



# National Association for Employee Recognition

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## 2005 BEST PRACTICES

A Summary Report  
Highlighting the Application of  
Best Recognition Practices  
at Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center  
and the University of Michigan Hospitals and  
Health Centers

WHITE PAPER



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## NAER Best Practices Standards

The National Association for Employee Recognition is the only association dedicated solely to the advancement of recognition in all work places. It is this association's desire that, through developing standards and implementing a site audit process, the "Best Recognition Practices" at work can be identified.

Management Teams have learned through experience strategic and consistent use of recognition, reward and praise throughout an organization is instrumental in reducing turnover, increasing productivity and creating a positive work environment. A paycheck is not reward enough for employees. When an employee feels they serve a purpose and are being noticed for doing a good job, they will embrace the organization's mission, goals and values, work above their standards, take fewer sick days, and are willing to put forth the extra effort for the company. As an added bonus, retaining good, loyal people elevates customer service and sales, and companies identified for their recognition practices attract a better recruiting pool. Compare Fortune magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" with "America's Best Managed Companies" by Forbes magazine. Many of these are one in the same and their return on investment speaks for itself.

Reinforcing standards of excellence, The National Association For Employee Recognition sponsors an annual review of nominees for "best practices" in seven strategic categories:

- Recognition Strategy
- Management Responsibility
- Recognition Program Measurement
- Communication Plan
- Recognition Training
- Recognition Events and Celebrations
- Program Change and Flexibility

When fully implemented together, the seven elements ensure a powerful and strategic recognition program for an organization. NAER's Best Practices standards were developed based on exhaustive research, including findings from the American Productivity Center, knowledge from respected recognition practitioners, recognition literature, case studies, selection criteria for Fortune magazine's 100 Best Companies, Working Mother Magazine's 100 Most Family Friendly Companies, and the Baldrige Award for methodology.

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# Categories Overview

A basic overview – full criteria for each category may be found at [www.Recognition.org](http://www.Recognition.org)

- 1. Management Responsibility (Required):** Demonstrates that an organization's executives and management take responsibility for a well-defined recognition program and are committed to the program's objectives.
- 2. Recognition Strategy (Required):** Demonstrates that the organization has established and documented process(es) that promotes employee recognition at all organizational levels, including day-to-day, informal, and formal recognition.
- 3. Recognition Program Communication Plan:** Demonstrates that the organization has established and utilizes an effective system to communicate all aspects of the recognition program.
- 4. Recognition Program Goal Alignment:** The organization demonstrates alignment between the recognition program and organizational goals and values.
- 5. Behavioral Based Programs:** The organization has well-defined business goals and organizational values, including employee behaviors that reflect those values.
- 6. Recognition Program Measurement:** The organization demonstrates how recognition programs are measured for effectiveness, using established measurement indicators or tools. There shall be at least one year of data. The organization also describes how they use statistics to validate employee participation and satisfaction levels in the recognition program.
- 7. Recognition Training:** The organization describes its methods for training managers and employees at all levels on the principles of effective recognition, and the methods of documenting the objectives of the training and curriculum.
- 8. Recognition Events and Celebrations:** Shows that the organization has processes in place for organizing celebrations and events, provides necessary resources for events, documents the event, and uses creativity and uniqueness in these events.
- 9. Recognition Process/Program Change & Flexibility:** Shows that the organization's recognition programs can be easily adjusted to meet new goals as the organization changes or as different needs arise.

# Memorial Medical Center -- Best Overall Recognition Practices 2005

For exceptional achievement in the following:

- Recognition Strategy
- Management Responsibility
- Recognition Program Measurement
- Recognition Training
- Recognition Events and Celebrations
- Program Change and Flexibility

## Organizational Culture and the Bottom Line

**F**inancial problems? Unhappy customers? Dissatisfied employees? You need to know there is a direct correlation between customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and improved financial performance.

A recent survey from the Forum for People Performance Management & Measurement confirms employee attitude and behavior can impact the bottom line of a company.<sup>1</sup> “It is an organization’s employees who influence the behavior and attitudes of customers, and it is customers who drive an organization’s profitability through the purchase and use of its products.”

In 1999 Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center Senior Leaders recognized a need for change in their organizational culture. Confronted by a triple dilemma: fiscal problems, declining employee morale, and escalating patient complaints, they knew something had to change. It was during this turnaround they also found a direct link between employee satisfaction and patient satisfaction.



**Memorial  
Medical Center**  
Member Conemaugh Health System

### Facts & Figures Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center

- Number of Employees: 2,700
- 2005 FY Budget: \$235,000
- Recognition Staff: Employee Relations Coordinator
- Ownership: Non-Profit
- Headquarters: Johnstown, PA
- Organization specialization: Health Care
- [www.conemaugh.org](http://www.conemaugh.org)



## Problem Analysis

In 1999 Conemaugh Memorial Hospital had recently merged with another local hospital and many employees were required to reapply for their positions. In addition to budget constraints, there was downsizing. Employee morale was at an all-time low. Patient complaints were up, and customer satisfaction was down.

