



connecting culture and care

Driven by a heartfelt mission to transform health care to provide the best care for every child, Nationwide Children's Hospital is striving to become a preeminent, nationally prominent pediatric teaching hospital and Research Institute. To achieve this, hospital leaders are executing an ambitious strategic plan to increase capacity, enhance patient care and services, improve performance and discover new treatments and cures.

A foundational part of its roadmap to success includes building an even stronger one-team culture of accountability, collaboration and innovation, one that connects administrative, medical and support staff throughout the hospital and Research Institute to the mission, strategic plan and values.



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Steve Allen, M.D., Chief Executive Officer

By any standard, Nationwide Children’s Hospital is one of the nation’s best pediatric care medical centers. It’s well run, people are passionate about what they do and it’s widely recognized for its research. So, why is the hospital leadership trying to change something that’s working so well? The answer: To truly fulfill its mission, it needs to reach the next level of performance. This article describes how culture shaping is supporting the strategic plan for its future.

Already recognized as one of the top children’s hospital in America, Nationwide Children’s Hospital is striving to reach even higher levels of excellence. Its goal of being a pre-eminent, nationally prominent pediatric teaching hospital and Research Institute is driven by a heartfelt mission to transform health care to provide the best care for every child.

To reach this level of performance, the hospital is executing an ambitious strategic plan that includes increasing capacity with hundreds of thousands of square feet of new medical facilities, enhancing patient care and services, improving performance and discovering new treatments and cures.

A foundational part of its roadmap to success includes building an even stronger “one team” culture of accountability, collaboration and innovation, one that connects administrative, medical and support staff throughout the hospital and Research Institute to each other and to the mission, strategic plan and values.

The hospital is well on its way to achieving its goals. When a 700,000-square-foot hospital expansion is completed in 2012, Nationwide Children’s will be one of the largest pediatric hospitals and research centers in America, able to serve far more children. It continues to attract outstanding clinicians and researchers. In June 2008, *U.S. News and World Report* [new](#), expanded listing of America’s Best Children’s Hospitals,

ranked the hospital among the best in all seven specialty categories rated, including cancer, digestive disorders, heart and heart surgery, neonatal care, neurology and neurosurgery, respiratory disorders and general pediatrics. “Making this list of best children’s hospitals validates our strategic plan and focused mission to transform health care for our children,” says CEO Steve Allen, M.D.

The journey to build a one-team culture began in 2007. Though it is in the early stages, positive results are already showing up. There is more open communication and greater accountability. Patient satisfaction scores — a significant measure of success on the front lines — are improving. Connecting culture to the point of care so strongly resonates with the hospital’s employed physicians and medical leaders that some are actively engaged in reshaping the culture throughout the hospital and even incorporating it into the residency training program.

Building on a strong foundation to reach the next level of performance

When Dr. Allen was named CEO in 2006, Nationwide Children’s was already recognized as one of the country’s top pediatric teaching hospitals. Its Research Institute was one of the fastest growing research centers associated with a children’s hospital. It had an outstanding residency training program with The Ohio State University College of Medicine. People at

all levels of the hospital loved working there. They believed deeply in the mission of providing the best care to all children, regardless of their ability to pay. And it had tremendous philanthropic support. So, why was there a need to change?

“The place had been run well over the years, but to achieve the aspirations we set for ourselves in terms of our mission, values and strategic plan, everyone had to behave in a little more consistent, high-minded fashion, with more attention to accountability tied to the values,” says Dr. Allen. He adds that there was little understanding of the strategic plan and there was probably even less emotional commitment to what needed to be done going forward, even among the leaders who reported to him.

Chief Operating Officer Rick Miller, a veteran of more than 20 years at Nationwide Children’s, has seen it grow from a small hospital serving the families of central

Ohio to a more complex health care institution with 6,500 employees. “It takes a great deal of energy, effort, flexibility and mental health to consistently sustain the level of performance that is necessary at a children’s hospital such as ours,” he says. “If you don’t have this bedrock of culture, and a way you are going to behave and work, you become exhausted and less effective.”

Miller believes a strong and aligned culture is important in a setting where nurses, medical staff, administrators, managers and even customers are involved in the care process. He notes that the hospital has more than 750,000 patient visits a year and has a very diverse patient population. “All that lends itself to the opportunity for miscommunication or conflict. So, when that occurs, how do you show up? And how does your culture? How do you prepare managers and staff leaders to process these issues?”

