

Cultivating a culture of respect in healthcare

Founded in 1897 by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry and licensed for 617 beds and 65 bassinets, Saint Francis Care is an anchor institution in northcentral Connecticut and the largest Catholic hospital in New England. Leadership must be committed both to the hospital's mission and to making an impact on the quality of healthcare delivery.

As an organization "committed to health and healing through excellence, compassionate care, and reverence for the spirituality of each person," Saint Francis lists among its core values respect, integrity, service, leadership, and stewardship.

Saint Francis's 115-year legacy is driven by its dedication to the dignity of the individual. The emphasis it places on its core values cannot be overstated, as half of each employee's regular appraisal is based on how he or she exemplifies those values.

The organization's leadership, however, recognizes that such dedication requires cultivation. Therefore, Saint Francis's leadership training team, led by Nancy Krafcik-Rousseau, PhD, Executive Director, Innovation and Learning—is tasked with creating programs that yield a renewed commitment to the mission and measurable impact on the quality of healthcare delivery.

Central to the team's focus is the core value of respect. "If we are to provide the best patient experiences with the highest quality care

Business Challenges

- Developing core leadership competencies to put core values of respect, integrity, service, leadership and stewardship into practice
- Improving low-rated communication issues revealed by employee survey

Company Profile

Saint Francis Care is a nonprofit, integrated healthcare delivery system established by Hartford, Connecticut-based Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. To provide the best patient experiences with the highest-quality care, it emphasizes a culture in which employees engage meaningfully and substantively with patients and with each other.

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throughout one's lifetime, we must demonstrate in measurable behaviors respect toward patients, families, and each other," said Krafcik-Rousseau.

Solution

While Saint Francis's staff always strives to maintain a respectful environment, her team is employing innovative leadership and management training designed to provide a well-defined road map for all organization members to follow on a daily basis.

Krafcik-Rousseau developed and instituted the Core Leadership and Management Training program, aimed at helping new managers—either new to management or new to the organization—cultivate skills that promote a culture of respect in which all employees give and accept feedback without fear.

The program addresses a central challenge: defining what respect means to individuals and departments within a diverse organization. Without such definition respect, in practical terms, would remain elusive. Krafcik-Rousseau notes that Saint Francis began using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) instrument two years before the Core Leadership and Management Training program was created, initiated by Judith A. Carey, RSM, PhD, Vice President of Mission Integration, to drive training programs focused on team building, skill development, conflict resolution, and individual coaching.

Given the organization's needs, Krafcik-Rousseau recognized an opportunity to build Saint Francis's current use of the tool and make it a core component of a more widespread, in-depth initiative.

The MBTI instrument, the world's most widely used personality assessment, is based on Carl Jung's personality type theory. According to type theory, we each have an innate, fundamental personality type that, while not controlling behavior, shapes and influences the way we understand the world, process information, and socialize. The MBTI tool helps individuals determine which of 16 personality types fits them best, a discovery process that yields an abundance of information related to work habits, relationships,

Solution

- Help new managers cultivate skills that promote a culture of respect
- Define 'respect' and what it means to individuals and departments within a diverse organization
- Use Myers-Briggs tool to help people demonstrate respect through behavior and tailored communication

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Nancy Krafcik-Rousseau,
PhD Executive
Director, Innovation and Learning
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and other elements affecting workplace cohesion. The 16 four-letter types are based on preferences for Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I), Sensing (S) or Intuition (N), Thinking (T) or Feeling (F), and Judging (J) or Perceiving (P).

With more than 25 years as an MBTI practitioner and vast experience as a trainer and a change agent, KrafcikRousseau is guided by a core belief that, to inspire change and growth, one must begin by accepting people as they are right now. The strength of the Myers-Briggs approach, she says, lies in its ability to build individuals' awareness of themselves and others. As a fundamental program element, all participants complete the MBTI assessment (Form M) prior to training. Once they've verified their type and studied their type description, the program leads them through a series of modules that address how personality type influences communication and people's ability to give and receive respect.

The first portion of the program, the "Leadership Intensive" module, covers leadership competencies, blind spots, and awareness of personal style using the MBTI tool. Subsequent modules include "Managing People," "Leading Change in Difficult Times," and "The Change Process." The final module, "Having Effective Conversations," focuses on what prevents effective conversations and how to make it safe to talk. The "Leadership Intensive" module provides an introduction to type within a team, while other modules offer more granular discussions. During training, participant groups are treated as hypothetical teams, enabling the facilitator to illustrate more effectively diverse communication styles based on personality type and potential pitfalls that may inhibit a culture of respect. The MBTI assessment, says Krafcik-Rousseau, provides strategies and techniques that enable participants to "connect the dots" between their own behaviors and others' perceptions in a short period of time.

