development, and Tanya Markovich, director of workplace initiatives, were charged with designing an intervention to address managers whose results fell into the lower tier.

### **Using Assessments to Promote Growth**

Weigand and Markovich designed a program to help managers identify underlying challenges and create individual development plans to address them. Plans were linked to St. Luke's core leadership competencies, including business acumen, command skills, developing direct reports and others, interpersonal savvy, self-knowledge, managing vision and purpose, customer orientation, accountability and responsibility. The ultimate goal was to partner underperforming managers with top-performing managers to help them add value to their work and increase job satisfaction.

Using a variety of assessments, St. Luke's produced a program aligning potential growth areas identified by the survey with psychometrically validated characteristics and preferences. Along with survey data and a sampling of low-performing managers to identify negative trends, these assessments laid the groundwork for measurable change.

In April 2009, St. Luke's initiated a tailored coaching process that started by meeting individually with participants to create personalized development plans. The 60 managers who were previously unable to achieve the improvement goal were given the aforementioned assessments and met with Weigand and Markovich to review results. Based on the identified growth areas and the insight gained through the assessments, each manager was guided through a process to create an individual development plan — with input from each manager's supervisor — that provided a blueprint for progress. While the training that followed varied by participant, it largely focused on tying areas of improvement as revealed by the survey data to practical methods that participants could employ to improve their situation.

One of the primary goals of the assessment process was to increase managers' self-knowledge. In one-on-one sessions, using a number of creative techniques, including metaphors as teaching aids, managers were able to see their own behavior through other people's eyes. For example, some used Chinese handcuffs to illustrate the dangers of inflexibility in management. Based on participants' specific needs, they also read literature on various subjects, such as John Maxwell's *Developing the Leader Within You* and Milton Erickson's *My Voice Will Go with You*.

The CPI 434 and Myers-Briggs assessment helped to bridge various areas of concern identified in the survey. For example, a high score on the dominance scale of the CPI 434 assessment could be linked to a manager's inability to obtain necessary team feedback. Typically such a score correlates with low scores from the manager's staff on survey questions such as "Are you listened to?" "Is your voice heard?" and "Do you have an opportunity to give feedback?"

Weigand said the CPI 434 score combination of high dominance, low tolerance, low flexibility, low sensitivity and low empathy is particularly deadly when it comes to communication. These scores typically reveal a manager is inflexible and does not value input from his or her team.

Participants were often unaware of these problems. Creating greater self-awareness, therefore, empowered them to change their behavior. Further, linking growth to characteristics identified by a scientifically validated instrument helped managers discover ways to alter behaviors that stifle open discussion.

"Without the benefit of the assessments, we'd only have the survey data," Weigand said. "We'd be able to identify the areas for growth but not necessarily have a means to address them." St. Luke's has relied heavily on the Myers-Briggs assessment for training initiatives and as a general source of information regarding the managerial staff since 2001. In this program the assessment was used not just to identify the managers' preferences but also to enable them to better understand and identify with their staff.

"The majority of our managers have taken the Myers-Briggs assessment, and everyone's type is displayed on a chart that can be accessed through the company's intranet," Markovich said. "This helps managers understand how they can work within the larger team."

Approximately June 2009, St. Luke's issued an abbreviated version of the original survey, which showed 85 percent of participants trending positively toward their goals. The results — in

combination with a leadership self-assessment, a supervisor assessment and a practitioner/coach assessment — were used to gauge progress.

This information provided reinforcement to show participants their efforts paid off and revealed when plans needed to be adjusted. Further, the data offered a means to quantify the impact on the business based on turnover and replacement costs, as well as the impact of managers' behavioral changes on their employees' perceptions and job satisfaction levels.

In May 2010, St. Luke's issued an additional survey at the 18-month mark, which indicated 94 percent of participants trending positively, a 9 percent increase over the six-month data. No substantive changes were made to the program between the six- and 18-month surveys, which indicated a need to allow participants adequate time to benefit from learning and practice their new skills.

### **Opening Communication Lines**

While improvement is manifest in varied spheres, a few common themes persist, such as communication. In one instance a manager had been communicating with her team exclusively through email. She often failed to communicate the reasoning behind her decisions and exhibited poor timing in her communication attempts — behaviors often demonstrated by individuals with a preference for introversion, as indicated by the Myers-Briggs assessment, and a low social presence score, as indicated by the CPI 434.

Not surprisingly, this was a sore point for her staff. Her personalized program, however, gave her the opportunity to identify these challenges and offered development options to help her communicate in a manner that elicited positive responses from people with varying personality types. She also has recognized the importance of adequately explaining decisions, and giving her staff ample time to digest information.

There also has been a common challenge involving managers' inability to hold department members accountable, commonly reflected by a low CPI 434 responsibility score. "When managers tend to avoid conflict, fairness and accountability issues typically begin to appear," Weigand said. "As these challenges have been identified and addressed, we've seen significant improvements in the ability of managers to fairly hold their staff accountable for their responsibilities."

Leaders at St. Luke's have noticed significant improvement in these managers' ability to manage up. Challenges in this area were particularly evident in managers with low CPI 434 responsibility and tolerance scores and high good impression scores.

"In situations where they didn't agree with policies and decisions but didn't want to voice their opinions, some managers tended to shift blame up the chain of command, never communicating their opinions to their supervisor," Markovich said.

In many of these cases, the organizational development team helped managers understand the importance of expressing their opinions to the appropriate parties, overcoming fears and other hurdles, and developing productive ways to voice disagreements.

The program also has helped identify and address manager visibility challenges — a common theme involving managers expressing a Myers-Briggs preference for introversion as well as those with a low CPI 434 social presence score. In many cases, these individuals thought they maintained strong visibility with their staff, when in fact the staff felt very little and sometimes no connection with them.

The program helped to identify steps managers can take to create a stronger, more positive presence. For example, some managers increased their rounds on all work shifts, while others started having morning huddles and regular staff meetings. One manager has even begun posting her schedule on her door, increasing her availability for open communication.

Consequently, St. Luke's has noticed that as these managers' roles have strengthened, so has their staff's ability to relate to senior management.

Managers are fully immersed in this ongoing program, one built to transform them into satisfied, engaged leaders who use their best talents to move the company forward. In turn, this has improved the organization's overall level of workforce satisfaction and engagement.

St. Luke's is working on an initiative that will leverage online learning and social media to build on the benefits and insights provided by assessments and other elements of the training, which will enable managers to further develop their critical thinking skills.

***John Hagan is a regional consultant for CPP Inc. He can be reached at [editor@talentmgt.com](mailto:editor@talentmgt.com).***