

Evaluating the Efficacy of the Emory Healthcare Pledge

Abstract

WLA's Oath Takers Class of 2014 selected a project to evaluate the efficacy of the Emory Healthcare Pledge. Our findings look at our own data, as well as best practices from leading organizations that use behavioral codes of conduct in building a positive culture among employees.

Waffle House, Ritz-Carlton, and other organizations who have built successful cultures have done so not through “pull”, but through “push”. Every employee in these organizations knows their version of the Pledge. They speak to it on a daily basis, in team huddles and other venues. It permeates their internal dialogue. We are not there yet with our Pledge. HR does not currently have records of how many/which staff have had formal Pledge training, and 11% of staff who completed our survey answered that they had never heard of the Pledge, so we know we have work to do. We need to measure our percentage of employees trained; but training alone will not indicate whether or not the Pledge has had any impact on our culture.

Barnes Jewish—one example of an organization that has changed its culture through a program like the Pledge—has 1 FTE per 1000 employees dedicated to driving organizational culture. Waffle House has the “Culture Dude” who sits on their executive board and has a department of employees working with him to drive culture. Emory has one person whose job it is to drive Care Transformation and the Pledge, We have many other individuals scattered throughout the organization who are working on

service excellence and other culture-related initiatives, but we do not have a large, concerted effort. We respectfully suggest that dedicated resources would help Emory drive culture change, as these “culture coaches” could help our frontline leaders train their staff and support and encourage their staff in the work of the Pledge, as well as customer service, re-branding, and other initiatives related to culture.

Focus groups and survey comments show that employees perceive a difference in implementation of the Pledge from department to department, depending on leadership engagement with the Pledge. For the Pledge to be fully implemented, we must hold ourselves accountable to implementing and continually reinforcing the Pledge.

We have access to some metrics that may indirectly measure whether or not the Pledge is having an impact on our culture, but there are no direct measures that we have been able to identify. Barnes Jewish uses HCAPS and their Physician Satisfaction Survey results. We have identified some possible parallels between certain employee engagement survey questions and some elements of the Pledge. We suggest that the proposed reallocation of FTEs dedicated to the Pledge would facilitate the identification of more correlated metrics that might be used to measure improvements in our culture attributable to the Pledge.

We close with these take-home messages:

- Other leading organizations have used Pledges successfully
- Emory employees and physicians who have been exposed to the Pledge report that it has impacted their behavior positively and see their values as aligned with the Pledge
- Our Pledge implementation has been highly variable
- Focus is needed to fully actuate the Pledge