

Crittenton Hospital Medical Center

A case study in employee partnership

VITAL STATISTICS

Crittenton Hospital Medical Center, Rochester, Mich., is a 290-bed community teaching hospital in north suburban Detroit. It provides a campus for medical residents from Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, and has partnerships with University of Michigan Health System for electrophysiology services and cardiac surgery and the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Center at Wayne State for cancer care. Its more than 1,500 employees provide a full continuum of clinical programs, and its medical staff of nearly 500 physicians represents a wide range of medical specialties providing primary, secondary and tertiary-level care. Crittenton is also a teaching campus for nurses from Oakland University's School of Nursing.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Just a few years ago, surveys at Crittenton found that employees were simply not engaged in the hospital. Those who bothered to fill out the survey forms didn't trust that their answers would remain confidential, and the few who provided written comments doubted their input would be valued. There seemed to be little hope of turning things around.

In March 2007 a Press Ganey employee satisfaction survey placed the hospital in just the 26th percentile nationally for overall partnership score. By that time, however, things were already changing. New leaders were in place in the hospital, bringing with them a new focus on creating a positive environment for the people who work there. Crittenton also turned to Press Ganey for its expertise in turning disengaged and discontented workers into dedicated partners.

The result was a 5.4-point jump in the overall partnership mean score in Crittenton's 2010 Press Ganey Employee Partnership Survey, which pushed the hospital to the 76th percentile nationally, up from the 56th percentile in 2008 and just the 26th percentile in 2007. Beyond the scores, there is a new sense of pride attached to working at the hospital.

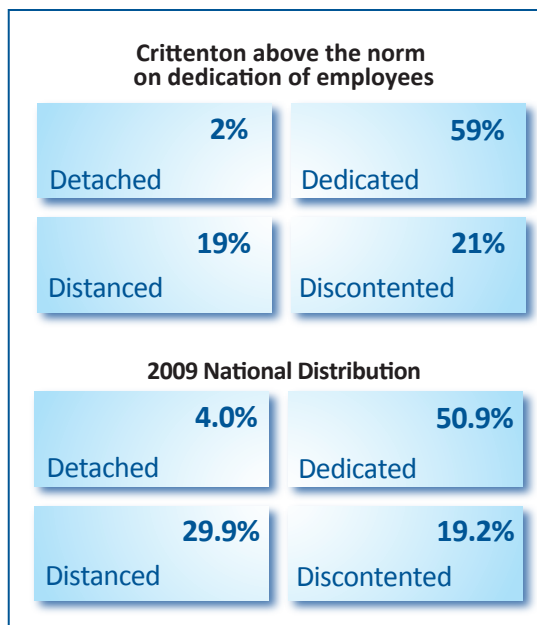
THE EMPLOYEE PARTNERSHIP MODEL™

Press Ganey adopted its new Employee Partnership Model™ in 2009. Based on extensive research, the model finds that rather than focusing on a single aspect of traditional measurement – employee satisfaction with pay, benefits and the quality of daily work – hospitals need to create an environment where employees feel an emotional bond with colleagues and the organization. Satisfaction must be paired with engagement – the state in which employees feel they are getting their emotional needs met by the employer – to understand and improve the partnership needed to provide the best care to patients.

The survey measures three types of engagement: with the work being performed, with colleagues/peers and with the organization.

After a survey, Press Ganey analyzes where the workforce breaks down in terms of the quality of the relationship with the organization. In the Partnership Model, employees can be generally characterized by one of four states:

- **Dedicated.** The ideal state in which employees feel that the organization is providing what they need and also feel connected to their work and the organization emotionally.
- **Detached.** They feel the organization is meeting their needs for the basics such as pay and job security but they're not emotionally involved.
- **Discontented.** Emotionally involved, but not satisfied that their basic needs are being met. They may feel their pay is too low or their input is not sought on matters that affect their work.
- **Distanced.** These employees feel both dissatisfied and disengaged and typically will either exit the organization voluntarily or worse – stay and create turmoil for everyone else.



Crittenton now outpaces the national average with 59% of employees in the dedicated quadrant. Some 51% of employees surveyed across the U.S. in 2009 fell into the dedicated quadrant, which represents the ideal state of being both satisfied and engaged. While on its face that sounds positive, 4% were detached and 49% were distanced or discontented. So many hospitals find themselves where Crittenton Hospital Medical Center did a few years ago — where a lot of work remains to be done to make employees feel valued and empowered.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Following the 2007 survey at Crittenton, hospital leaders created a cross-departmental Employee Pride/Satisfaction Team to work on a number of projects. Hospital-wide, communication was one of the key areas of opportunity identified. Senior leaders began attending department meetings to learn firsthand the challenges facing managers and employees, as well as to bring their unique perspectives to each meeting.

“As a result of these sessions, one of the things that our CEO (Lynn Orfgen) started was a blog on our intranet so everyone knows not only the latest news but can post a question for him,” says Steve Yax, manager of Crittenton’s Respiratory Care and Sleep Center and co-chair of the Employee Pride/Satisfaction Team. “He’s answered every one of those questions.”

The intranet site is also where employees and physicians can recognize one another for exceptional acts of caring, one of many reward and recognition activities. The site also provides employees with a sense of community. Recently, employees learned of the first robotic surgery at the facility, which spawned a host of comments from proud staff.