It was at this juncture Memorial Medical Center senior management made a decision to employ Press Ganey Associates, Inc. to measure patient

<sup>1</sup> Forum for People Performance Management & Measurement, “*Linking Organizational Characteristics to Employee Attitudes and Behavior--A Look at the Downstream Effects on Market Response & Financial Performance.*” Executive Summary available at [www.Recognition.org](http://www.Recognition.org).

A community and regional referral hospital known for clinical excellence and patient satisfaction, **Memorial Medical Center** is a member of the Conemaugh Health System. Memorial, recognized as a top 100 hospital in the U.S. in both orthopedics and open-heart surgery, offers highly specialized services, including a regional trauma center, high-risk obstetrical care, a Regional Intensive Care Nursery, and centers for heart care, vascular disease, neuroscience and minimally invasive surgery. In addition to a complete range of community services, Memorial Medical Center is also a teaching hospital with various physician residency programs, School of Nursing, Radiological Technology, Surgical Technician, Histology and Laboratory Technical Programs.

satisfaction, and compare it with other hospitals in their peer group. Inpatient scores came back in the 22<sup>nd</sup> percentile, and outpatient scores were in the 32<sup>nd</sup> percentile.

Why was patient satisfaction so low?

Memorial Medical Center management determined they were not listening to their employees, or their customers. The Senior Leaders commissioned teams of staff level employees to find out what their employees were trying to tell them, and how the employees could be involved in a turnaround. This is the journey that eventually led to a dramatic change in the culture at Memorial Medical Center.

## The Commitment

In the next step Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center management made a commitment to create an environment where employee contributions are noticed, appreciated, and recognized. Through their recognition programs, they have developed a culture where employees are motivated, thanked, and inspired to do their best every day.

In addition, the Board and Administration made Service Excellence their highest priority

and commissioned employees to develop performance standards. All employees were encouraged to be diligent in practicing the standards and inspired to exemplify positive behaviors.

Next, Memorial Medical Center hired a full-time employee to develop and administer the recognition programs. The Employee Relations Coordinator, working alone or with a team, was charged with developing recognition programs, implementing the programs, and tracking results for senior leadership review.

*Press Ganey Associates, Inc. was founded in 1985 by Irwin Press, Ph.D. and Rodney F. Ganey, Ph.D. to provide information essential to the assessment and enhancement of the health care experience. Dr. Press is an anthropologist and leading expert in patient satisfaction. Dr. Ganey is an accomplished research methodologist.*

## **Index of Standards**

Attitude  
Appearance  
    Employees  
    Facility  
Call Bells  
Commitment to Self/Co-Workers  
    Attendance  
Communication  
    Telephone  
Confidentiality  
Customer Information and Education  
Customer Waiting  
Elevator Etiquette  
Privacy  
Safety awareness  
Sense of Ownership

### **Standards of Performance**

#### **Attitude**

- Treat everyone as if he or she is the most important person in our facility.
- Our job is to serve our customers and provide high quality services with care, courtesy and empathy.
- Acknowledge a customer's presence immediately and introduce yourself. Make eye contact, smile, say hello. Don't allow anyone to feel ignored.
- Recognize that our customers have a sense of urgency and show them that we value their time.
- Anticipate and respond to customer needs.
- Rudeness is never appropriate. Treat one another with courtesy, honesty, respect, and tolerance.
- The last employee who has a contact with a patient/customer before discharge/departure should always verbalize appreciation for the opportunity to provide care. Say "Thank you for allowing us to serve/assist/care for you."
- Be receptive to new ideas.

#### **Note:**

*Throughout the Standards, "Customer" refers to all internal and external customers patients, family members, co-workers, physicians, volunteers, and students.*

### **Our Mission**

#### **Our Purpose:**

We will promote health, ease suffering, heal and teach.

#### **Our Values:**

We believe in the dignity of all individuals.  
We hold a reverence for life.  
We will ensure access for all.  
We view participation and teamwork necessary for excellence.  
We recognize diversity and creativity as sources of strength.

#### **Our Vision:**

We will be the premier comprehensive medical center for the Laurel Highlands Region.

#### **Our Goal:**

In collaboration with our physicians, we will be recognized as possessing clinical excellence, demonstrating exceptional hospitality and providing services at a competitive price.

## Standard 1. Recognition Strategy

Believing recognition is a powerful tool that helps every employee see their value and worth, managers and directors at Memorial Medical Center are asked to use the Standards of Performance (page 6) as a guide to observe and recognize positive behaviors, and are encouraged to daily recognize when employees meet and exceed expectations.

