RESHAPING THE CULTURE OF CARE

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Soapbox:
Achieving a Culture of Caring (Part 1 in 2-Part Series)
By Jill Golde, Partner & SVP, Market Development, Language of Caring, LLC

How would employees describe the culture of your organization?

• Would they say: “A great place to work, a place where you can keep learning and growing, brings out the best in us, really good people caring for patients and each other, a place where the leaders care about you, a family in the best sense of the word…”?
• Or would they be more likely to say: “There’s no appreciation, people stick to themselves, you do what you’re told, it depends where you are in the pecking order, you have to ask permission for everything, I don’t feel trusted…”?

What Is Culture?

As I see it, organizational culture is “how we do things here” --- the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that are the glue that integrates everyone in the organization. The culture influences how people describe where they work, how they understand the mission and how they see themselves in relation to that mission. Culture also drives decisions and actions, thereby exerting a powerful influence on the organization’s performance. I also see culture as a social control system. The culture defines and encourages positive behavior and discourages behavior that falls outside of behavioral norms.

Cultures either evolve organically or through deliberate planning and consistent action. Really good organizations choose the culture they want and take careful steps to operationalize it, manage it, sustain it, and promote it.

A “Caring Culture” doesn’t happen by accident. It’s a result of commitment and deliberate effort.
In Healthcare, We Need a Culture of Caring.

A culture of caring is characterized by leaders caring about employees, employees caring for each other and for the people they serve, and everybody in the organization caring about the organization’s purpose. People know they are on a purpose-driven mission with caring at its core.

Why does a culture of caring matter? Organizational culture impacts everything—the patient and family experience, employee and physician engagement, retention, productivity, community perceptions, and your bottom line. A caring culture produces caring employees and therefore patients and families who feel cared about and supported. Employees feel empowered and important to the team, and they are more likely to create a positive patient experience. A caring culture keeps these questions front and center: Why do we do what we do? What do we believe? How can we make an important difference? Organizations that can answer these questions have a caring culture that sets them apart.

Keys to Building a Caring Culture

First, take a look at (and show your team) this wonderful short video from the UK: Creating Caring Cultures in Health and Social Care: Getting Started.

Now, here are six keys from my experience:

**SIX KEYS TO A CARING CULTURE**

1. **Promote an overarching purpose.** Clarify, communicate and keep highlighting your purpose, not only in new employee orientation, but in the stories you keep telling.

2. **Engage and empower.** We can’t force people to feel caring. We need to engage and empower them with our mission, how they can contribute in their everyday actions. And this means making it clear that people can “go off script” because they are entrusted with communicating in ways that demonstrate caring.

3. **Focus on personal relationships.** Advance the human connection through leadership actions. Leaders need to connect to employees, physicians, patients and the community personally. Living your purpose by holding caring conversations during rounding on staff, rounding on patients, and appearing at community meetings ---and listening, listening, listening… this is key to cultivating a community of caring.

4. **Create a universal language of caring.** If people don’t communicate their caring, you cannot achieve a caring culture. It’s not wise to assume that people know how to communicate caring. Our Language of Caring programs help organizations strengthen their cultures of caring by helping everyone build and apply the skills for communicating their caring—making caring palpable everywhere you turn, in every interaction. Caring is the one language that truly can be universal. To learn how Adelante Healthcare strengthened its culture of caring by engaging all providers and staff in building and using the Language of Caring click here.

5. **Remove barriers.** “When you make my life easier at work, I will care more.” This is a common sentiment. To achieve and sustain a culture of caring, we need to reduce the barriers that make it hard for caring people to dip into and release their wellspring of caring.

6. **Share stories.** Mobilize staff and patients to share stories that reflect a culture of caring—in meetings, in person, at events, on your website, through media hubs, and the like. Theses stories become your history and make your caring culture enduring.
According to Margaret Mead, “An ideal culture is one that makes a place for every human gift.” Said Peter Drucker, “Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but no plans.”

Watch for Part 2 next month: “Do you have a Culture of Caring?” This upcoming Soapbox will include tools you can use to characterize your current culture from multiple perspectives and use the results to drive your plans to engage everyone in living the culture you want.

Strengthen Medical Staff Engagement and Performance through Caring
Watch as Jeremy Blanchard, M.D., MMM, CPE, Chief Medical Officer & Coach at Language of Caring® emphasizes the importance of improving the lives of medical practitioners and reducing burnout. In this Beryl Institute Patient Experience (PX) Learning Bite, he explains how training in the advanced competencies of mindful, empathic communication results in sustained improvement in the patient and family care experience, patient engagement, quality and patient safety scores, and restores the joy of practicing medicine. Watch Now.

Notice the “wow”
Before a meeting or a demanding hands-on task, take a look around the room and make a point of noticing and appreciating the beauty around you—a painting on the wall, a bird singing outside the window, the smile on a coworker’s face. A moment of mindfulness and relaxing will help you enjoy and focus on the work at hand. For more on how to Work Happy Now click here.
Instructions:
1. Post 3 questions.
2. Ask people to choose one they want to answer.
3. Give each person a change to pose a selected question and share their answers.
4. Afterward, invite reactions, surprises, “me too!” sentiments...

Sample questions:
- What are you most worried about at work this month?
- What characteristic do you value the most in your coworkers?
- If your workplace was a tree, what kind of a tree would it be and why?

Announcing New COO/CIO at Language of Caring
We are delighted to announce that, as of July 1, 2017 Dustin Fennell, MS, will serve as Chief Operations Officer and Chief Information Officer for Language of Caring. Dustin is a respected leader in healthcare and education.

Dustin has over 17 years’ experience as an IT professional integrating technology to enhance organizational success. Also, a seasoned senior executive with 10+ years’ experience, Dustin has a proven track record of understanding operational challenges and introducing solutions that strengthen teamwork, keep people engaged, lower costs and increase organizational effectiveness.

Dustin is not new to Language of Caring. Over the past 6 years, he has worked closely with the Language of Caring team to create our web-based client portal and manage the integration of our programs with client learning management systems. He also has operationalized new websites and programs for us.

We’re excited to have Dustin on board. You can contact him by email: dfennell@languageofcaring.com; or phone: 623-734-7496.

10 Ways Lack of Communication Is Ruining Healthcare
Money is wasted and lives are lost due to poor communication among healthcare providers, hospitals, medical researchers, the government, policymakers, EHR vendors, and the patients and families using the healthcare system. Click here to read the full article by Nicole Fisher in Forbes Magazine.
Achieve Communication Excellence with Our Patient Experience Solutions

• Web-based training programs that **hardwire** best practice communication skills
• **Proven** CAHPS and patient experience breakthroughs
• Engages and fulfills **Staff** and **Physicians**

**TO LEARN MORE**

**Attend a Live Webinar Overview** on August 22 or August 29 or **Contact Us**

Join the 200+ organizations who are transforming their cultures with the Language of Caring

**Contact Us!**

314 300 7701

Jill Golde, MS, Dorothy Sisneros, MS, MBA and Wendy Lebov, EdD—partners at Language of Caring.

**Spread the Resources**

• Forward this month’s HeartBeat email to others.
• Share and tweet the following link:
  
  **Achieving a Culture of Caring**
  

Join our LinkedIn Group “**Patient Experience & Communication**” and add to the rich discussions.

**PLEASE FOLLOW US!**

**Language of Caring**

Achieving an unparalleled patient experience and a culture of caring through exceptional communication.