A service excellence steering committee, comprised of chairs from the seven intra-departmental service excellence committees, including the employee pride team, meets every other Friday. The chief operating officer, Gregory Partamian, is the champion of the group. Two teams give presentations, and Press Ganey account managers participate in the meetings. The group works on everything from reward and recognition to service recovery to communications to employee satisfaction, with the goal of ensuring that programs are implemented throughout the organization and momentum for improvement is ongoing.

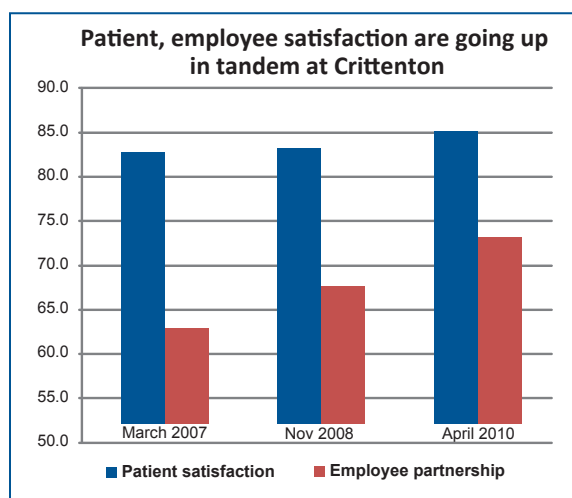
“There is a real sense of this being a continuous quality improvement effort,” says Colleen Cavanagh, Crittenton’s revenue cycle director and co-chair of the Employee Pride/Satisfaction Team.

Early on, Crittenton leadership committed to online action planning, using Press Ganey’s solution. “My feeling is that the ball really got rolling in 2007 when we took the results back to each team within the hospital and began the online action planning cycle,” Yax says. “On my team, we sat down with employees and asked them what they wanted to work on, what made sense and literally had them vote on priorities. The cycle repeats after each survey.”

One of the priorities for employees in Yax’s workgroup was the staffing mix. Staff members didn’t understand why hours were allocated to different shifts. “We told my workgroup how many staffing hours we have throughout the week, and we asked them to sit down and decide how to allocate those hours for day, night and weekend shifts. We ended up shifting some of those hours to the night shift, which has helped the day shift get off to a better start each day. Because of that action, the mean score for the question, ‘Is there adequate staffing in my workgroup,’ went up by 10 points to the 72nd percentile from the 40th percentile in the prior survey.”

Periodically, Partamian will have the employee pride team leaders and the administrator of human resources sit down with each department representative and ask how their action planning is going. “This is just to keep our finger on the pulse, to let everyone know this is an ongoing process,” Cavanagh says. “It’s very informal; people don’t come with written reports and handouts. It’s literally, ‘Let’s just talk about this and see where we are.’ You would be surprised at how that keeps the ideas flowing.”

Partamian is also a champion of patient satisfaction improvement. He regularly sends out Press Ganey reports to the entire hospital. “Press Ganey is very much a partner and very much in people’s lives throughout the organization, so whether it’s employee partnership or patient satisfaction, people are very aware and knowledgeable of the engagement,” Cavanagh says.



EMPLOYEE OUTINGS BUILD COMMUNITY

The employee pride team sponsors many employee events and outings throughout the year, including a trip to a Detroit Tigers game, where 200 employees share a party deck at the ballpark; a July 4 picnic and

fireworks display for the entire workforce; an Ice Cream Day, where a local shop brings in a traveling cart; and the opening of a new parking deck, which occasioned a staff party. “Basically, ‘any excuse for a party’ is our motto,” Yax says.

Crittenton annually donates a turkey to each employee prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. The annual “Turkey Toss” involves senior leaders staffing a semitruck full of frozen turkeys outside of the parking garage. As employees are leaving work for the day, each one gets a turkey “tossed” their way.

Among many recognition programs at Crittenton is a program featuring six-foot-high banners with pictures of employees, their names and the words “I Make It Better Here” hung throughout the hospital. In addition, the employee newsletter was transformed into an employee recognition vehicle.

MEASURABLE IMPROVEMENT

As noted, Crittenton’s overall partnership score rose to 75.2 in 2010, an improvement of 5.4 from the 2008 survey and up from 65 in 2007. Other scores were even more positive. On the question, “I would recommend the health care services provided here to my friends and relatives,” the score jumped 9.1 in 2010.

**Moving toward partnership:
Crittenton’s overall scores for satisfaction
and engagement are on the rise**

	Mean Score	% Favorable	National Rank
April 2010	75.2	85.3%	76th
November 2008	69.8	80.2%	56th
March 2007	65.0	73.7%	26th

Perhaps the single most tangible sign of the success of the program is a dramatic reduction in staff turnover. In 2007, total hospital turnover was 10.7%. Just a year later, it had dropped to 8.1%. By 2009, it had plummeted to just 5%.

Among nurses, the improvement has been nothing short of spectacular. In 2007, RN turnover was an unhealthy 15.5%. In 2008 it was 8.2%. By 2009, it was just 1.2%.

“You can certainly trace some of that reduction to the state of the economy, but even with the downturn, it is an impressive achievement,” Cavanagh says.

Yax points with obvious pride to the results of a custom question from the Crittenton survey, “I am proud to tell people I work for this organization.” Ninety-five percent of employees responded favorably to the question, a mean change of 9 points, which put the hospital in the 99th percentile of its peer group.

“You can feel it in the hallways – this is just a friendlier place to work now,” he says.