Memorial Medical Center's Recognition Strategy involves formal recognition programs and informal recognition programs with an emphasis on day-to-day recognition of employees.

### Formal Recognition

- **The Gold Star Program.** With customer service in a development stage, the Gold Star program was initiated to reinforce and reward behaviors with an eye toward changing the culture at Memorial Medical Center.

Over the past 5 years, the program has evolved and while once escorting a lost visitor or patient to their destination was a Gold Star deed, it is now considered an expectation. Consideration is given to those who *significantly* impact a patient/visitor or co-worker's life, or those who use their own time and resources to come to the aid of a patient, visitor, or co-worker.

Gold Star recipients are recognized at the Director Supervisor Meeting and presented with a gift certificate, Gold Star lapel pin, and a congratulatory letter from the president, Steve Tucker. The quarterly and annual Gold Star Winners are

recognized at the Employee Recognition Dinner, and presented with a glass engraved "star" trophy. The annual winner receives a \$500 gift certificate along with publicity.

The Gold Star Award Nomination Form is on page 8, and an example of two Gold Star winners is on page 9.

### **Recognition Program Objectives**

- To recognize, reinforce, and promote positive behaviors that support Memorial Medical Center's Standards of Performance, mission, vision, and values.
- To recognize distinguished performance and significant contributions.
- To recognize outstanding contributions by both individuals and teams.
- To provide both informal and formal recognition.
- To provide recognition at all levels of employment.
- To improve customer service.
- To foster a culture of recognition and appreciation.



## Gold Star Winners Go the Extra Mile

It was a blustery weekend in mid March. Joni Tickerhoof had serious concerns the man she was visiting couldn't adequately care for himself. He had cancer of the esophagus and was released from the hospital with a trach tube in his neck. He was unable to speak and lived alone. He also relied on a peg tube for feeding. "He was adamant he wanted to be home. He wanted to manage his own care," says Tickerhoof, who devised a system the patient could use to call for help. "We had programmed a cell phone to call a friend or family member and we told them he would tap two for yes, one for no, and three taps meant he needed 911."

Still, Tickerhoof wasn't convinced the patient would follow doctor's orders or be able to use the suction machine as directed. "I made visits Friday for several hours, several hours Saturday, and I went back Sunday. I just didn't feel he could cope with this." And Tickerhoof was right. By Sunday the man wasn't eating and was getting weaker. But he refused to return to the hospital. Tickerhoof was equally stubborn. She called Dr. Rogerson

with her concerns. "I thought if we could reason with him and show we cared, he'd go with us," Tickerhoof explains.

Rogerson agreed. He immediately drove to the patient's home, and together the pair convinced him he needed to be hospitalized. Rogerson even transported him there. "I just wanted to see that he got the right care," says Rogerson. Although moved by the Gold Star he was awarded, Rogerson admits he's uncomfortable being singled out for his efforts. "I think you would be surprised. These things happen all the time by caring physicians and healthcare professionals. We all care. That's why we do what we do." Rogerson calls Tickerhoof the *real hero*. "Not everyone would've gone the extra mile. She made sure someone took care of him."

Tickerhoof received both quarterly and annual Gold Star awards. "You just go out and do your job. I think any one of the home health nurses would've done the same thing."

*Excerpt from Conemaugh Health Foundation Newsletter*

## Team Recognitions

### **Security, Facilities, Bio-Med, In-House Construction, Environmental Services**

As the rains poured down and our first floor outpatient center began to fill with water, teams from environmental control, security, and maintenance responded. These groups organized their tasks and contained the water quickly. The flooding was at its peak at around 5:30 p.m. By 8:00 p.m. the only evidence to be seen was a few wet rugs and a fan or two running to help dry the carpets. This group's quick and efficient work exemplifies their dedication to our facility and our patients. The next morning when the outpatient center opened, patients could not tell

anything happened the evening before. Our service was uninterrupted and the area looked as if nothing happened. This is a great example of how these groups worked behind the scenes to provide excellent service to our customers. This is only one example of their efforts that night; I am sure there were many other activities as a result of the rain that these groups handled to make sure our patients and customers could access our services that night and the next morning without any issues.

*Conemaugh Health System Newsletter*

### **Formal Recognition** (continued)

- **Team Recognitions.** Nominations for team recognition come from complimentary letters written by customers, as well as internal recognition letters.

On the day of the Team Recognition award, the vice president and director present a framed plaque and a food basket made up of fruit and packaged snacks. A picture of the group is included in the hospital newsletter. An example of a Team Recognition story is above.

