

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

Bridging the Healthcare Performance Gap

WHY HAVE A MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

The mission, vision and values can be very powerful tools inside a healthcare organization if they are developed with the same passion that they are intended to stir in our people. In turn, they can also be just another perfunctory activity that we do because we think we have to. What they do for our organizations is totally dependent on how we treat them.

The mission, vision and values can be extremely helpful in defining who we are, why we exist, what we want to be, and how we will get there. They help our people focus on the target that defines the organization's future and understand the contribution that they make in the delivery of high quality patient care and creating an organization that holds a special place in the hearts and minds of our communities.

The most moving reason for people to get out of bed in the morning, come into work and deal with an industry as challenging as health care is because their efforts are tied to making a difference. At the end of the day, they know that their patients are better off and their community has access to high quality care that might be much more

difficult to attain if the organization did not exist.

The mission, vision and values are each something much greater than a mere group of words that create a statement. The power is not in the words. It is in the message that is conveyed and the feeling it elicits in the people who are responsible for bringing it to life.

Like so many potentially helpful tools that have been introduced into health care, the mission, vision and values have unfortunately been viewed by many as just one more thing that has to be done to please some outside entity. Their real purpose and potential has been sadly overlooked. I remember when the existence of a mission and vision became a big focus for the JCAHO surveyors. Surveyors would randomly stop people in the hallways of organizations and ask them what the mission statement of the organization was. To help their people out, hospitals would print the mission statements on the back of their name tags so they could take them off and read the statement to the surveyors if they couldn't remember it. I will never forget a JCAHO preparation meeting I attended where the speaker stated that it was not important for the staff to be able to tell the

surveyors what it meant. They simply needed to be able to say what it was.

It is very easy to pick up literature related to health care and read about the tremendous morale problem that the industry is experiencing. So many of our people express frustration with feelings that they work hard every day and don't ever feel that they make a difference. Consider the nurse who recently left the healthcare field and now sells homes. When asked why, she replied that she finds an excitement and sense of satisfaction in helping young couples to buy their first homes and it makes her feel good about herself. She further replied that it had been so long since she had felt that way in health care that she forgot what it felt like.

This woman is typical of so many healthcare people who are not sure what contribution they make. If we want our people to care, they need to know that they contribute to meeting the mission and creating the vision. They need to hear that they make a difference. They need a future to focus on and work for. They need a meaningful mission, vision and set of values that they are a part of.

What do our healthcare people need from leadership:

- 1. They need to feel that their efforts make a difference, and***
- 2. That they are part of creating something better for tomorrow than exists today.***

They need to know that they contribute to meeting the mission and creating the vision.

SO WHAT IS LEADERSHIP'S ROLE!

Leadership's role related to the mission, vision and values of the organization is three-fold. First, leadership has the responsibility for making sure that the organization has a mission, a vision and set of values. This responsibility is pretty significant as it is much more than simply making sure that something has been put on paper. Greatness as a leader is not in being able to show that the words were written. Greatness is in the message that is conveyed and the common understanding that everyone holds.

Leadership's second responsibility is to inspire people to believe. This is where leadership's ability to walk the talk of the mission, vision and values can make or break just how powerful these messages can be and the staff's willingness to believe in and follow the leader. Remember, only very brave or very foolish employees will try to move their organizations to a better place if leadership is not driving the train.

Leadership's third responsibility is to

make sure that people understand their contribution. This is where the skill of sincere "future talk" is one of a leader's greatest assets. Future talk is the ability to tie most conversations and statements of appreciation to the future of the organization. Think about how an employee might feel if he or she received the following responses: "Thanks, you did a great job" or "Thanks, you did a great job in identifying that malfunction early. You saved us about \$25,000 and moved us one step closer to building that new wing." Future talk, as is demonstrated in the second response, ties people's actions to the contribution they make to the future of the organization or patient care. It helps them to feel that they are making a difference and makes them much more likely to keep trying.

The leader's role is to lead. In order to lead, this person needs to inspire people to believe because a real leader only exists when people choose to follow.

CREATING YOUR MISSION

Missions can carry very powerful messages but too often they are just words inside many organizations. A perfect example of the mission statement that is just words is the one that people have to look it up when asked what it is or can efficiently recite but not explain.

