This Is How We’ve Always Done It
No-BS Insights & Anecdotes
from the Heart of Healthcare

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with Feliza David
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Introduction

Once upon a time, a healthcare employee named Emily was curious about what life was like beyond her silo.

Often, she would peek out and wonder about the amazing things that were happening in Patient Experience, Employee Engagement, and Marketing. These silos were all nearby and they each seemed like an interesting place to be.

So, one day, she decided to visit them all.

The Patient Satisfaction silo was filled with staff members who were passionate about keeping their patients healthy, happy, and productive in their lives. Here, they didn't just care about a diagnosis; they cared about treating the whole person. In this silo, they understood that we are all patients at one time or another, and a little empathy goes a long way.

At the Employee Engagement silo, Emily found people who were excited about creating the best work environment they possibly could. It wasn’t just about fun and games, it was also about giving employees a real sense of ownership and pride in their work. In this silo, they understood that engaged employees will always go the extra mile to help one another – and the patients they serve.

The Marketing silo was flashy and fun, but beyond the clever words and eye-catching images, there was plenty of substance. It wasn’t just about getting attention. In this silo, they understood that good marketing is about communicating with your customers, not making false promises.

Emily was dazzled by what she found in Patient Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, and Marketing, but she began to wonder: what would happen if there weren’t any silos at all?

Employee Engagement could affect Patient Satisfaction (and vice versa), but without Marketing, there may not be any patients to serve at all. Likewise, without the good works of Patient Satisfaction and Employee Engagement, even Marketing’s best campaigns would fall flat.

The three silos depended upon one another. Wouldn’t it be nice if they could work together more efficiently?
That’s when Emily decided to forget silos and think systems.

By harmonizing Patient Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, and Marketing, she saw a way to create personalized, actionable strategies for healthcare providers who wanted to strengthen their performance every step of the way.

And that’s how Recourse Resource began in 2010.

Since then, we’ve been proud to work with companies all over the United States (and even out of the country), but our focus will always be on integrating those three core areas. We change the way that healthcare is experienced, one company at a time.
Process Fail
How My Son’s Neurologist Gave Me a Headache

“Dr. XYZ’s Office,” said a flat voice.

“Hi, this is Emily Tisdale again. I’m calling to follow up on my voicemail from a week ago. My son’s been having really bad migraines and—”

“–Leave your message after the tone,” said what I now realized was a recorded message.

Oh.

I took a deep breath. This was my second conversation with Doctor XYZ’s voicemail in as many weeks, and in the meantime, I could only imagine how far out we would have to schedule the consult with the highly sought-after pediatric neurologist. After a full week with no response to my first message, I tried again.

BLEEP, said the answering machine.

My thoughts exactly.

I took a deep breath and left another message, wondering how long it might take to get a call back.

Finally, after another few days, I received a return call.

“Hi, Emily,” said a cheery, female voice, “I’m with Dr. XYZ’s office. What days would be convenient for you to bring in your son for some diagnostic work? We want to get your little guy in as soon as we can.”

I was pleasantly surprised that we were able to set up the appointment for the following week. Before we hung up, she added, “You have yourself a great day!”

And, no kidding, I really thought she meant it.

Before I go on, let me say that I think my little guy is just fine. His pediatrician ordered the consult as a precaution and we agreed that
it was best to have him checked out.

But in the two weeks between the pediatrician ordering the consult and actually making contact with someone at the neurologist’s office, my opinion of the neurology practice had plummeted. Even though the secretary was nothing but courteous, it was concerning that it took the office a full two weeks to get back to me. And even then, the secretary hadn’t apologized for my wait or even acknowledged it.

Are they disorganized? Did they experience some staff turnover that led to the ball being dropped? Maybe they had been busy that week. Maybe someone had called in sick.

Maybe, maybe, maybe.

*But the disconnect certainly didn’t increase my confidence in them.*

**PROCESS + PEOPLE**

For any business, but especially in healthcare, a customer’s experience is determined by a mix of:

*Process* – the steps taken to complete the job

and

*People* – the individuals that help to facilitate the process

Dr. XYZ’s office seems to have great *people*, but their *process* left much to be desired. Dr. XYZ’s people were a solid win, but their process was a fail. However, even if my first phone call had been returned immediately, I wouldn’t have been happy if the receptionist was rude and uncaring.

Luckily, it’s not an either/or proposition – you can have great staff *and* a thorough, efficient process for serving patients.
Discussion Questions

When have you experienced a process or people fail? Is one easier to tolerate than the other?