- **Press Ganey Recognition.** Departments are formally recognized quarterly as a result of the Press Ganey patient satisfaction survey. Departments are recognized for the highest inpatient score, the highest medical/surgical unit inpatient score, and the most improved score; and presented with a framed plaque, sheet cake, and sodas. Their

picture is published in the local hospital newsletter.

- **Employee Recognition Dinner.** In conjunction with National Hospital Week, an annual dinner is held in May. Employees are recognized for years of service in five-year increments; five-year employees get a gold pin; and other employees, in five-year increments, receive gift certificates in varying amounts depending on years of service. Employees recognized for 25 years of service are presented with a gold watch. A drawing for various door prizes tops off the evening.

The most recent employee satisfaction survey indicated that 66% of the employees taking the survey felt that the Employee Recognition Dinner helped make Memorial Medical Center a good place to work.

## **Informal and Day-to-Day Recognition**

Memorial Medical Center has a variety of ways to recognize employees on a day-to-day basis. These tools are also available for staff to use to recognize each other.

- **WOW Program.** WOW's are given on a day-to-day basis for immediate recognition. Presented by management, WOW's are awarded to employees exceeding the Standards of Performance, exhibiting

behaviors that illustrate the established "Vision and Values" code, or employees that inspire and raise morale to a higher degree.

Employees are also encouraged to give WOW's to each other as a form of recognition. Although managers are encouraged to consistently look and listen for the great things employees do, they can't be everywhere. Peers recognizing peers instills a sense of worth and generates an atmosphere of teamwork.

## **Award Selection**

Intrinsic to the success of any recognition program is the selection of awards and acknowledgement of an employee's actions.

### **GOLD STAR**

Gold Star winners receive a "gold star" lapel pin which most wear on their name badge to proudly identify them as a Gold Star recipient. They also receive a \$10 gift certificate to the Memorial Medical Center "Little Shop," a first-class gift shop recognized by a national trade magazine for gift shops.

### **WOW**

Each WOW certificate has a value of \$3.00 which can be redeemed at the "Crossroads Cafe" in the hospital, or for off-campus employees, used as a coupon at their local convenience store. In addition, WOWs can be redeemed for one free month of membership in the employee fitness gym.

### **TEAM RECOGNITION**

Framed certificates are awarded to departments who gain team recognition, along with a food basket containing fruit and packaged snacks such as crackers, chips, pretzels, cookies, etc. Managers make sure snacks are put aside for the evening and night shifts.

### **PRESS GANEY**

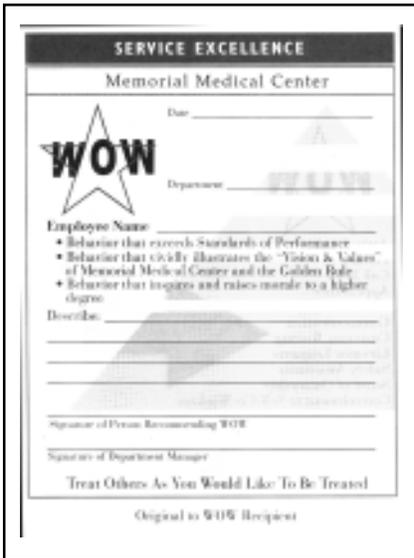
Awards for departments recognized for excellence on the Press Ganey patient satisfaction survey consist of framed certificates, a cake and assorted sodas for the department. The employees love to publicly display the framed certificates as a way to "brag" about their achievements.

### **Other**

This past year at the 2004 Employee Recognition Dinner, President Steve Tucker, who personally signs each of the "Gold" and "WOW" certificates, suggested that to recognize employees with as many as 35 recognitions in one year, a plaque should be made at a local trophy shop and presented to the employee at the dinner.

## Informal and Day-to-Day Recognition

(continued from page 11)



- **Thank-You Cards.** All managers and departments keep a supply of Memorial Medical Center thank-you



cards for informal day-to-day recognition. They are encouraged to write thank-you notes and present them in person to the employee when an employee displays behavior consistent with the Standards of Performance or exceeds job expectations.

On a monthly basis department directors report positive employee

actions to their Senior Leaders, then personal thank-you notes are sent to the employee at their home. One employee said “It was nice knowing that my vice-president appreciated the effort I put forth and to open up the card in front of my husband and share it with him made me feel extremely proud.”

- **Candy Bars.** Managers are provided with a supply of candy bars with personalized wrappers as an informal means of recognition:
  - Hershey® chocolate bar with wrapper - THANKS, it was “sweet” of you to help out.
  - Milky Way® bar with wrapper - THANKS for providing “out of this world” service.
  - Almond Joy® with wrapper - THANKS! You’re a “joy” to work with.
  - Nestle Crunch® bar with wrapper - THANKS for helping out in a “crunch.”
  - Peppermint Patties® with wrapper - THANKS for your “commitmint.”
- **Rounds.** Senior Leaders, directors or managers make rounds in departments to talk to employees, give verbal recognition and thanks. The interaction also allows employees to approach leadership with their concerns.
- **Staff Meetings.** The vice presidents attend departmental staff meetings on a rotating basis to give them an opportunity to recognize staff and listen to concerns.

