

# SOLUTION: CREATING TRUST WITH TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION (ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL)

***“Trust is like the air we breathe. We do not notice it until it is gone.”***

**--Warren Buffet**



This Solution is specifically written for the steering team because a Journey to Greatness oftentimes can involve “righting some wrongs” that have been happening in the organization.

You have a culture that is currently in place, and potentially that culture is one that has been named by your employees, leaders, and physicians as one without communication at all levels and trust.

We do not like to use the word “accountable” a lot. We prefer the word “ownership”. Primarily because the word accountable seems to have a negative connotation.

However, when you consider the work of a steering team (inclusive of the Senior Leaders in an organization), you can be sure that the dictionary definition of the word accountable is one that you should consider when you think of how to create a transparent, and trusting communication strategy for your organization.

*“The obligation of an organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose results in a transparent manner”.*

We have worked with many organizations that are concerned about transparency, and transparent communication causing chaos within the ranks of employees, leaders and physicians. “My employees cannot handle the truth” has been heard from partner CEO’s.



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We disagree. When you create a plan and structure to communicate transparently, and in a timely fashion, the employee loyalty skyrockets.

However, you have to do communication from an organization's perspective well. If you believe that you already are an effectively communicating team with the engagement data to validate that (including physicians and community members), then please read on to see how you can elevate your own best practices.

***"Transparency, honesty, kindness, good stewardship, even humor, work in businesses at all times."***

**--John Gerzema**

## **SOLUTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR TRANSPARENT ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION**

### **CEO Forums**

We strongly believe in the power of face time with the CEO of an organization and all leaders, employees and providers. Please see the Solution for CEO Forums found in the Employee Experience Team section for details. The premise behind the CEO forums is that all employees get their vision for the future of their organization from the voice of the CEO. It cannot be replaced in the highest level of transparent communication for your organization. We see some partner organizations "dip their toes in the water, or substitute" this high level of communication by having a report from all senior leaders, or all team members.

We do not recommend this and know that the CEO may prefer it because he or she is not a great public speaker. Whatever the CEO speaking style may be, it is a skill to be practiced, and used often. Yes, preparation for the CEO forum includes the messages to be delivered in the following way:

- What information do employees WANT to hear about? (do not exclude the rumor mill- it is the best route to transparency)
- What information do employees NEED to hear?
- What is an update on building projects/newseworthy items?



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- Update on healthcare advocacy
- Results on the organizational goals, or recent surveys, such as the employee engagement survey

Again, potentially the CEO may need coaching on delivering the messages, and potentially will have to be fed an agenda- it doesn't matter what it takes to create transparency behind the scenes, the important piece is the availability of the CEO with a message provided face to face throughout the organization. The message is delivered with accountability ("I am responsible for this organization, therefore this message and our results")

## CEO Blog/Updates

In order to convey the messages that each CEO needs to convey to maintain a very high level of transparency and trust, there needs to be face-to-face delivery of messages (CEO Forum), and written messages. Each Steering team and Senior Leadership team (as well as the CEO herself) will have to determine what is best delivered face to face, and what template to use for a written communication.

We have two great examples in our "tools" section in the Steering Team section on our website. One is from Michelle Franklin from Sullivan County Community Hospital in Indiana. Michelle was not keen on writing a newsletter or blog monthly, she wanted the written form of her transparent communication to sound like her- so she came up with Franklin's Friday Five" which goes out each Friday to all employees. It simply has 5 statements that simply place a cadence of transparent communication from Michelle that has 5 statements "this was my focus this week". She lists her work on goals, strategy, project updates, etc.

David Jahn, the CEO of our hometown hospital War Memorial in Sault Ste Marie, MI has a coveted monthly blog/newsletter that our employees literally could not wait to read each month. David provided an update on "big news items" such as building and grounds updates, project management, physician recruitment, and "news". He also did a year to year comparison of volumes and growth by department. Employees loved this! He listed the growth in revenue and volume as "departments with highest change positively", and the opposite.

## Communication Boards

Your Employee Experience team will audit the communication boards for the entire organization, and they have their own Solution on that tactic for accountability with the transparent communication boards. Please also see the Communication Board Solution for specifics on how to roll out this very valuable tool for transparency.



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What you need to know is that the Steering Team is responsible for setting the standards that each department will follow as to what is vital to place on the Boards. This cannot be left up to the department leaders as individuals. Employees need to know, and rely on, what the boards will contain, no matter which department they are located, or transfer to. Do not be afraid of transparency! Even in departments that serve patients.

## New Hire Orientation

We have solutions written for you on great hiring and onboarding practices. If you are truly hiring future rock stars that will take your place at the Steering Team table someday, you want to make a great first impression. A great onboarding practice is to convey the mission, vision, values of the organization at the New Hire Orientation, and this is best conveyed by the CEO himself, along with an introduction to the Senior Leadership Team.

