



Mercy Health Partners

Mercy Health Partners is a large health system in West Michigan with more than 4,300 associates, some 21,000 inpatient discharges, and 137,000 emergency/urgent care visits annually. The system has four hospitals and 375 physicians, and offers a number of exclusive specialty physician care services for the region. Mercy Health Partner's parent company, Novi-based Trinity Health, is the nation's 10th largest health care provider.¹¹

When Mercy General and Hackley Health merged last year, the community reflected deep seated, generational biases about the two competing hospital systems. “You were either a Hackley family, or you were a Mercy family,” said Roger Spoelman, C.E.O. at Mercy Health Partners. “So we really did have to create a new culture in the organization. And I have to say that MBS was part of the foundation of that new culture. It helped us focus on getting to know one another, and gave us a common nomenclature when we talked about our communication styles...When there is difficulty, you can refer to the person's communication style and their profile, rather than saying, ‘You never listen. You always jump to conclusions. You aren't patient.’ Instead it's, ‘Let's talk about the style. Let's talk about the perspective.’ So it allows you to resolve conflicts by taking a third person approach...It was very helpful in bringing together these two disparate cultures...I would call it an accelerant to the culture transformation that we needed. A merger is a legal transaction, but anybody who has gone through one knows that it's a cultural transformation. The legal transaction can take place fairly quickly. The cultural transformation takes place every day, one day at a time. It's not something where you say, ‘There, done. Cross that off the list.’ Using a transparent and sustainable communication platform provides a consistent framework for the ongoing integration process. This system gives you something tangible.”

This deliberate attention to effective communication processes is part of the strategy to build an attractive culture in the merged organization. Spoelman noted that using Management By Strengths tools helps people take a step back to understand how to communicate more effectively with new colleagues, rather than focusing only on the mechanics of merger related functional changes. In addition, the MBS program provides free profiles for employees' families. Spoelman remarked, “We ask people to leave their personal problems in the parking lot. As helpful as MBS is in the workplace, if we can give employees this powerful tool that enhances their abilities to understand their families, and recognize why they may act the way they do, that is a tremendous benefit.”

For Mercy Health Partners, the hoped-for synergies have clearly yielded results, not only in reducing costly duplicate services, but also in elevating the organization's level of patient care. Within eight months of the merger, Mercy Health Partners was named one of the nation's Top 100 Hospitals and Top 100 Hospitals for cardiovascular care by the Healthcare business of Thomson Reuters. It is now also the only hospital in Michigan, and one of 13 nationwide, selected as Leapfrog's top hospitals for quality by combining quality and resource utilization in the areas of coronary artery bypass, coronary interventions, and treatment of acute myocardial infarction. Said Spoelman in a press release, “This is exactly the kind of platform of quality and cost management our business community has challenged us on, and it is the kind of outcome we promised with our merger.”¹²