## Standard 2. Management Responsibility

In 1999 the Senior Leaders at Memorial Medical Center acknowledged there was a need to develop formal recognition programs to improve employee satisfaction, which was at an all-time low. They unanimously approved the Gold Star program, and increased the dollar amount of the gift certificates recommended by the staff level team. In 2000 the Senior Leaders created the position of Employee Relations Coordinator and hired a full-time person to administer the hospital's recognition programs, and to work at developing new programs. After obtaining approval from Senior Leadership, the Coordinator has full responsibility for implementing the programs.

As an illustration of management's commitment to employee recognition, President Steve Tucker attends every new employee orientation and Great Expectations (customer service training), and sits down with the new employees at either a breakfast or lunch. In addition, the president and vice presidents are very committed to sending thank-you cards and making rounds in the departments. They have set monthly goals for themselves and track those goals.

The Senior Leaders have put recognition first on the agenda for management meetings, including the Board of Directors meeting. Quarterly Gold Star winners are invited to the Board meeting for recognition and the president, Steve Tucker, introduces the Gold Star winner to Board members.

Management is also held accountable for supporting recognition programs. The vice presidents

Managers are encouraged to be creative in their day-to-day recognition. For example, a manager called a clerical worker at home to see if she could come in and cover a call-off. Before the girl arrived at work, the manager went to the Gourmet Bean coffee shop and purchased a gourmet muffin and a cup of coffee, and left them on the employee's desk along with a thank-you card.

review measurement tools and if a director is not consistently writing thank-you notes or giving WOW's, the vice president will counsel the director and discuss ways in which they can improve recognition practices.

Senior Leaders make a concerted effort to attend all special events, from celebrations and parties held in the atrium, to the Holiday Party held for employees' children and the Holiday Adult Dance. They are visible. They talk with employees and have an opportunity to extend a personal thank-you.

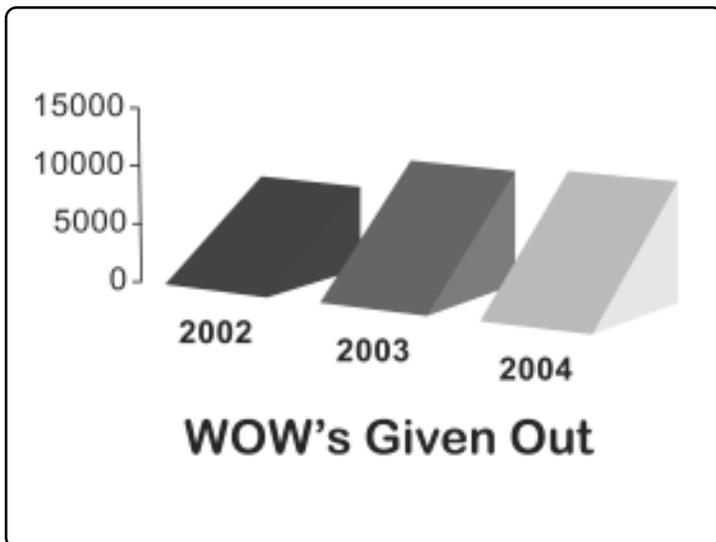
"This was a major commitment, and it highlighted the importance senior leaders place on recognition and employee satisfaction, and its link to patient satisfaction."

Every quarter a PI Indicator Metrics Report is generated and shared with the senior leaders. The report keeps them updated on the number of celebrations and recognition awards given out.

A \$235,000 budget for FY 2005 has been approved, which includes salary and wages for the Employee Relations Coordinator.

### Standard 3. Recognition Program Measurement

In 2001 Memorial Medical Center conducted an Employee Satisfaction Survey to determine if employees felt they were recognized for exceptional service. Only 42% of employees completing the survey answered positively. To track this



finding, focus groups have been held, and changes have been made to the recognition programs. Based on these findings, overall job satisfaction has greatly improved. While the national norm for hospitals has declined from 4.65 in 2001 to 4.56 in 2004, Memorial Medical Center has improved from 5.09 in 2001 to 5.35 over the same time period. The Employee Satisfaction Survey is conducted every two years, and is administered by Baird/Borling.

Individual reports are generated monthly for management regarding the number of WOW's presented, Gold Star nominations made, and employee turnover. Employee statistics are kept as to the number of employees who attend recognition events; the number grows with each event. Patient satisfaction results come in monthly and quarterly reports, and are conducted by Press Ganey Associates, Inc.