Knowledge that they have “joined a great team striving for excellence” is a vital piece of keeping your newest team members excited and loyal to the organization. This will be your newest team member’s first “coaching moment” of expectations to be conveyed to all. If the CEO cannot make all new hire orientation days, a professional video conveying the welcome message can be created.

Another great practice is for the CEO to have breakfast with all new hires at 60 days of employment. Dan Rohrback, from Southwest Health in Platteville WI has this practice and hears from all new employees how their first impression of his organization differs from the mission, vision and values he communicated on Day One.

## An Organization Wide Communication Plan

As a partner organization, you have the great gift of CapstoneEDU, and Creating A Transparent Communication plan is a module we offer as part of our Leadership Bundle. This virtual learning module has teachings specific to all forms of transparent communication.

We recommend that the Steering Team develop a communication plan to set a standard for communication and communication priorities throughout the organization. Some of our partners roll these communication standards into their Leadership Behavioral Standards.



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The communication plan answers the following questions and allows employees to “find their own answers” in a very transparent and well communicated way.

- What do employees need to know and when?
- What do employees want to know and when?

## SAMPLE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATION PLAN

- **Need to know today:** **urgent** communications are posted near the time clock on red paper. This must be read prior to the start of each shift.
- **Need to know today:** **emergent** messages will be communicated in person. The leader will seek out all who need to know to deliver the message individually or in groups.
- Non-urgent communications will be included in a weekly blog. This communication is posted on Tuesday of each week no later than noon. Read within one week of publication. This blog will also be printed/posted on the department’s communication board.
- All goal metrics and monitoring metrics will be posted on the department’s communication board by 5:00 p.m. on “Metric Monday” (...which is the Monday following each payday Friday).
- The department’s staffing schedule will be posted four weeks in advance of the start of the schedule in the on-line scheduling system. Employees are required to review the new schedule prior to the start of the schedule. Changes to the schedule after posting of the finalized schedule will be communicated via phone call or direct communication prior to updating the on-line schedule.
- Monthly staff meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:15 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. These meetings will last 45 minutes and will be started via a huddle at the department’s communication board. The agenda for the meeting will be posted on the communication board one week in advance of the meeting.
- Quarterly updates to goal action plans will be posted on the department’s communication board by the first day of each quarter (January, April, July, and October).
- The department’s finalized annual budget and goals will be the topic of the Employee Forums scheduled in early December each year.
- All emails will have a clear subject line, including response date for any time sensitive communications.

## Senior Leader Zone Rounding

The Senior Leadership team @ Hayward Area Memorial Hospital and Water’s Edge led by Luke Beiryl, CEO, have a great way to elevate trust and transparency while Validating their True North Journey to excellence at



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the same time. They have elevated “management by walking around” to new heights. Senior Leader rounding is important but needs to be elevated with purpose. (See Solution on Leading Change; Key Validation Tactics in the Leadership Bundle section of the website) The Senior Leaders @ HAMHWE round in “zones” and ask standard questions with a rating for each question. They round each month with a “theme” that validates recent learning from a Journey team and provides feedback and scoring by department.

## A Standard for Staff Meetings

We often hear that Senior Leaders “believe” that Staff meetings are happening in every department. We recommend that this is a mandatory requirement for all leaders to communicate in a transparent and collegial manner with their employees on a monthly basis. This expectation can be a part of your communication plan and should be listed as something the leaders and Senior Leaders discuss during Monthly Accountability Meetings. Sue, as my Senior Leader simply asked for my staff meeting agendas and meeting minutes (she was in my departmental distribution group) so that she could see that I was discussing goal attainment and conveying what the Senior Leadership team needed me to.

## Patient Experience Transparency

Our patients are getting savvier in their ability to very transparently look for data and results that lead to their decision making regarding your care. With LeapFrog grading, and Hospital Compare.gov - anyone can see how you are doing in comparison to another healthcare choice they may make. We suggest that you post and communicate your results up front. Your community of patients and future patients wants to know they have come to a place that is thriving for excellence and working to eradicate error. Train leaders to communicate what each department is working on through their goals when they round on patients. Just as trusting your employees with transparent communication creates employee engagement and loyalty, this also holds true for your patients.

## Just Culture/Psychological Safety

Transparent communication is key in a Just Culture. (see Solution for Just Culture in the HRO section of the website) Employees need psychological safety to truly have a transparent culture. Include in your transparent communication plan (and leader and employee training) how to respond to human error, near misses and choices that are made demonstrating at-risk behaviors.



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## Just Start Advice:

- Trust people to do the right thing – and tell them that you are doing that
- Share results
- Don't keep job responsibilities a secret
- Open communication channels (forums, communication boards, etc.)

And know where to draw the line – transparency isn't about knowing everyone's business. It's about making sure everyone has the information they need to do their job effectively.



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