The real value of a mission does not reside in the words that are printed on the page. There is a difference between a mission and a mission statement. The mission conveys the passion behind the organization's existence. The mission statement is a tool to convey it to stakeholders and outside parties. The power of the mission is found in the process it elicits when leadership agrees on what it means in terms of day-to-day operations and future planning and the ownership for making it a reality is successfully transferred to the front-line workers. The value of the mission is measured in how these front-line people translate it into actions and understand the power of their actions

in making a difference.

The mission communicates the purpose for the organization's existence. For example, the mission of the American Red Cross is "To care for those in need." A mission statement is an enduring statement of purpose for an organization that defines why it exists and reflects its values and priorities. It captures the unique reason for being and energizes stakeholders to want to be part of making it a reality. It does not have to be long or complicated. It simply needs to communicate and inspire. If used properly, it becomes pivotal in making "do we or don't we" decisions when faced with conflict over whether something is in the best interest of the organization or patient care. It creates the foundation on which leadership builds the vision, values, and strategic plan.

Missions tend to withstand the test of time. They do not change significantly unless the organization changes significantly.

Think About the Impact

Many times when I work with healthcare organizations I am asked how you inspire the staff in the housekeeping and maintenance departments. I am asked how you make these people care about the jobs they do as their jobs are so routine. Many leaders assume it has something to do with the fact that they are often the lowest paid people in the building, have the least amount of formal education and have boring jobs. My response frequently comes in the form of the question, "what do you do to help them care?"

The real question that should be asked is what does leadership do to help them understand the value they bring to the healthcare team for they are very important members of that team. The answer is in the role these people play in bringing the organization's mission and vision to life? Their role is significant as these people control the first impressions that every person coming into the organization has. As we all know, first impressions are the most important and longest lasting. These people control the stage in which health care is delivered. They create and control the message of orderliness, cleanliness and safety. They are principle contributors to the prevention of nosocomial infections and patient injuries. Years of experience have shown that housekeeping can have a profound impact on the patient's satisfaction when they interact with patients and families while they are cleaning rooms and they frequently know the greatest amount of information of any group in the building as to just how happy the patients are with their stay because patients will visit with them about such things before they will share the same with clinical personnel.

If any leader were to work in one of these two departments, which message would inspire them to care about the role they play in the building: the message in the above paragraph or the message that their jobs are just to come in to clean and fix things every day. Unfortunately, many of our people do not hear the message that inspires them to care. If leaders want their people to care, it is their responsibility to help them understand the critical role and contribution that they make. They need to make sure that their people understand the role they play in making the mission and vision come to life.

CREATING OUR VISION!

The vision describes how you expect the organization to look - how you expect it to be better - at some point in its future. The vision of an organization is more comprehensive than the mission statement and it describes what the organization would look like at some point in the future if it were to operationalize the mission and achieve its goals of community service. It paints a picture of what the organization aspires to be and what that future would look like for its key stakeholders. It helps people in the organization to visualize what they are working to create.

The vision is commonly developed as part of the strategic planning process and is a collaborative activity between the board and senior leadership. Physician input can be extremely beneficial in this activity as this group of professionals has such a profound impact on the organization's success.

The vision serves three important roles in a healthcare organization. First, it defines the target that the organization is reaching for. It creates focus for the workforce and let's everyone know when they have created success. Secondly, it helps to promote an effective strategic planning process. The vision defines what the strategic plan is working to create. Finally, it creates the foundation for "future-talk". Great leaders tend to be very good at future talk because they recognize the im-

portance of having the workforce understand that their actions not only impact today but they set the stage for tomorrow. The creation of the vision is often that future that the leader ties those actions to.

The vision is something that needs to be shared by everyone. One of the most common mistakes involves the creation of a vision that only a few people share. The chance that a vision will come true is slim to none if the CEO is the only person who knows it and believes in it. This is especially true in health care where the power to make it happen resides in the workforce.

When we analyze the environment and culture of health care, the largest service industry in America, people quickly come to realize that what we are really marketing to the public are the skills, talents and attitudes of the workforce. Beautiful building and high tech equipment have little real value if the industry does not have a workforce that feels and shares the passion of caring. The workforce brings out the value in the equipment and facilities. It is these people who control the experiences and outcomes for every person who enters our buildings. This passion that our industry so desperately needs starts with our people having a mission that works towards a vision.

DEFINING OUR VALUES!

