

Culture Shift: Managing Change in the Hospital Setting

Judy Schueler and Donna Surges Tatum

Introduction

Since its opening in 1967, the University of Chicago Children's Hospital (UCCH), a 152-operating-bed acute care hospital, has provided comprehensive, innovative medical care to children of all social and economic backgrounds. UCCH is dedicated to preserving the health of children through patient care, education and research into the causes and cures of childhood diseases.

UCCH is staffed by more than 100 physicians of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Chicago, as well as specially trained nurses and caring support staff, who provide general and specialty medical care for infants, children and teens. The pediatricians of tomorrow - medical students, residents and fellows - also play an important role in caring for children.

The K.I.D.S. First initiative, launched in December, 1997, was designed to fundamentally shift the culture of care at the UCCH. Through interviews and surveys, it was apparent that although staff members were proud to work at UCCH, they believed many barriers existed to delivering optimal care. Additionally, they felt unrecognized for their efforts on behalf of patients and families. It is clear that these perceptions have eroded staff morale and attitudes.

Survey Results

A survey was developed to ascertain attitudes of UCCH staff. The data analysis shows the instrument is well-designed and useful. All of the items fit along the line of inquiry. No items misfit. That is, they are well-written, and are used appropriately by the respondents. They have a reliability of .98. The items are listed in order of how often these behaviors are perceived on the unit. Items above 10.00 indicate a positive response. Those below 10.00 are behaviors that are seen less often. Item maps can be used to devise an Action Plan to improve staff morale and attitudes.

Judy Schueler

Judy Schueler joined the University of Chicago Hospitals in December, 1992 as the Executive Director of the newly created UCH Academy. Prior to joining the University of Chicago Hospitals, Ms. Schueler served as Vice President of Triton College, River Grove, IL. With over 20 years of experience in curriculum design and higher education, Ms. Schueler has extensive experience in creating School/College/Business partnership programs integrating adult learner services into organizations as well as developing regional retraining assistance centers. The UCH Academy was awarded a "Best Practice" for Education and Training by ASHHRA in 1995. Ms. Schueler graduated with a B.S. in Education as well as a M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Illinois. She also possesses a Master's Degree in Management in Organizational Development from Illinois Benedictine College.

Figure 1. Unit Perception

The participants were asked to rate their perceptions of their respective unit and/or department at UCCH on a frequency scale of never; rarely; sometimes; usually; always. The staff perceive themselves to be well-prepared to effectively communicate with and serve patients, families and internal customers. They are encouraged to solve problems and know the mission, vision, direction, and goals of UCCH. They know how their jobs impact patient/customer satisfaction, and employees generally are held accountable for their service-based behaviors and attitudes.

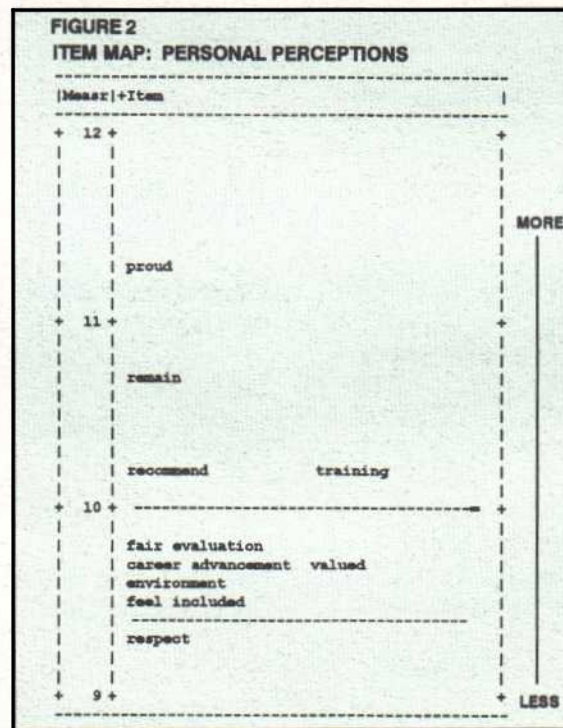
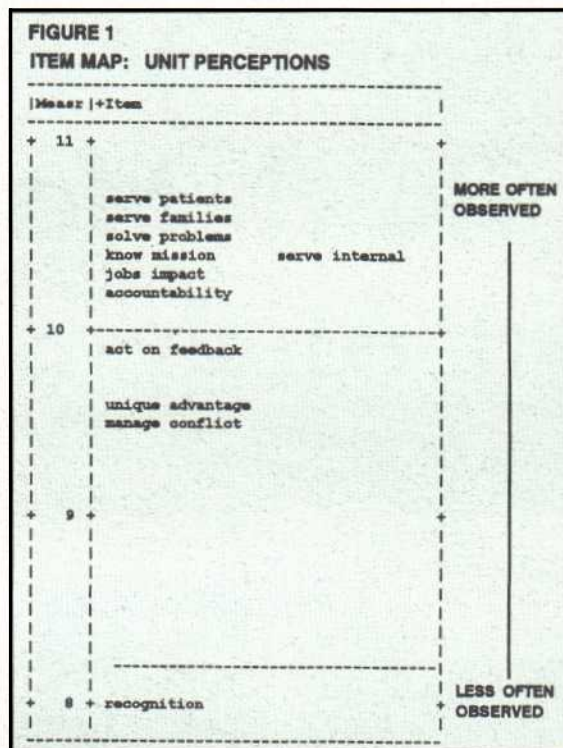
Behaviors which are less often seen are: acting upon feedback; knowing the unique advantages of UCCH over competitors; and knowing specific communication skills for managing conflict. Units are rarely perceived to recognize employees for outstanding service.

Figure 2. Personal Perceptions

Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of UCCH from their personal perspective. The rating scale is: not at all; to a slight extent; to a moderate extent; to a great extent; to a very great extent. Only one item slightly misfit: "Do you think you would remain with this organization - even if you were offered a similar job elsewhere?" The responses were a bit erratic on that item, and it did not fit the pattern as well as the rest of the items.

Respondents are overwhelmingly proud to be an employee of the University of Chicago Hospitals. They would remain with the organization even if offered another job; recommend this organization to others; and think opportunities for training are fair and equitable.

Respondents are less sure their performance is evaluated fairly; opportunities for advancement are fair; they are valued; the work environment is supportive and caring; and



that they feel included as a member of the UCCH organization. They do not feel all members of the organization are treated with dignity and respect.

Action Plans

There is a renewed focus on enhanced service quality in UCCH. The adaptation of services and programs toward a kid and family orientation recognizes the different and unique needs of children. The K.I.D.S. First initiative aims to incorporate this philosophy into everything that is done at UCCH. The following issues were highlighted during the extensive data-gathering phase. Using the results, many cross-functional teams developed action plans for improving UCCH quality of service. The following has been addressed as the K.I.D.S. First program continues to evolve:

- integrating the UCCH mission into the daily work environment
- developing a pediatric specific candidate assessment program
- creating a pediatric specific interview tool
- implementing a special children's hospital orientation program
- enhancing communication throughout UCCH
- establishing patient satisfaction survey processes throughout the children's hospital
- establishing a reward and recognition program for children's hospital staff
- implementing service improvement initiatives
- measuring the impact of K.I.D.S. First on our patients and staff

Due to the scope and complexity of the K.I.D.S. First initiative, UCCH is interested in determining the impact of the interventions. The collection of baseline data will allow us to subsequently measure our progress and celebrate our successes. Comparative data is scheduled for collection in July of 2000.

