



CASE STUDY: NATIONAL REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

Cultural Transformation through the Disney Institute: The National Rehabilitation Hospital Story

IMPETUS

In 1995, National Rehabilitation Hospital (“NRH”) underwent a restructuring and downsizing which resulted in employee distrust and increased patient complaints. Two years later, in order to address these issues, NRH implemented a “Patient First” initiative whereby employees were trained on guest relations. Patient First was viewed as “just another project” and lost momentum.

Then in 1999, NRH set out to invest in its intangible assets (such as customers and employees) to improve the value and performance of the organization. NRH believed that clinical quality was extremely difficult for consumers to understand and determine. It concluded it needed to differentiate itself by focusing on the service delivered to its external customers instead.

What follows is the story of their remarkable success...

THE BOTTOM LINE - RESULTS TO DATE

With the investment in customers and employees, NRH has been successful at improving its relationship with employees, physicians, and customers. Specifically, union employees voluntarily initiated a vote to decertify their union. The feeling was that “when management listens to you, you don’t need a union to represent you.” A dramatic 40% reduction in turnover was seen in two years. Inpatient satisfaction has increased with both inpatients and outpatients. Employee satisfaction substantially improved in all measured categories over a six month period, with employees feeling “senior management cares about its employees”.

HOW NRH ACHIEVED THE RESULTS

NRH had launched a new culture, which focused on the intangible assets of customers, employees, and underlying

processes. NRH senior management was committed to living out their credo, “*Adding Life to Years*”, and their service vision, “*Every patient encounter will be a life-enhancing experience that builds toward a lasting relationship.*” Senior management realized that this must be translated into **specific actions and behaviors** lived out daily by everyone in the organization from the CEO to physicians to nurses to housekeepers.

NRH leadership realized this could only become a reality by transforming its culture and operations around the tenets of employee and customer service excellence. This cultural change began with the commitment and alignment by the entire senior leadership team and was led by the CEO, COO and Medical Director.

In early 1999, senior management attended a 3½-day course at *Disney Institute*. Senior management was inspired by this experience which showcased Disney as a world-class leader in

demonstrating how investing in employees can lead to building a fanatically loyal customer base which drives repeat business and financial success. NRH sent several more teams of managers and front line employees to

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attend additional offerings at *Disney Institute*, in order to build commitment and passion throughout the organization. These forty “graduates” of *Disney Institute* became champions of the new culture, which further leveraged management’s ability to be successful. NRH engaged a third-party consulting company to serve as a partner in guiding the design and implementation of all phases of this bold initiative over a fifteen-month period of time taking the principles learned at *Disney Institute* and helping to apply them in their own unique situation.



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NRH established nine task forces with a clearly delineated charge. Each task force was composed of a member of senior management, who chaired the committee, one physician leader, and other NRH employees. Task Forces were formed around the following five pillars (developed from key *Disney Institute* concepts), the foundation for enabling their employees to carry out the NRH service vision.

1. Define and reinforce a positive culture – including staff orientation, handbook, and service behaviors.
2. Select for “right fit” – including the creation of a pre-application video, hiring for attitude, new name badges, and a new, clearly articulated dress code
3. Train, coach and empower – including standardized job descriptions, communication of expectations, and intensified investment in training to develop their entire workforce and transform them into individual “service heroes”.
4. Inform and inspire – including a variety of communication vehicles to the point of saturation.
5. Provide a caring environment – including reducing administrative hassles, reward and recognition programs, and a variety of listening posts to actively solicit employee feedback

Additionally, Andersen worked with other Task Forces to support this process which include the following. The customer experience, touchpoints and processes which create the idea customer experience and develop implementation plans for all eight touchpoints of the typical inpatient experience. The physical setting which creates an atmosphere that supports a “life enhancing” experience for customers and employees alike. Develop benchmarks, goals and measurement to monitor operational processes and drive new achievements. Value growth strategies by capitalizing on market opportunities and strengthening physician relationships to drive positive, long-term sustainable growth in market share. Finally, give continuous care by assessing financial and service implications of moving to a 7-day clinical operation to ensure care is consistent and satisfies physician and customer needs.

To learn more about how *Disney Institute* can assist your organization on its own journey to excellence, call **(321) 939-4600** or visit **www.disneyinstitute.com**.