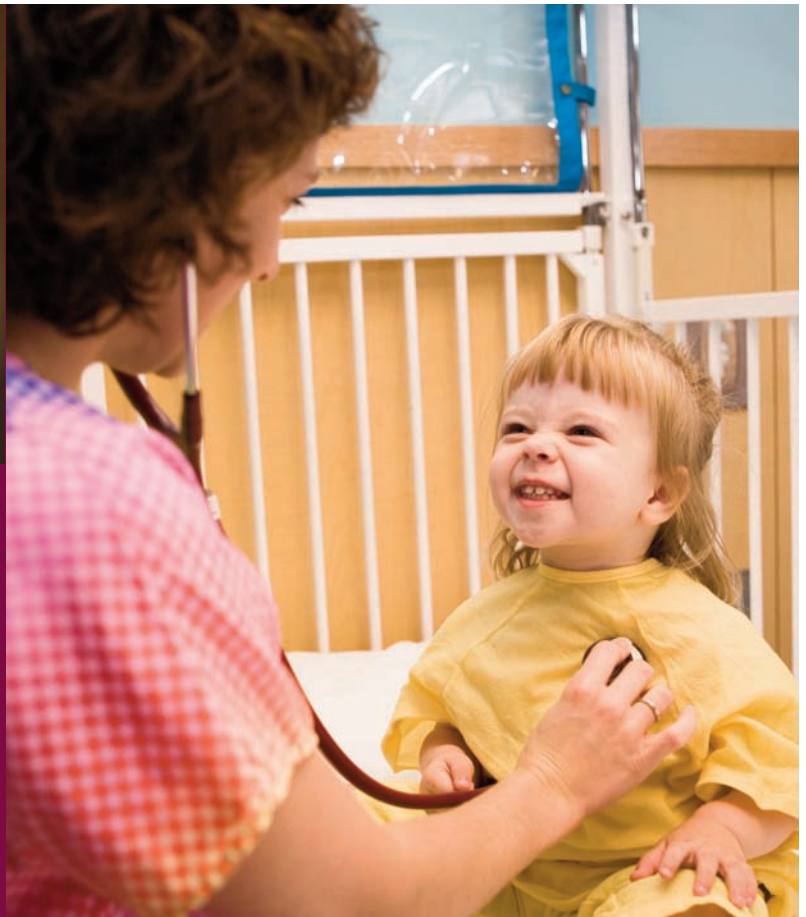
The leaders believed that developing a one-company, one-team culture would not only take the medical center to the next level of distinction, but would also have a strong impact at the daily point of care. The aspiration is to bring a very strong group of individual leaders, including administrators and medical leaders, together with “more collaborative, collegial, open communication, almost an intuitive way of working with each other,” says Dr. Allen. “I chose Senn Delaney to help us create the kind of culture that would help us achieve the next level.”

Dr. Allen felt that Senn Delaney’s culture-shaping process was the right approach for the hospital’s goals because it strongly supports and enables strategy through a comprehensive, integrated methodology. (See DURAM Methodology on page 5.) “What I was taken with is a focus on individual emotional buy-in to a set of values.” People are guided through an



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insight-based model to discover how they personally can connect to the values, relate in a more focused, trusting and authentic way with their colleagues and be even more effective at achieving the hospital's goals.

The culture-shaping journey begins at the top

An important key to the success of culture shaping is that it must start with the top leaders. They must enthusiastically buy in to the process and concepts and then consistently model the behaviors to set the example throughout the organization. Dr. Allen is especially aware of the impact his behavior — what Senn Delaney calls 'the shadow of the leader' — has on others in the organization. "I need to model the values to people, not just say them."

The first significant step in Nationwide Children's culture-shaping journey took place in January 2007. Dr. Allen brought the Executive Leadership Team together for a two-day offsite session, facilitated by Senn Delaney. Knowing that his executive team members were highly educated and experienced leaders, Dr. Allen was not surprised that some of them wondered what impact the sessions would have. "As we went through the process, what I found is that people on my team who initially were the most skeptical about the process and being away on a retreat for two days were the biggest converts."

The retreat focused on individual leadership effectiveness, how to encourage an even healthier, higher-performing team and how to lead and shape the culture of the hospital. A critical part of that session was that the leadership team developed a clear statement of values and guiding behaviors to serve as a roadmap to achieve the strategy. They promote the concepts of one team, integrity, honesty and inclusiveness, open communication and collaboration, the importance of embracing change and innovation, and a



Nationwide Children's Hospital values and guiding behaviors

We do the right thing

- We always act with integrity and honesty
- We are inclusive and respectful of everyone

We are one team

- We collaborate across boundaries
- We communicate openly
- We routinely seek input from others
- We leverage our diverse strengths

We promote health and well-being

- We balance work and life demands
- We generate optimism and energy in one another
- We advance our health, and the health of our community

We are agile and innovative

- We embrace and manage change
- We foster a streamlined and entrepreneurial environment
- We generate and share new knowledge and ideas

We get results

- We're accountable (we do what we say we'll do)
- We're determined (we get the desired result)
- We're committed to constant improvement

results-oriented outlook that emphasizes accountability, determination and a commitment to constant improvement.