The program also offers ongoing skill development through one-on-one coaching. Additionally, once the leaders have undergone training, they will often invite the leadership training team to work with their own teams—Krafcik-Rousseau works with several such teams each year.

Results

- Improved conflict handling and less misunderstanding, and a greater feeling of respect for other team members
- Small team gained insight into general employee population

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Central to training is an examination of “effective conversations”—interchanges upon which important decisions are based—and how personality type affects people’s ability to engage effectively in such dialogue. The program helps participants understand how type-based differences can disrupt lines of communication at precisely those moments when clear and direct communication is required. Often these conversations need to be held in response to change, previous dialogue between individuals, and conflict.

“By understanding how you interpret the situation according to your own type, you can bypass much of the emotional interference as well as the assumptions you would normally make, obtaining a more positive, clear outcome,” said Krafcik-Rousseau. For example, during a crucial conversation, often individuals with a preference for Introversion need time to digest the dialogue. However, their reluctance to finish the conversation at that moment can be perceived as stubbornness, or “shutting down.” With the self-awareness afforded by training based on the MBTI instrument, Introverts can handle the conversation more effectively with statements such as “I hear what you’re saying—give me some time to absorb this and then we’ll revisit this conversation.”

On the other hand, Extraverts, who often feel an immediate need to express themselves, come to understand that while they need to “get it out in the open,” the problem doesn’t need to be resolved that instant. According to Krafcik-Rousseau, “Having a meaningful dialogue and dealing effectively with difficult conversations is the core of maintaining a respectful environment. When employees can demonstrate respectful behaviors the environment is then open to providing excellent patient care. When effective communication is present our employees can return to their passion—helping our patients.”

Training modules emphasize managers’ self-awareness of how they communicate and how team members receive such communication attempts through understanding MBTI principles. During meetings, for example, Introverts might view Extraverts, who tend to talk more, as grandstanding, while the reality may be that Extraverts have little time to voice their opinions during normal working hours and are fulfilling a need. This, says Tim Michaels, Team Trainer and Facilitator at Saint Francis, is often the case for Extraverted types working in operating rooms, who must take direction from a surgeon for hours at a time under very intense pressure. They may attempt to counterbalance this lack of opportunity for self-expression during meetings.

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By contrast, Introverts, who might be viewed by Extraverts as “disengaged” during meetings, may need to leave their comfort zone to demonstrate vocally that they are in fact interested in what’s being discussed. In order to accommodate all personality types, the meeting organizer may consider setting some guidelines for participation, such as the maximum and minimum expected contribution. In some instances, they may even be encouraged to use a timer.

Training sessions also address communication challenges between employees and their superiors. MBTI team charts, says Michaels, are a particularly effective way to help managers, subordinates, and co-workers understand each other. For example, an ENFP employee having a heart-to-heart with an ESTJ boss might feel he is “getting nothing back.” However, if true to type, the supervisor may actually be processing the employee’s logic in her head. “When we do our ‘team chart,’ we make points as to how the leader of the team communicates,” said Krafcik-Rousseau. “The training enables participants to assess their ability to convey their message and confirm how it is received.”

Conflict management through the lens of MBTI type is central to all training modules, as well as ancillary team and individual coaching. Elizabeth Lunt, Team Trainer and Facilitator at Saint Francis, recalls a team that recently exhibited high tension. “There was a lot of stress. We finally discovered that one Introvert team member was having a great deal of difficulty expressing herself over the Extraverts during meetings. By the time she spoke she’d be frustrated, and as a result, the team interpreted what she said quite differently from how it was intended.”

The MBTI training—which offers a basis for removing emotion from conflict and strategizing a positive outcome—enabled the team to work together to ensure that the Introvert’s thoughts were expressed and understood. According to Krafcik-Rousseau, “Teams that have undergone MBTI-based training manage conflict more effectively and exhibit less misinterpretation, with members generally feeling respected because others appreciate how they approach tasks, decision making, and organization.”

As misreading of intent is often the root of conflict, understanding MBTI type helps leaders more effectively discern the source of unpleasant encounters and strained relationships. Participants may be asked to deconstruct a scenario in

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which a senior employee asks his or her aide for help and is met with “I’m busy.” Training helps them view it from each party’s perspective and discuss a more constructive way to deal with it that takes into account time, place, context, and relationship. If the aide is generally agreeable, the senior employee is counseled to let it go.

If, on the other hand, the aide is regularly responding dismissively and it is bothering the senior employee, they are both counseled to exercise self-awareness as they address the situation through a crucial conversation. In all cases, they are required to ask themselves if they are calm enough to maintain objectivity during the conversation. While Extraverts may need to fight the urge to express their feelings immediately, Introverts are cautioned not to wait too long before addressing the issue.