As a patient, if you had to choose between incredibly efficient processes or conscientious, unfailingly friendly people, which would you choose? Why?

Are there some situations in which process has to take precedent over people, and vice versa?
Describe what you believe would be the ideal balance between efficiency and customer service. What would this workplace look like?
Marketing Can Only Get You So Far

Thoughts on Style, Substance, & How Your Mother Was Right

A pristine, white background frames something slender and glossy, a gadget that starts with “i” and ends with a dent in your bank account. You’re not even sure what the gadget does, but something tells you that you need it. And then someone with a British accent starts talking and—

Yeah, you’re hooked. Or, at the very least, you’re intrigued.

No question, a good marketing and advertising campaign can work wonders. But millions of iFans aren’t camping out in front of retail stores because of cool ads. That’s the part that draws you in, but what keeps you coming back?

Turns out, it’s just like Mom always said. It’s what’s on the inside that counts — and that goes double for the healthcare industry.

It’s tempting to believe that marketing could be your secret weapon—you could already be running a first-rate ad campaign and shouting your perfect CMS rating and quality outcomes from the rooftops. And this can certainly pique a patient’s interest, but at the end of the day, it’s the quality service a patient receives that inspires their loyalty.

A patient might contact you based on a polished ad, but it’s the people they encounter that serve as the tipping point to a rave-worthy experience.

When a patient refers a friend to your organization, they’ll say things like...

“My nurse really listened to me.”
“I feel like the doctors really care.”
“The office staff is so friendly.”

Rarely will they mention your marketing campaign, even though that’s what may have brought them to you in the first place. There’s
no doubt that marketing is an important piece of the puzzle, but your competitive advantage lies in the stellar service you provide inside your doors, not in the messages you broadcast out.

A slick campaign might distinguish you from the organization around the corner, but it’s your compassionate staff and top-notch care that will keep your patients coming back.
Discussion Questions

Give an example of a time when a marketing campaign didn’t live up to the actual product. How did this affect your trust in this brand?

What are some companies in and out of health care whose marketing campaigns catch your eye? Why?

In your opinion, how important is healthcare marketing? As the saying goes, there are only so many ways to draw blood. Why bother with marketing?
Imagine the worst possible marketing campaign for your organization. What would the ads say? How might they turn off your prospective clients? Think about what can happen when marketing goes wrong.
The Weirdest (and Wisest) Interview Question I’ve Ever Been Asked
And Why It Pays to Be Caught Off-Guard

I had drilled myself for hours to get it right. I read about the executive team and their visions for the hospital and their patients. I rehearsed succinct replies to the interview questions I was certain they would ask until I could (and did) recite them in my sleep.

I. Was. Ready.

Or so I thought. Imagine my surprise when the CEO asked, “So, Emily, what’s your favorite movie?”

I was stunned but managed to blurt out, “The Sound of Music.” I hoped to find some way to tie this back to the position – maybe something about the contrasting leadership styles between Maria and the Captain? – but no such luck.

"I've never seen it," said the CEO. "I'll have to check it out. Now, tell me more about what you think your experience will bring to the team."

I let out a sigh of relief. We were back on familiar territory, though I made sure to keep myself poised for more unexpected questions.

A few days later, I got a call back. I was hired! Eventually, I asked my new boss about his random interview question. The answer was as simple and surprising as the question itself.

"Interviews can be too structured," he told me. "I like to see how an applicant is going to think on their feet, whether they can keep up with a real conversation."
Well played, Mr. CEO. Well played.

So much of the interview process can feel scripted. *How can you get a real sense of an applicant's personality in such a controlled environment?*

A casual (and appropriate) question about everyday life – be it movies, TV, or anything else – can help break the ice and start a real conversation, one in which could help you get to know the applicant behind the resume.

The next time you're looking to add a new member to your team, consider asking the applicant about his or her favorite movie. You might just find that extra bit of information that makes you certain you're hiring the perfect employee. (Especially if their answer is "The Sound of Music.")
Discussion Questions

What’s the one question that you wish your leadership team would ask during employee interviews?

What question(s) do you find most difficult to answer when interviewing for a position?

What is the strangest interview you’ve ever been on? What made it odd? If you haven’t had any odd interview experiences (lucky you!) describe the best interview you’ve ever been a part of.
Have you ever been asked an offbeat interview question? Tell us about it. Was it helpful to the process?