The value statements of an organization commonly consist of 8-12 statements that define the values that the organization hold to be important. They commonly speak to issues of respect, caring, courtesy and quality. They are intended to define those values that drive the culture of the organization and create the foundation for how people act and behave inside the organization. They define those behaviors that are closely tied to making the mission a reality.

The values of the organization are closely tied to the policies. Policies translate values into position statement for the organization. Then the procedures trans-

late policies into day-to-day actions. For example, a healthcare organization may have a value that speaks to respect for all people. One of the policies that the organization would develop to operationalize this value would address nondiscrimination in hiring and management activities. The organization would then have a number of procedures to describe how this policy would be acted out in day-to-day business.

In the end, the mission drives the values which then drive the policies which in turn drive the procedures. They all come together to support the organization in reaching for its vision through the strategic plan.

Testing Your Mission

Randomly select 20-30 employees and ask them what the organization's mission is and what their role is in making it happen every day. The measure of success is not found in their ability to recite it or read it. The measure is found in their ability to describe their role in making it happen and to convey commitment. If your mission statement is not what it needs to be, there are several approaches to developing one. The best approaches involves the involvement of a large group. One approach is to have a contest that allows all employees to contribute ideas. From those ideas, the organization's mission statement is born. If you use this approach, please recognize that you could have multiple winners as the best mission statement may come from a blend of ideas. However you choose to approach this, remember that buy-in of the workforce-at-large is at the heart of your success.

Testing Your Vision

Randomly select 20-30 people from all levels of the organization (board, leadership, medical staff and workforce). Ask each person to write, in 2-3 sentences, their vision of the organization (what it will be) in 5 years. Compare responses to see how consistent or diverse those visions are. This will tell you just how much work you have to do. Remember, there is no vision unless everyone shares it. If you have the opportunity, a great way to create a vision is to pull all these people together as part of the strategic planning process. After each person has written their ideas, you can transfer them to large sheets of paper on the wall. After reviewing the commonalities and difference, the group reduces all the ideas into one vision that they can all agree to. When everyone agrees to work towards this one common future, you then have a vision.



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*The first step in great leadership
is to inspire the people to believe
because you believe yourself.*

It Starts With a Vision!

There was once a small community hospital where everyone was committed to making it be everything it needed to be. The people came to work every day and worked very hard to do what they each believed was in the best interest of the organization. The CEO and other senior leaders worked very long hours and sacrificed many aspects of their personal lives in order to make their hospital successful. The board met faithfully and spent many long hours talking about the need for their hospital to be successful. At the hospital's annual picnic several board members, senior leaders, managers and employees were sitting and visiting about how hard they were all working to make sure their hospital became successful. A new employee, who was listening to the conversation, looked at the group and asked "and how will we know that we have achieved success?" After several minutes of thought, one board member replied "I'm sure we will just know"

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The mission defines why our health-care organizations exist. The vision defines where we picture our organizations to be at some point in the future if the mission becomes a reality. Our values define those behaviors we hold to be important if we are to make our mission come true.

It can be very easy for these important messages to become fluff and pie-in-the-sky words that only raise more doubt and questions if people can not see the path to follow that brings them to life. Leadership is responsible for leading them along that path.

The mission, vision and values of an organization come to life when they are successfully married together through the organization's quality program and strategic planning activities. These two activities create the structure and processes to support an organized approach that maximizes the resources available within our organizations.

The strategic plan defines those strategic moves that the organization will take over a defined period of time and that will methodically walk the organization through a series of well thought out activities that will lead it to its vision while remaining true to its mission and the values that it holds to be important. It helps to think of strategic planning as a chess game where an organization's board and leadership plan out those steps that would most logically lead the organization to its goal—its vision.

The quality program creates the structure to support the creation and implementation of the many continuous improvements that bring the strategic plan and vision to life while holding true to the mission and values of the organization. A healthy quality program is about much more than making sure that our organizations are meeting the expectations of outside regulators and the many external customers that stand

at our doors every day.

A healthy quality program is about making sure that our organizations are being true to the business of health care and that business is the delivery of high quality patient care in an environment that makes our patients and communities feel well cared for and deeply cared about.

Our healthcare organizations do not have the financial or manpower resources to promote functional silos and duplicative activities that only serve to divert our attention and resources. By driving true meaning into our mission, vision and values and operationalizing them through healthy strategic planning and quality activities, our healthcare organizations have the potential to build performance improvement structures that significantly increase our potential for success. (See educational newsletter on "Building Effective Performance Pyramids".