

Creating Ambassadors One Employee at a Time

RML Specialty Hospital, Hinsdale, Illinois

Since our beginning, HealthStream Research has performed over a million employee surveys. With that kind of volume, patterns emerge. While there are successful best practices to handle just about any issue, hospitals across the nation do tend to have certain challenges in common. How do you build trust with leadership? How can you get employees to be your ambassadors to the community? RML Specialty Hospital managed to tackle all of these issues with resounding success. In the latest employee survey, leadership was rated in the 99th percentile, and the areas of benefits, communication, and community orientation all saw incredible scores. The employees have become satisfied, engaged, and dedicated ambassadors for RML Specialty Hospital. How would you like to have evangelists like these at *your* hospital?

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.

The Results

Of the 33 performance items provided in the survey (including satisfaction and retention) for which a database comparison was available, RML Specialty Hospital scored statistically above the HealthStream Research National Database average for 29 of those items and for overall employee satisfaction. Below is their impressive array of high-performance items compared to hospitals across the nation:

Employee Survey Item	RML Specialty Hospital Percentile Ranking
The top leadership is an excellent steward of the well-being of our employees and the mission of the hospital	99 th
I would report a co-worker whom I saw placing a patient, an employee or him/herself at risk	99 th
I would feel comfortable reporting a medical error	99 th
My co-workers understand that high productivity is important to the hospital's long-term success	97 th
I understand and support the mission, philosophy and values of the hospital	97 th
I selected this hospital as a place to work because its values and mission reflect my own	96 th
In my department, we have the equipment and supplies necessary to do our jobs well	94 th
To help ensure the hospital's success, I realize I may have to perform additional or different duties	89 th
I believe that this hospital is a good place to work	87 th
Staffing levels within my department are adequate	85 th
The hospital's benefits package meets my needs	84 th
I understand the benefits available to me	80 th
<u>Overall Employee Satisfaction</u>	86th
<u>Engagement Index</u>	92nd

How to Create Ambassadors

Listen, then Act

“We are unique in that all of our patients are referrals from other hospitals,” said John Landstrom, Vice President of Human Resources and Operations. “To build ambassadors among our employees, we first had to know exactly where we stood with them,” said Landstrom. “To drive participation, we had a contest. At the end of the survey administration, each department raffled off \$15 gift cards to a variety of places like Blockbuster, Starbucks, Best Buy, Panera Bread, and so on. The winners were able to choose which type of gift card they wanted.”

Once the results were in, the next step was to take directed action. “Our last survey from HealthStream Research showed us that our employees were dissatisfied with the benefits package,” said Landstrom. “After receiving the results from the survey, we took immediate action and did our best to work with the benefits provider, hoping to get the employees’ issues addressed, but in the end we switched providers. This made the employees much happier with the benefits package, and they *knew* we listened, heard, and learned because we took action that addressed their needs. The proof was in the 2006 survey, when the questions related to benefits saw significantly higher scores.”

Department-Specific Review and Goal Setting

“We shared the overall hospital survey results with all employees, as we believed the results should be shared with total transparency. We posted the results on our intranet and also published them in our bi-weekly newsletter. We had round-the-clock meetings to go over the results, ensuring that all departments and all shifts were fully informed. Each department received their specific results. HealthStream Research helped us determine appropriate—but challenging—goals for each department, with powerful Action Planning exercises that helped us chart a path to become a world-class hospital,” said Landstrom. “Each and every department helped create our successes.”

Share the Success

RML Specialty Hospital established very specific organizational goals for clinical quality, patient satisfaction, and financial performance. “Our employees have received *very* meaningful bonuses. We take an all-or-none approach—the whole organization gets a bonus, or none of us do. I am happy to say we’ve had many very successful years,” said Landstrom.

Want Excellence? Show It!

“Our Service Excellence initiative, called RML REACH, is an ongoing process to create a culture of excellence,” said Landstrom. “We put a lot of focus on employee education. If you want excellence, you’ve got to show your employees what excellence *means*. From the beginning, we wanted the employees to own the initiative, so we had an employee contest to name it. The winner received a trip to Las Vegas, so as you can imagine participation was intense.”

The RML REACH (Respect, Excellence, Appreciation, Concern and Honor) initiative established a set of six behavior standards, known as RML REACH Service Behaviors:

1. Make Good First and Lasting Impressions
2. Solve Problems and Anticipate Needs
3. Communicate with Courtesy and Compassion:
4. Act Like an Owner
5. Respect the Dignity and Confidentiality of Others
6. Be an Active Team Member

Success Story: RML Specialty Hospital

“We wanted everybody on the same page,” said Landstrom. “To be the best, we knew that personal interactions are very important. Each department took the initiative to develop department-specific protocols to put these standards into practice. A one-size-fits-all approach wouldn’t work.”

Not only does RML Specialty Hospital have department-specific protocols for the Service Behaviors, but they’ve also developed role-specific protocols within the departments. For example, for “Make Good First and Lasting Impressions” there are unique protocols for Dietary based on Cafeteria, Patient Tray Delivery, Dietitian, and Meal Rounds/Menu Collection by Nutrition Assistant.

Visible Leadership

As any sociologist will agree, we fear the unknown. In both its positive and negative manifestations, HealthStream Research has seen that organizations with visible leadership do well, and those without rarely do. “Jim Prister, our President and CEO, is very visible,” said Landstrom. “He is the first to speak at employee orientations. He sets the tone and lives the message by making himself accessible. He has also adjusted his communication approach over time, moving from quarterly meetings in a formal atmosphere to informal meals.” The result? RML Specialty Hospital scored in the 99th percentile for *The top leadership is an excellent steward of the well-being of our employees and the mission of the hospital.*

Bringing It All Together

In just two years, RML Specialty Hospital improved their scores for 27 questions out of a total of 33, with some scores improving by as much as .50 points. “We’ve been very satisfied with HealthStream Research. Their web and phone surveys made it easy for us to reach our employees, and we had very high participation rates,” said Landstrom. “We are on a path to fulfill our vision: to be the best long-term acute care hospital in the country.”