

## Three Steps to Excellence: Accountability, Goal-Setting, and Recognition

Orange Regional Medical Center, Goshen and Middletown, New York

Orange Regional Medical Center's Arden Hill Campus in Goshen, New York, and Horton Campus in Middletown, New York provide medical excellence close to home in the Hudson Valley. Orange Regional Medical Center provides a combined 450 beds with more than 2,500 compassionate healthcare professionals (including more than 450 outstanding physicians) who care for thousands of patients each year.

Now, to say that Orange Regional Medical Center has a *great* recognition program would almost be considered a spectacular understatement. After all, for the question "My manager does a good job of recognizing employee contributions," Orange Regional Medical Center improved by a staggering 10.7% in less than 2 years, and they experienced a wide range of improvements that exceeded 9% gains! How? They accomplished this by setting clear expectations throughout the organization, developing aggressive goals, and further enhancing their comprehensive (and *highly* unique) recognition program.

2003 was a year of major organizational changes for Orange Regional Medical Center. "When HealthStream Research conducted our survey in 2003, we lacked a comprehensive system for accountability, and our managers didn't understand the high importance of staff recognition that is timely and meaningful. We needed to further-develop our managers and provide them with tools to readily and effectively recognize their staff. Our low scores were the direct result of this, so we knew that our first steps had to be focused on accountability and recognition," said Gwen Faust, Director of Organizational Change. "By setting aggressive goals and placing extreme focus on accountability and recognition, we've achieved great results."

With such sweeping organizational changes and the resulting successes of the present, the low scores of 2003 now seem practically ancient. "2003 was a trust-building year," said Faust. "We chose HealthStream Research to conduct an Employee Insights Survey, and to drive participation in the survey we had raffles and participation awards. HealthStream Research provided an onsite team to proctor the survey so that all shifts would be able to participate."

### HealthStream Research

HealthStream Research is a national leader in the measurement of physician, employee, patient, and community satisfaction for healthcare organizations. We currently work with more than 1,100 facilities nationwide, including many of the nation's largest for-profit and not-for-profit health systems and specialty healthcare companies.

It's not enough to simply conduct a survey. You've got to share the results with total transparency so that employees will take ownership in the coming organizational changes. "Allan Acton (*Senior Vice President, HealthStream Research*) came onsite to present the results to our leaders and managers. The best aspect of this was that he conducted Moments of Truth and Action Planning exercises and trained the managers on how to best share the results and initiatives with their employees. Not only did they give us the results, but HealthStream Research gave us the tools to take action."

### **Step One: Establish Accountability through Clear Expectations**

Orange Regional Medical Center began by creating a Standards Team, which was initially chaired by the Vice President of Human Resources, Deborah Carr. The Standards Team was charged with creating a document that focused on the non-clinical expectations they had of all employees. To ensure maximum representation across the organization, the Standards Team was created from a cross section of various Orange Regional Medical Center departments. As the Standards touch the lives of all employees, the draft was then shared with all levels of staff to solicit suggestions or changes.

After all suggestions and changes were reviewed by the Standards Team, the final Standards of Performance and Behavior Booklet was created. "Each and every employee was then given the *Standards of Performance and Behavior* to review. The employees were asked to sign an acknowledgment form. We didn't force the employees to sign the form. If an employee refused to do so, it was noted on the form by their supervisor. Signing the Acknowledgement form is not mandatory but the behaviors within the *Standards of Performance and Behavior* are. The overall approach has fostered greater employee buy-in, and virtually all employees have chosen to sign. The standards are the foundation for holding all of us accountable. We now have a clear understanding of the behaviors and performance expected of everyone at Orange Regional," said Faust.

The purpose of the Standards process was threefold:

1. To create and communicate clear Standards of Performance and Behavior so that everyone in the organization knows and understands the standards which Orange Regional Medical Center expects
2. To integrate these Standards of Performance and Behavior into the organization's culture in support of the **Service Excellence Every Time** Program
3. To educate everyone that his or her individual performance and behavior has an impact on patient care and the organization's success

### **Orange Regional Medical Center's Standards of Performance and Behavior**

- Ownership: "Take pride in this organization as if you own it."
- Communication: "Good intentions are not enough. We must make sure we have communicated them clearly and that they are understood."
- Service Recovery: "It is never the wrong time to do the right thing."
- Create a Positive Impression: "Every success is built on the ability to do better than good enough."
- Care and Compassion: "Wherever there is a human being there is a chance for kindness."
- Attitude: "Attitude is everything, so choose to have a positive one."
- Privacy: "Privacy is the distinguishing feature of a truly elegant culture."
- Confidentiality: "Keep it to yourself."
- Commitment to Co-workers: "It is much easier to build a good relationship than to struggle with a bad one."
- Safety: "Think safe, act safe, be safe and stay safe."

- Customer's Waiting Times: "Create the world you want."
- Call Lights: "Our customers are our first priority."

Orange Regional Medical also wrapped their organization around the Studer Group's philosophies and built upon the Studer Group's Five Pillars: *Service, People, Quality, Financial, and Growth*. "With results and insights gained from HealthStream Research, the adoption of the Studer Group's organizational philosophies, and the *Standards of Performance and Behavior*, we finally had a solid foundation for accountability. Combined, all of this gave our managers real tools to hold employees accountable—and hold themselves accountable as well," stated Faust.