### Standard 5. Recognition Training

All members of the management team are given a "gold box," which is their recognition toolbox. It has all the "tools" used for recognizing employees: Gold Star forms, WOW forms, thank-you cards, pens, candy bars, Recognition Assessment forms, and tips for providing recognition.

Leadership development classes are held quarterly, and a Dale Carnegie representative has shared principles for improving "recognition skills." Also, recognition education is provided at the Director Supervisor Meeting.

The Conemaugh Learning Institute offers various courses which include recognition practices. One session of the Performance Improvement Course deals specifically with recognition tools and how managers should link recognition with the vision and values, and Standards of Performance (see page 6).

A "Needs Assessment" form for management has been developed to determine strengths and weaknesses; it is filled out by the manager's staff or

#### *Cause for Applause* Recognition Tools & Tips

To be effective, managers must personalize recognition. This is best done with a three-part process\*:

1. Identify how the employee can best contribute to achieving organizational goals and values.
2. Determine what the employee values in terms of recognition.
3. Recognize the employee's unique contributions with personalized recognition.

\*From Cindy Ventrice, "Potential Unlimited Seminars."

peers. The top three needs are outlined and appropriate training is then provided. A "tip sheet," *Cause for Applause* (page 14), is published quarterly and allows the Employee Relations Coordinator to share with management many of the recognition tips and suggestions culled from the Internet, National Association for Employee Recognition (NAER), and other sources.

Memorial Medical Center has made it a priority to budget for on-going education and leadership development programs.

## **Standard 6. Recognition Events and Celebrations**

Memorial Medical Center hosts many events to celebrate successes and accomplishments. Events include:

- Positive Press Ganey patient satisfaction results
- Top 100 Heart Hospital
- Top 100 Orthopedic Hospital
- Designation as a Level 1 trauma center
- Press Ganey success story
- Modern Healthcare's Spirit of Excellence Award for 2002
- The National Coalition of Health Care's recognition of the regional intensive care nursery
- Thank-you event after the Que Creek mine rescue
- Employee Recognition Dinner for years of service
- Holiday Tea to thank employees during the holidays

Events have included some very unique ideas. When the Press Ganey results moved into the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile, a 70's party was organized. Management dressed in 70's attire and played 70's music. Other themes have been "Going Bananas," a "Fall Festival," "Mardi Gras," and a "Fiesta."

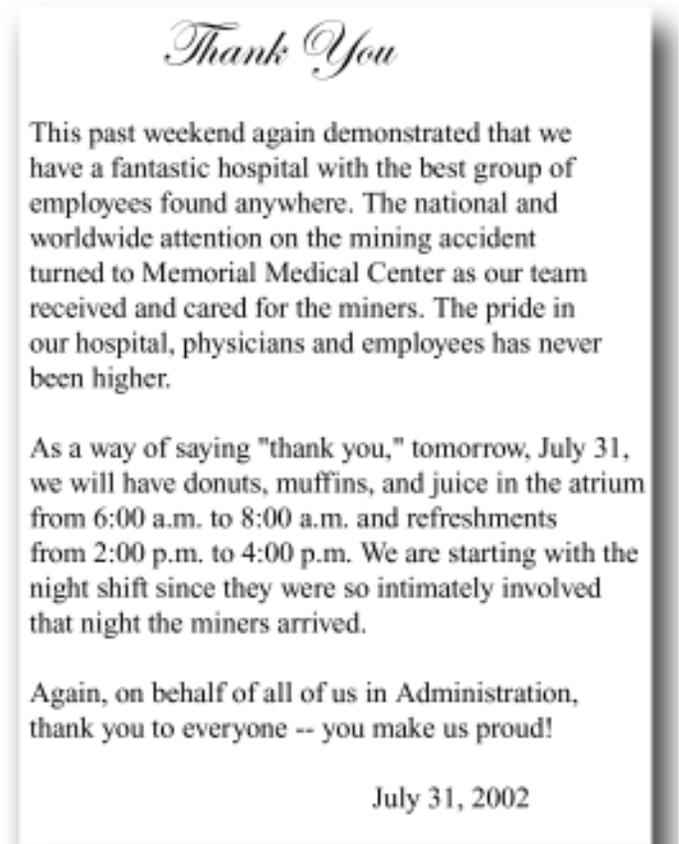
When Memorial Medical Center won the Press Ganey Success Story award, homemade cookies and sheet cakes were delivered to every department with a letter of "thanks" from the president, Steve Tucker.

At all of these events the employees have a chance to win door prizes and pictures are taken for publishing in the hospital newspaper.