Physicians become deeply engaged and committed

A common challenge in many health care organizations is overcoming the 'we-versus-they' mentality between the administration and the medical staff. This was

not a burning issue at Nationwide Children's in part due to the fact that doctors are employed rather than independent physicians. However, there was an opportunity through culture-shaping to enhance alignment, communication and collaboration among administrators, clinical leaders and medical staff. But would busy doctors and clinical leaders find the sessions worth taking time from caring for patients or running busy

departments? Would they feel that the concepts and principles would enhance their skills as physicians and leaders? The answer was a resounding yes.

“The physicians at Nationwide Children’s are deeply engaged in this. They see it as very relevant at the point of care and are telling us that it has been personally helpful,” says Senn Delaney Partner and Executive Vice President Nitsa Lallas.

Mike Brady, M.D., physician-in-chief and chairman of the Department of Pediatrics, found the initial executive leadership session to be very different. “It is not a didactic approach. The exercises are not passive, but an active process. It energizes you.” He also saw an opportunity to use the principles to enhance communication and rapport between clinical leaders and top administrators. He suggested that his clinical leadership meet with Dr. Allen and other top administrators to explore this further. The meeting went very well. Says

Dr. Brady: “The meeting made clear that we are in this together.”

Dr. Allen describes the meeting as an important step toward realizing the one-team concept. “The session clearly opened up channels of communication. The medical staff leadership could see me articulate these values and understand the importance I placed on them. I got to hear open conversations about some misperceptions they had about a few issues.”

Another measure of the impact of culture shaping on physicians is that several physician leaders have stepped forward to become facilitators to lead the culture-shaping process throughout the organization. Terrance Davis, M.D., administrative surgical director, was among them. He thinks the principles are very relevant in a health care setting, especially in a larger teaching hospital because people gain a deeper understanding of their colleagues and how to work together by understand-

ing their operating styles and mindsets. “I jumped on the idea of being a facilitator,” adds John Mahan, M.D., program director of the Pediatric Residency Program. “It was an opportunity to help develop better teams by having some of our doctors be part of the process. They must be exposed to these important principles and values.”

Dr. Mahan introduced a number of Senn Delaney culture-shaping concepts to residents. He sees the methodology as an effective way to build a team mindset among residents so that they will become stronger physicians, team members and leaders in whatever field they choose to practice. “I’d like to go beyond what we are able to introduce in these sessions and introduce these concepts throughout their three-year training period.”

Senn Delaney is working with Dr. Mahan and the hospital to customize a program for residents that has the potential to positively impact future generations of physicians and patient care and satisfaction. “We would like to look at our residents’ customer service and see how that might be affected by the Senn Delaney process. We are going to look at self-rating and peer rating in terms of team skills and leadership skills.”

Dr. Mahan thinks the program could become a model for the hospital and the The Ohio State University College of Medicine to build on for other OSU residency programs. “I believe this expanded program will enhance our connections with OSU and make our residency program even more attractive.”

Engaging more people across the hospital

Shaping behaviors and a culture to a new desired state with sustainable results requires an integrated approach that starts with diagnosing the existing culture up against the hospital’s new strategy and direction to define the current and future state. The Senn Delaney culture-shaping

Senn Delaney DURAM model

Integrated approach needed to shape team behaviors and the culture



Senn Delaney’s model called DURAM is an integrated approach to effect organizational change. DURAM and the customized culture transformation processes and technology that go with it provide a powerful framework to shape behaviors and culture, and then reinforce new behaviors, apply them in daily work practices and measure the outcomes against objectives defined at the start of the process.

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Jose Balderrama, VP of Human Resources



process that is being employed at Nationwide Children’s was customized to support its goals and enable the one-team culture to become a way of life.

Initial grounding sessions are an important first step. People participate in an insight-based unfreezing process that allows them to see ingrained habits and behaviors and to make new choices that improve their leadership styles and their impact on their workgroups and the organization as a whole. The Senn Delaney DURAM model provides the supporting framework to reinforce new behaviors and apply them in daily work practices and measure the outcomes against objectives defined by hospital leaders. The hospital engaged more than 400 leaders and managers in the culture-shaping process and plans to expand this significantly in the future.

Behaviors are changing to reflect the values

Culture shaping is an integral part of Jose Balderrama’s role as vice president of Human Resources. He has become a certified facilitator not only because it’s a part of his role, but because he deeply believes it can make a difference to people across Nationwide Children’s. “We expect this culture-shaping initiative to be reflected directly in our patient satisfaction scores, employee satisfaction scores, in our financial performance, in quality metrics and goals that we have for our mission.”

Leaders who have attended the unfreezing sessions are applying what they’ve learned in a number of positive ways. Balderrama says he’s a more effective leader and peer. “It has made me review everything we do in light of what the organization is going through.”

