Building Values from the Ground Up: The Opening of the Mayo Clinic Hospital

Building a Workforce That Fosters the Organizational Culture

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On October 23, 1998 the Mayo Clinic Hospital (MCH) opened the first ever Mayo-built hospital in the organization’s greater than 100-year history. Located 12 miles from the Mayo Clinic outpatient campus, the hospital serves as the inpatient facility for Mayo Clinic-Scottsdale, which opened in Scottsdale, Arizona in 1987. Mayo Clinic Hospital opened as a closed staff hospital with 178 beds; only Mayo physicians practice in the facility. Mayo Clinic Scottsdale—like Mayo Clinic-Rochester and Mayo Clinic-Jacksonville—is a multispecialty tertiary care academic medical center. The Mayo Clinic mission is focused on patient care, with robust medical education and research programs that support the care of the patient. Prior to the opening of the Mayo Clinic Hospital, a community hospital served as the inpatient facility for Mayo in Arizona for over 10 years. It was already an organization of more than 1800 people, and the administration of Mayo Clinic-Scottsdale faced the task of hiring 1200 new employees to support the new hospital, a 65 percent staffing growth rate in one year. At the same time the organization was preparing to open the hospital, the institution underwent an information systems conversion, bringing up over 30 new IS systems to support a conversion to an almost totally electronic environment in both the inpatient and outpatient settings.

Hiring sufficient numbers of allied health staff was a challenge in and of itself. However, perhaps an even greater challenge was how to hire a large number of new allied health staff who would reflect Mayo’s long-held values and culture.

In this article, we describe the process used to select 1200 new employees who reflected the culture and values of Mayo Clinic and to integrate them into the established culture of Mayo Clinic to open the new Mayo Clinic Hospital.

The Mayo Culture

Mayo Clinic has a rich culture and a deeply ingrained set of organizational values. Mayo has been a physician-led organization since it began in Rochester, Minnesota in the late 1800s. The primary mission of the organization is “to provide the best care to every patient every day through integrated clinical practice, education, and research.” The primary value is that “the needs of the patient come first.” Throughout its history, Mayo has endeavored to hold fast to its mission and values. This mission and value set form the basis for the Mayo Model of Care, defined by high-quality, compassionate medical care delivered in a multispecialty, integrated academic institution. The Mayo Model of Care defines expectations for the Mayo Clinic staff. Key elements of this model include collegial, cooperative staff members who work together as a team. Physicians are expected to take time to listen to the patient in an unhurried fashion and to take personal responsibility for directing patient care over time in collaboration with the patient’s local physician. Allied health staff is expected to have a strong work ethic, which supports their commitment to Mayo. All staff members are expected to share their expertise unselfishly with colleagues and with the institution. Both physicians and allied health staff are mentored in the culture of Mayo. The Mayo Model of Care allows Mayo to retain its position as a leading international health care organization, while responding to dramatic changes in health care. It is the commitment to this model, which directly reflects the core values of the institution, which leads observers to refer to Mayo Clinic as being a leader in the health care “service.” According to Leonard Berry, professor of marketing at Texas A&M, “Mayo offers patients and their families concrete and convincing evidence of its strengths and values.” With the emphasis on teamwork, commitment, and values, hiring for the new hospital became especially critical to preserve the essence of the institution.

Hiring Staff in Today’s Health Care Environment

Health care organizations are faced with a myriad of challenges in the current environment of declining reimbursement and shortages of
health care workers. Although in the not too distant past, hospitals were closing with great frequency due to excess inpatient bed capacity in many markets, it is estimated that the demand for beds in the next 25 years will increase 46 percent, due to a variety of factors such as an aging generation of baby boomers. Thus, the scenario of an organization expanding its current capacity is a plausible one. These organizations will be faced with the same dilemma that Mayo Clinic-Scottsdale faced: “How does an organization hire new allied health staff who mirror its culture and values?” The answer to this question is critical to the success of all health care organizations hiring staff, whether it is for a new or an existing facility. Collins and Porras, in their book *Built to Last*, state, “You cannot impose new core values on people. Instead, find people to share your core values: attract and retain those people; and let those who do not share your core values go elsewhere.”