### **Que Creek Coal Miners**

A special thank-you event was held in 2002. The nation was riveted to their televisions watching the rescue of coal miners trapped for 77 hours in the Que Creek Mine near Somerset,

Over 500 Gold Stars have been given out since the program's inception in 1999



Pennsylvania. The rescued miners were brought to Memorial Medical Center for emergency care. As a thank-you to staff for professionally handling all the extra attention and added work, a number of celebrations were held so that every shift was recognized and rewarded.

## **Standard 7. Program Change and Flexibility**

By using information generated from the measurement tools and by listening to employee feedback, Memorial Medical Center recognition practices have evolved to best support and encourage positive results.

In 2002 the Performance Improvement Department became more closely involved with the Service Excellence programs and registered nurses and support staff were hired, specifically with the goal of overseeing the Performance Improvement processes within the hospital.

Patient complaints are reviewed at the Performance Improvement Team meetings, and processes and services are changed to improve patient satisfaction. Employee comments on the Employee Satisfaction survey have resulted in a change in team efforts within a department to further improve employee satisfaction.

## **Summary**

Through their recognition programs, Memorial Medical Center has successfully developed a culture where employees are motivated, thanked, and inspired to do their best every day. This culture change has resulted in an improved financial picture as market share continues to increase and the patient census is at an all-time high.

From the 28th percentile in the first Press Ganey survey in first quarter June 1999, Memorial Medical Center has now achieved the 93rd percentile in patient satisfaction. Employee satisfaction has risen from the 64th percentile in 2001 to the 79th percentile in 2004 nationwide.

Overall job satisfaction has greatly improved. The national norm for hospitals has declined from 4.65 in 2001 to 4.56 in 2004, while the score for Memorial Medical Center improved from 5.09 on 2001 to 5.35 over this same time period.

Patient satisfaction continues to soar. Notes Kathy Gorzelsky, Employee Relations Coordinator, "We feel there is a direct correlation between our increase in patient satisfaction scores, and our increased use of recognition programs with greater attention to employee satisfaction.

"We believe that our recognition programs reinforced desired behaviors and helped motivate our employees to exceed our patients' expectation."

# University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers

## Standard 4: Best in Class Communication Plan

### A Culture that Values People Succeeds

“Driving learning throughout the organization is the best offense in a world of massive change and global competition.” Jim Harris, Ph.D.

**R**ecognition programs are always at the core of a culture that values people. Without recognition, employees are disconnected from company goals, attrition is a major concern, and a business environment can be chaotic. With strategic recognition programs, employee responsibility and satisfaction become an integral part of a company’s success, which leads to improved customer satisfaction, and in turn, an improved financial position.

But it isn’t enough for senior management to just buy into the concept of employee recognition and reward. They must be an active participant. They need to be the architects because it is invaluable to create recognition programs from the top down.

#### **A Fundamental Change in Structure**

“Support by Senior Management is critical to the overall success of any strategic recognition efforts,” confirms Denise L. White, Human Resources Consultant and Chairperson, University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers Employee Recognition Program Committee.

The University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers (UMHHC) knew this. At their annual strategic planning retreat in September, the Employee Recognition Committee evaluated their current recognition initiatives. A recommendation was made to divide the committee into smaller task teams to handle the planning and



### University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers

#### Facts & Figures

- Number of Employees: 15,000+
- 2005 FY Budget: N/A
- Recognition Staff: Human Resources Consultant
- Ownership: Non-Profit
- Headquarters: Ann Arbor, MI
- Organizational specialization: Health Care
- [www.med.umich.edu/mchrd/recognition/](http://www.med.umich.edu/mchrd/recognition/)

implementation of various new strategic initiatives. The new structure consisted of task teams responsible for design and development of projects within the larger committee. The task teams formed were:

1. Education Task Team
  - a. Meetings/network
  - b. Presentations
  - c. Seminars
  - d. Road shows
  - e. Newsletter
  - f. Unit based or development programs

## More Task Teams

2. Process Improvement
  - a. PDCA current process
  - b. Employee Suggestion Program Redesign
  - c. Web site
  - d. Communications
  
3. Day-to-day Operations
  - a. Budget
  - b. Purchasing
  
4. Events/Celebrations
  - a. Receptions
  - b. UMHHC Picnics
  - c. UH Celebration
  - d. Programming for evening and midnight shift personnel
  
5. Institutional Strategies
  - a. Leadership Performance and Expectations
  - b. Integration of Recognition into MTV
  - c. Centrally funded FTE Recognition Committee
  - d. Benchmark/Site Visits
  - e. Multi-layer data and measures
  - f. More bucks = more exposure
  - g. Holiday Coupons

Team leaders were identified and had functional responsibility for achieving specific objectives.