As Saint Francis builds a strong shared governance foundation, it improves patient experiences by ensuring that staff, particularly nurses, have a strong voice in Saint Francis’s practices. Among other contributions, shared governance councils are integral to raising and setting goals at the unit-specific level.

A shared governance structure provides large employee segments, such as the nursing staff—which makes up two-thirds of the employee population—with an organized way to meet the needs of patients. The MBTI training allows each floor to explore its own culture and how its members define respect as a group, providing a foundation for effective conversations and a framework for peer-to-peer resolution of potential conflict.

In addition to nursing units, the training team has provided department-level training across the organization. This type of training allows the team to focus on specific group dynamics. Knowledge of the specific team styles gives the trainers opportunities to provide a more extensive array of strategies.

“We have a very limited ability to get people—particularly nursing staff—together, so we’re confined to hour-long segments,” said Krafcik-Rousseau. Consequently, information must be presented in practical terms. Krafcik-Rousseau says that time constraints require trainers to offer on-target examples of problems participants are likely to encounter. Taking everyone through pre-training assessment provides immediate insight into the kinds

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of problems they're likely facing. "We enter with MBTI analysis in hand and go straight to their issues. Training becomes more meaningful when people can connect it to their work quickly—participants typically find MBTI training fun and energizing and usually wish the sessions were longer."

It's also important, she says, to keep participants engaged between sessions by offering "parting gifts," such as type charts and stickers. Additionally, follow-up sessions begin with a discussion of what has happened since the previous session, paying particular attention to "aha!" moments.

Saint Francis has over 5,000 employees and a training team of three people, making it a challenge for Krafcik-Rousseau's team to connect directly with the entire staff. However, the programs enable them to form relationships with managers, who then share insights and access to the general employee base. "Once the training turns to team building, we often gain entrance into the actual teams, enabling us to impact the larger organization directly," said Krafcik-Rousseau.

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Results

Krafcik-Rousseau largely attributes the program's success to consistent training, regular follow-up sessions, and individual coaching. Saint Francis, she says, plans to expand the program—the MBTI assessment remaining its core—with the goal of typing all 5,000 employees. To date, one-fifth of Saint Francis's employee base has taken the MBTI assessment, including most everyone at manager level and above, and numerous non-manager employees as well. The team recently compiled all results into a single database, the analysis of which will shape the program moving forward. Additionally, they've started a physician leadership training program that examines personality from the viewpoint of a practicing physician and are developing a new-hire orientation program that will incorporate discussion of MBTI type and core values.

The team also recently expanded the program to encompass stress and change management. MBTI training is central, as both stressors and stress responses during change vary greatly by personality type. "For us, change is constant—if there's not a new building opening up, then we're dealing with a new technology or new strategic plans," said Krafcik-Rousseau. "And that change can lead to stress."

Krafcik-Rousseau and her team discuss how leadership style through change management can affect team stress, using MBTI "grip" theory to help participants identify stress cues by personality type. Originated by Dr. Naomi Quenk and developed in her booklet *In the Grip*, grip theory proposes that, under severe stress, people tend to operate from their "inferior" function. Because they're operating from less practiced aspects of their personality, they may behave like an immature version of their opposite type.

However, while these stress reactions may seem random, they're actually predictable through an understanding of personality. The process helps participants understand how they react to change, why they resist change, and how understanding their own style can help them tailor their change management approach to people of varying types to minimize stress.

Christopher M. Dadlez, FACHE, President and CEO of Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, has been a strong supporter of utilizing the MBTI tool among his senior leadership team. This top-level support has further enabled the team

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to extend the program's benefits organization-wide. Mr. Dadlez agrees that leadership is about a focus on human capital.

For this reason, he says, "Relationships are everything for leaders regardless of who you are dealing with." He notes that relationships are built on trust and respect, and he has worked very hard in his leadership to exhibit both. Mr. Dadlez has found MBTI strategies to be helpful in his own reflection on leadership among members of his senior team.

Under the leadership of Dr. Krafcik-Rousseau, Saint Francis has moved from being an organization that searches for ways to communicate its core values to one that follows a well-defined strategy for putting those values into action. "If we are going to actively live the mission and core values, it will require us to engage in meaningful dialogues so that we can feel empowered to behave in ways that represent these values," she says. The Myers-Briggs instrument helps Saint Francis provide employees with concrete strategies and tips that allow them to demonstrate respect through their behavior.

"We all want to be respected and demonstrate respect, but defining how this translates into real behavior can be difficult," said Krafcik-Rousseau. "The MBTI tool gives definition and a framework to an otherwise subjective and nebulous concept, and provides a real basis for action."



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