**The Search for Staff**

The challenge for Mayo Clinic-Scottsdale was extraordinary: in 18 months select, hire, and orient more than 1200 new employees to meet the operational needs of opening and running a new hospital while not compromising the historic values of the organization. The task was even more challenging in 1997 with a booming economy and record low unemployment in metropolitan Phoenix. As difficult a challenge as it was, the organization held firm to finding individuals who embodied the Phoenix. As difficult a challenge as it

We sought qualified individuals who would most likely consider an opportunity in the Phoenix marketplace. We conducted external focus groups to develop a working environment attractive to talented health care professionals. We examined demographic trends to determine where migration into Arizona came from, and set recruitment efforts toward those target markets. We looked for talent, but did it in a way that consistently reflected our values of teamwork, respect, open communication, and integrity. We implemented the practice of holding open job fairs, which few if any hospitals had done previously in the Phoenix area. The multidisciplinary teams that went to the job fairs openly discussed such issues as wage rates and benefits. We did not offer signing bonuses, which was occurring in our marketplace, as this was inconsistent with the Mayo values. Instead, the recruitment teams sought to demonstrate to potential candidates the unique opportunity to work in an environment where the needs of the patient come first. We were able to hire a significant number of employees who previously worked closely with Mayo Clinic staff in the community hospital we used prior to the construction of the Mayo Hospital, and who thus had significant exposure to the values of Mayo.

3. We equipped our recruiters and managers with a selection process to assess not only a candidate’s technical capabilities, but also the congruency of their values with Mayo’s core principles. Utilizing a behaviorally based interview tool, we evaluated candidates along five values-based dimensions. Candidate interview responses were scored, creating individual profiles that were compared against Mayo’s organizational profile. Final hiring decisions were based upon a combination of the candidate’s technical skills and cultural fit with Mayo core values.

4. Although we were successful in recruiting highly qualified staff, the real measure of success was in integrating these new colleagues into the wider organization. The majority of employees were hired to work in the hospital; others joined existing work units in the Mayo Clinic outpatient building that also supported hospital functions. Thus, we had to build the team. An exhaustive orientation and training curriculum was designed and customized to individual roles. The duration of the orientation varied from three to twelve weeks and culminated in team-based simulations before the doors of the hospital opened. In all, over a quarter of

- **Open Communication**
- **Community Service Commitment**
- **Education and Research**

Although the organization was determined to find suitable candidates for the Mayo culture, there was also a clear expectation that the new staff would reflect the diversity of the community. The organization successfully hired 1,210 new staff in less than a year, after reviewing more than 22,000 resumes. Over 14 percent of the new staff was comprised of minority candidates. The initial success of this task was a result of four specific strategies:

1. We clearly articulated what type of organization we were, including the Mayo vision, values, and operating principles. In the start-up recruitment advertising campaign, we used the theme of “Can you imagine” to capture the candidates’ interest, and to connect it to our values. “Can you imagine being a part of an organization that always puts the patient first …”

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a million hours of training were provided to prepare for the first patient’s arrival—the epitome of putting the patient first.

The Results

What impact has all of this had? The Mayo Clinic Hospital has received the rating of the Number 1 hospital in the Phoenix metropolitan area from the National Research Corporation every year since 1999, just one year after our opening. This rating was performed by patients in the Phoenix metropolitan area and reflects their experience with many of those employees hired when Mayo Clinic Hospital opened. JCAHO accreditation within the first year of opening yielded accreditation with commendation. Mayo Clinic Hospital is considered by many to be the employer of choice in the Phoenix metropolitan area by such hard-to-find allied health staff as medical-surgical nurses. At a 2002 turnover rate of 9.2 percent and a 2003 annualized trend of 7.4 percent, our hospital turnover is among the lowest in the area. The median rate for health care institutions was 19.4 percent in 2002.6 We believe our commitment to hiring allied health staff who share the values of the Mayo culture directly impacted the success the Mayo Clinic Hospital experiences today. We believe that although the scarcity of allied health staff in medicine makes recruitment difficult, time spent in clearly defining organizational values—and selecting employees who embody those values—will greatly enhance the success of the organization.

References


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