

SERVICE EXCELLENCE IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES (Compiled by Deep Banerjee, Marketingpundit.com)

A "Service Excellence" initiative should result in tremendous improvements in patient, employee and physician satisfaction in every healthcare facilities.

Healthcare centers should not only be 'good' medical centers, but should strive to raise the bar to become 'great' medical centers through 'operational excellence'.

"Operational Excellence" is defined as the relentless drive to reach extraordinary results through a combination of:

- service excellence,
- leadership development
- accountability systems.

With the right operational excellence, a healthcare facility suffering with horrible patient satisfaction scores (under 10%) can transform to a hospital with great patient satisfaction scores (99%).

A balanced pillar approach is recommended.

The five pillars are:

- Quality
- People
- Growth
- Financial
- Service

A culture of 'service and operational excellence' :

- attracts and retains talented staff
- is financially stable
- has excellent clinical outcomes
- is growing
- is full of employee generated ideas for improvement
- maintains patient, employee, and physician satisfaction at high levels.

Medical centers should ideally have fantastic staff of professionals who must:

- embrace the set vision and realize that mediocrity would not be accepted at any stage.
- be doing rewarding work and daily "make a difference" in the lives of the patients and families they touch
- strive to have customers leave saying "Wow! I could not have received care like this anywhere else! Those people really cared about me!".

To achieve excellence, some healthcare facilities needs to make some hard staffing decisions. To achieve the goal of 'per Good to Great' its always important to have the right people, in the right place.

The perception of most **rural healthcare facilities** by the folks who live in the rural communities is that they are merely band-aid stations. They are seen as stops along the way to "real" care in a bigger metropolitan hospital. Through a different approach one must try to change that long-standing perception.

Rural medical centers should:

- quickly become much more than "just a hospital"
- be positively influencing the lives of patients in their service area
- support patients to live a healthy lifestyle
- be chanelized towards the process of building and remodeling the entire medical center to be a healing environment that will reduce overall stress and thereby improve quality and service.

Urban medical centers can offer free massages to all patients, warm spa-like robes, softer lighting, wireless internet service, complimentary long distance phone cards, in-room video games and DVD player, and gift bags upon admission complete with blended aromatherapy lotion, mints/candies, etc. very much in the style of a 5-star resort.

They should try very hard to anticipate the needs of their patients well in advance of hearing it from them. Such facilities should take pride on being innovative and caring for the communities they serve. Their staff are expected to play active roles in most local welfare boards and volunteer organizations in the locality. The services of such medical centers should reach far and wide – from free clinics to domestic and sexual abuse centers, from wellness and fitness centers to providing meals to home bound and low-income seniors.

These medical centers should strive to provide proactive leadership and not reactive management.

The challenge will be to create new standards for which all rural health care will be based.

What service excellence allows us to do is raise the bar not only for ourselves but our entire community. It is often found that many other businesses are standing up and taking notice of what we are doing right and are following our lead. The path to success does not lie in who makes the most money but who creates the best organization. The entire workforce should rededicated themselves to the organization and pledge their time and talents to this new culture. Their willingness to accept complaints as gifts and accept the challenge to continually raise the bar in everything while simultaneously willing to do what it takes to achieve greatness has always proven to be very successful.

With the right guidance a satisfaction survey could throw up staggering results, viz. composite satisfaction score of 95%, a morale score at 100%, employee turnover statistics remaining at 2%. Patient Satisfaction scores could be: inpatient 98%, quality of food 94%, room cleanliness 98%, outpatient 94%, medical practice 82%.

Service Excellence Teams could be recreated to Pillar Teams, which include front line employees from every department. This can prove to be the communication venue that most employees normally want. The healthcare facility can have its own "Reward and Recognition Team" that chooses employee of the month and the employee of the year and a "Celebrations, Communications, and Events Team" that keep it fun and make all look forward to coming to work each day.

Discussions need to be conducted with all staff as a baseline for performance improvement. These open and honest discussions continue to aid in the development of already awesome staff as one goes on the journey from 'good' to 'great' to strive for Organizational Excellence.