Yvette McGee Brown, president of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy, gained a new perspective on how she is perceived by her colleagues and how her behaviors impact the team. “Where I saw myself as a promoter and someone who was pretty open, my colleagues saw me as more controlling and not always open to feedback.” She has consciously worked on making an effort to connect with her staff in a more personal way.

Dr. Davis finds the concepts useful in working through conflict management situations. “It creates a common space where we can talk about things and be willing to see each other’s point of view in a way that I think was not necessarily a safety zone before. Now, I’m a little more aware of where people are on their mood elevators.”

“When you have highly trained people, you sometimes assume that coaching is unnecessary,” adds Dr. Brady. “One of the things I learned is that you are never too old or young to coach or be coached. I’m more aware that that is one of my responsibilities.” He notes that providing coaching is a crucial way of offering feed-

back, improving individual performance and encouraging a high-performance culture to achieve desired outcomes. Coaching can enhance interactions with patients and families, which will in turn improve patient satisfaction.

Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer Linda Stoverock has come to realize that in order to provide patients with the best care possible, there will be times when she needs to step outside her own leadership style when working with people who have different styles in order to be more effective. “If I’m not speaking up, I think certainly my direct reports will not speak up either, and maybe they are not pushing me back if they feel I’m heading down the wrong path.”

Positive impact on relationships, performance and accountability

Meetings feel different, more productive and focused around the strategic direction. People are relating to each other in a more open, collegial way. Accountability is improving. “People are much more likely to speak up about things of a substantive nature, related to the values that we have promulgated throughout the process,” notes Dr. Allen. Miller recently observed that managers are filing performance reports in a much more timely way and are displaying more accountability in hitting budgets. McGee Brown sees managers directing their own staffs back to levels of accountability and people

owning more of their own responsibility. Stoverock adds that the values have been taken to heart and people are taking accountability to enhance service, data and outcomes relating to strategic priorities. "One team is helping us align the initiatives and priorities to act on them. And each of us has accountability for our part of it." She adds that quantitative measures, such as patient satisfaction scores and care outcomes, are moving in the right direction. "As care improves, the word gets out. A happy customer tells a lot of people. An unhappy one tells even more people."

She believes the one-team culture will also enhance nurse-physician interactions. Nurses have to know that if they are not speaking out if something doesn't look quite right, then they are missing an opportunity to make something better for the patient. "Physicians will see what they are bringing to the table and value it more." Improved outcomes, such as a reduction in

hospital-acquired blood infections and ventilator-associated pneumonias, will also drive the business and help Nationwide Children's become a national leader.

Miller says the hospital made great progress in 2007 in these outcomes. "I think the medical leaders are a big part of that progress. Even though we have talked about it for years, there is something that is different. They bring this notion of accountability, that we can fix this, that it is within our control. I think that is very consistent with the culture shaping."

The future journey requires a comprehensive approach

Culture shaping has become an integral part of Nationwide Children's Hospital's strategic roadmap to realize its mission. A more collaborative culture is empowering staff at all levels to be at their best to ensure that every child receives the best care. The hospital plans to continue to

engage more people in the Senn Delaney methodology to inspire and support the high-performance culture rooted in its national goal of being a pediatric "powerhouse."

Keeping the desired culture alive and reinforcing and applying those desired behaviors requires an ongoing, comprehensive approach, notes Balderrama. "Cultures are shaped by behaviors, by the different messages that are sent, by policies, procedures, reward systems, recognition systems, anything that has to do with encouraging and promoting certain behaviors or discouraging others." He cites the importance of hiring the right people. "We have to make sure that people we are hiring not only fit the culture, but promote the culture and support our efforts."

Research Institute President John Barnard, M.D., is factoring that into his hiring decisions. He believes culture shaping will be important as the Research Institute

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Top left: Terrence Davis, M.D., administrative surgical director

Top center: Yvette McGee Thomas, president of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy

Top right: John Mahan, M.D., director, Pediatric Residency Program

Bottom left: Mike Brady, M.D., physician in chief

Bottom right: Linda Stoverock, SVP / chief nursing officer





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John Barnard, M.D., Research Institute President

enhances its research programs in neonatology, cardiology, oncology and gastroenterology. “We have a very aggressive agenda and very high aspirations. We have a very well thought-out strategy to accomplish it. However, if we don’t do it with the right culture we’re not going to get the job done. That goes for the research arena, and it also goes for the patient care arena and the collaboration that we strive for between research and patient care.”

In looking to the future, Dr. Allen continually is searching for answers to several questions. What more can be done to distinguish Nationwide Children’s at the national level? What can be done to perform at a higher level, to be the best clinically, the best educationally? What new, innovative programs, services and research can be initiated to better serve patients? “I think that is what will really help make the place great. It’s not about running a business, it’s about providing to people who are in great need of help.” ■



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