

## **Applied Integral Leadership Development: A Customer Service Example in Healthcare**

### **The Presenting Problem**

What does it take for a “good” organization to become a “great” one? In 2001, Elmbrook Hospital was asking itself this question. For the past 30 years, Elmbrook had enjoyed a strong reputation of providing high quality, compassionate medical care in its community. But healthcare had become increasingly competitive and Elmbrook knew that they had to do more than “what we’ve always done” in order to keep and enhance their position in the market. ***Elmbrook set a goal for itself of becoming an identified leader in service excellence and customer satisfaction – for patients, staff and visitors.***

### **Pacific Integral’s Involvement**

Elmbrook engaged Pacific Integral to partner with them in accomplishing this goal. A key component of this partnership was to create and implement “breakthrough projects” that ultimately produced breakthrough results. In their work with Pacific Integral consultants, Elmbrook leadership and staff learned and implemented the skills, behaviors and attitudes that created the necessary culture to ***create and sustain*** their goal of service excellence and customer satisfaction.

Pacific Integral provided an Initiative Partnering solution that included:

- A comprehensive assessment that reflected the complexity of their system and the challenge before them, and that provided a comprehensive approach for realizing their goal in a sustainable way.
- Coaching, facilitating and training of the Administrative team to create new ways of thinking, interacting and communicating
- Working with the larger management team and key leaders to enhance their thinking and communicating as well as improving their ability to enact plans and engage staff throughout the organization.
- Identifying and supporting specific projects to apply new skills and behaviors to real-time problems with measurable goals.

### **Elmbrook Hospital’s Results**

The results Elmbrook was able to realize – and sustain – were impressive. They included the following:

- In 2001, Elmbrook earned the national rank of “Top Performer” in overall quality of care in its Emergency Department and a 5-star award for its registration process.
- In 2002, they received top national rankings for inpatient admissions process,

emergency registration process, and 5-star awards for care in the Outpatient and Emergency Departments.

- In 2003, five different hospital departments received 5-star national recognition.
- In 2004, Elmbrook received 9 national awards, including “Top Performer” award for Outpatient Services, overall quality of care, staff member’s quality of care, staff understanding and caring and teamwork between doctors, nurses and staff.
- In 2001, participation in employee opinion survey was 96% (target 84%) and 100% in 2003. Attendance at house-wide information fairs was 43% (target 25%). Staff turnover rate was 4.8%, compared to national averages of 7.5-8% in comparable markets

## **A New Culture Created**

In addition to these results, Elmbrook recognized other gains. Pacific Integral worked with the Administrative team to strengthen their communication and relationship, making it “safe” to be open and honest with each other. Gigi Rutkowski, a member of the Administrative team, reflected the impact of that: “After that breakthrough, the Leadership team (the next level of management) could tell that things had changed.” This ultimately resulted in more open communication between the Administrative and Leadership teams which, according to Rutkowski, “...(then) helped staff change.”

“It’s really all about relationship”, Rutkowski stated. “We will always hit barriers. When we do, we know it and we go back to our relationship (as a basis) to work it out. We learned to trust our peers as partners and as coaches.”

Since the initial work with Pacific Integral, Elmbrook has continued to deepen and enhance the culture and skills they created. They have changed the structure of key meetings. They negotiate on issues. They engage teams in project work. They take risks. They set goals as teams and as individuals for which they hold themselves and each other accountable. They provide regular in-house training to staff on key skills that enrich communication, relationship, accountability and the accomplishment of shared goals.

Because of Elmbrook’s willingness and ability to learn new ways of thinking and communicating, they were able to see new possibilities. These possibilities led to new kinds of actions, which ultimately led to new results – results they couldn’t have imagined in their “old” way of thinking and behaving.

## **Conclusion**

Elmbrook had a big vision for itself. In support of that vision, Pacific Integral helped Elmbrook Administration and Leadership make a powerful, shared commitment to making it happen. Pacific Integral provided training, insights and applicable tools that helped Elmbrook develop organizational structures and processes as well as individual skills and behaviors to realize their goals. Through an *integral* approach – attending to both observable skills and structures as well as individual attitudes, beliefs and values – Elmbrook was able to create an organizational culture that continues to reinforce service excellence and customer satisfaction.