### **Step Two: Goal-Setting**

To gauge the progress of their initial organizational changes, Orange Regional Medical Center came to HealthStream Research in 2003 to conduct an Employee Insights Survey. In 2004, a Pulse Survey was developed by HealthStream Research to give Orange Regional an essential interim measurement tool for gauging the effectiveness of their employee satisfaction improvement initiatives. "We used the results of the Pulse Survey as the foundation for our goal-setting in 2005. As HealthStream Research provides department-specific results, Berke Billbay (*Director of Analytics, HealthStream Research*) was able to assist us in setting targeted goals for individual units or departments. This was incredibly powerful, as we could then go to each manager and say, 'This is what you're working towards.' Goal alignment was critical to our success," stated Faust.

One challenge facing many organizations is determining how many targets to improve. Too few and you'll have a hard time maintaining long-term engagement—you're also unlikely to see major organizational changes coming from such a singular focus. Too many fronts, and you will have an overwhelming maze of metrics that will grind improvements to a halt. "We chose three survey questions on which to focus our system-wide goal-setting: *My manager does a good job of recognizing employee contributions, My manager holds everyone in our department accountable for their work, and I believe my manager cares about me as a person*," said Faust. "We believed that focusing on a long list of goals would be counterproductive. Having three central targets for the entire system made it very clear to everyone exactly what to work on."

To get maximum buy-in from each department, Orange Regional Medical Center has taken a unique approach in 2006. "We chose two questions as goals for everyone in the organization and are allowing each department manager to choose another goal specific to his or her department. That goal had to be based on a survey question with a .5 or greater correlation to Overall Satisfaction. We provided organizational direction by having two central goals for the entire system, but allowing each department to address its own unique issues was very powerful," said Faust. "Also, senior leadership chose a goal specific to them. It is essential for leadership to walk the talk."

"In 2005, our goals were organized into the Studer Groups' Five Pillars. Departmental goal alignment with organizational goals drives results. Managers' year-end compensation was tied to achieving the targets set and the strategy paid off. Orange Regional achieved many of its goals. We believe that 'pay for performance' is an important part of helping an organization achieve its goals," beamed Faust.

### **Step Three: Rewards and Recognition**

"Orange Regional Medical Center has always had a very strong organizational-level recognition program. We have had Employee of the Month, Employee of the Year, and our Star Program for some time," Faust said with a smile.

## Success Story: Orange Regional Medical Center

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To enhance those programs and build more manager-driven recognition, Orange Regional Medical Center established a Rewards and Recognition Committee. “We began with all members at the director level, and then transitioned to members coming from all levels of the system. The committee launched under Orange Regional’s **SEE** program—Service Excellence Every Time. The Recognition Team developed a full suite of tools for managers to recognize excellence in the moment,” said Faust. “We even wrap candy bars in special SEE paper!”

Now things get *really* interesting. “We make heavy use of informal notes. We encourage managers to write thank-you notes, but we also take it a step further. We ask managers to send personal notes of recognition to the employee’s *home*. This promotes positive discussion of the workplace at home—and the power of this cannot be underestimated. It shows the employee we care, and it shows the employee’s family how much we value their loved one,” said Faust.

Leaders at Orange Regional round on their staff and customer-departments. “We ask about what’s going right and we look for opportunities to recognize excellence. This also gives us an opportunity to drive interdepartmental recognition—it’s amazing what you can find out simply by asking the right questions,” said Faust.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of their recognition program is how they send recognition up the line. “We work with the CEO, COO, VP of Clinical Services and other senior leaders to reinforce employee recognition. Managers are encouraged to pass on suggestions for employee recognition to the Executive level. When an employee gets a letter from the CEO that says *Your Director told me about . . .*, morale soars. It directly improves relationships between employees and supervisors, it increases faith by employees that leadership really cares, and the work that they do really matters,” said Faust.

### The Star Program

*All winners are highlighted on their website, through newsletters, and internally throughout the system.*

**Level 1: Shining Star**—This is a staff level award and is for individual action. A patient or staff member can nominate an employee for this award.

**Level 2: Shooting Star**—This award is reserved for employees whose actions have positively affected multiple departments or groups.

**Level 3: Guiding Star**—This is an award for management, and anyone can nominate.

## The Results

“We have seen the benefit of our sweeping organizational changes. Recognition is our biggest success around here,” said Faust.

By setting clear expectations across the system, setting aggressive goals, and instituting a robust recognition program, Orange Regional Medical Center saw the following improvements in their most recent survey conducted by HealthStream Research:

- My manager does a good job of recognizing employee contributions (+10.7%)
- My manager holds a staff meeting at least once per month (+9.6%)

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- My manager shares all the information my co-workers and I need in order to feel part of the hospital team **(+9.5%)**
- My manager is fair to all employees **(+9.6%)**
- My manager gives me measurable goals to achieve **(+8.2%)**
- The hospital's top leaders share information that is important to my department **(+9.0%)**

Orange Regional Medical Center isn't done yet. "We have set some very aggressive goals for this year, and we expect to *continue* our success. Goal setting, accountability and recognition are becoming part of our culture." This won't be the last we hear from Gwen Faust and Orange Regional Medical Center.