

Finding a Common Thread

Homestead Hospital, Homestead, Florida

Located in Homestead, Florida, Homestead Hospital experienced one of the United States' most devastating natural disasters—Hurricane Andrew in 1992. We interviewed Bo Boulenger, who served as the CEO of Homestead Hospital from 1992 – 2006. Mr. Boulenger shared his story of how this hospital has coped and grown since Hurricane Andrew to become a hospital with excellent scores on physician satisfaction. Mr. Boulenger has worked for Baptist Health South Florida, Homestead Hospital's parent organization, for 22 years. Today he serves as CEO of Baptist Hospital of Miami and Baptist Children's Hospital.

Bo Boulenger joined Homestead in 1992 as COO and assumed the role of CEO in 1994. At that time he and the management team began focusing on quality. "The common thread between administration and the medical staff is quality," said Boulenger. Additionally, having a clear vision and spirit of collaboration have been two keys to success for Homestead Hospital.

Other factors that aid in physician satisfaction include straightforward answers, no bureaucracy, and open two-way communication. "The physicians knew my cell phone number and weren't afraid to contact me at night or on weekends. The management team also provides a high level of service to the physicians," said Boulenger.

Homestead Hospital also boasts of low employee turnover and high employee satisfaction. "The low employee turnover rates have allowed Homestead Hospital to keep the most experienced RNs, which means doctors have a higher level of comfort and trust with them," notes Boulenger.

Administration also makes a point of involving physicians in key decisions regarding the hospital as well as providing education for them on quality initiatives. For example, key Homestead physicians are actively recruited to sit on committees and attend seminars, are involved in quality measures, and attend leadership courses.

Homestead Hospital has also moved to a state-of-the-art replacement facility. Mr. Boulenger and his team ensured a high level of physician involvement in the design of the new hospital, which included physicians accompanying him on visits to other new hospitals around the country to get best practice ideas.

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Success Story: Homestead Hospital

When asked about any words of wisdom he would impart to new CEOs, Boulenger mentioned several key ideas:

- Clearly articulate strategies
- Involve physicians, employees, and the board to the greatest degree possible
- Communicate your strategy through many different ways (employee forums, communication boards, etc.)
- Do more listening than talking
- Give straightforward answers; if you say you will follow-up on an issue, insure you do so
- Be honest; have pure motives

After learning the techniques for communication and culture building used at Homestead Hospital, it is no wonder their physician satisfaction scores were noteworthy. Bo Boulenger summed up his thoughts on physician satisfaction very well. “The purpose of our relationship with the physicians is to be a collaborative partner. I consider it an honor to work with them each day.”