With this framework in place, UMHHC Employee Recognition Committee members defined their specific goals: help UMHHC improve patient and customer satisfaction scores, and enhance customer service standards throughout the hospitals and health centers.

### Training the Trainer

To achieve their objectives, committee members developed a strategy to communicate employee recognition and reward programs throughout the 15,000+ employee organization.

The central theme would be top-notch instruction and guidance in the area of reward and recognition. Committee members planned to develop their consultation skills in recognition to

#### UMHHC Strategic Goals

- Goal 1. Improve Clinical Outcomes and Service
- Goal 2. Support the University's Health Science Academic Mission
- Goal 3. Improve Customer Satisfaction in all Groups
- Goal 4. Create a Safe and Healthful Workplace
- Goal 5. Enhance our Financial Strength and Competitiveness
- Goal 6. Participate with State and Local Partners to Create Healthy Communities

assist the leadership in achieving its mission and goals, and reinforce the values of the organization. Training and educational awareness programs would be developed in-house, and conducted by Employee Recognition Committee members.

#### Project Goals:

- Develop expertise in recognition
- Share best practices
- Evaluate recognition approaches at the department level and provide feedback
- Develop and deliver appropriate unit-based employee recognition training (peer)
- Coach and mentor supervisory staff on recognition efforts
- Analyze trends and report findings
- Support unit-based recognition functions
- Collect data on challenges and concerns and report findings

The UMHHC committee "content experts" would be responsible for coaching and mentoring supervisory staff on recognition efforts. Recognition "ambassadors" would provide strategic and customer-focused employee recognition education, awareness, and training.

## Competencies

Four levels of competencies were identified:

- Basic Level Consultant
- Proficient Level Consultant
- Technical Competencies
- Interpersonal Competencies

## Curriculum

Curriculum and training components consisted of

- How to Train 101
- UMHHC Recognition 101
- Coaching/Mentoring
- Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
- How to Give and Receive Feedback
- How to Implement a Reward and Recognition System
- 25 Low Cost, Creative Ideas to Improve Morale, Enhance Productivity, and Make Your Workplace More Fun
- Best Practices of Employee Recognition Programs
- Go Fish!
- Benchmarking and Evaluation of Recognition Efforts

Training was provided through interactive presentations, self-study, seminars, and workshops.

## Recognition Objectives

Moving forward, ambitious UMHHC Employee Recognition Objectives were defined:

- Create and communicate new vision and corporate identity for recognition
- Increase awareness of recognition's role in workforce planning strategies
- Build effective internal and external business partnerships
- Produce video on institutional recognition "best practices"
- Establish "recognition presence" at the unit level

### UMHHC Employee Recognition Mission Statement

To provide leadership in partnership with Health System Administration for employee recognition at UMHHC by providing a framework to assist in the creation of a culture that values people.

- Design training for leaders and staff on recognition principles
- Create an employee recognition lending library
- Redesign employee web site
- Provide support for local level recognition
- Redesign Employee of the Month and You're Super processes

The UMHHC Recognition web site

([www.med.umich.edu/mchrd/recognition/](http://www.med.umich.edu/mchrd/recognition/)) was

redesigned to quickly capture data and speed results from a 6 month lead time to less than 36 hours. Over 120 intake boxes were eliminated, and the organization saved

\$20,000 annually in administrative costs.

## Employee Recognition Rollout

How to reach all of the UMHHC 15,000+ employees was the central and most important link to implementing the successful recognition programs. Denise White, Human Resource Consultant for UMHHC summed it up. "Don't leave anyone out. Keep the pulse on the best way to communicate with staff (employees). If they don't have a computer, figure out the best way to reach them. Is it a flyer? A face-to-face meeting? Or through their supervisor or union rep? Find the best way."

### UMHHC Recognition Vision Statement

Partners creating meaningful recognition strategies

A communication plan was developed and launched with a major kickoff event. Reward and Recognition guidelines were distributed to management, along with management resources. Other communication resources were Employee Recognition Bulletin Boards and many sources of internal communication which included UMHS Hospital Bulletin, UMHS Applause, and UMHS Star.

How can your company duplicate the UMHHC effort? "Determine what you're doing now, and get feedback from your entire staff on what needs to change," suggests White. Back it up with a framework of task teams with a mandate to implement new strategic initiatives in recognition.

## Summary

The culture at the University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers (UMHHC) is clearly one that values people. They have made a commitment to provide education and training as primary methods of communication in their organization. With top-notch instruction and guidance in the area of reward and recognition, members of the Employee Recognition Committee have become empowered content experts and ambassadors trained to provide strategic and customer-focused employee recognition education, awareness, and training.

With strategic recognition programs, employee responsibility and satisfaction become an integral part of a company's success, which leads to improved customer satisfaction, and in turn, an improved financial position.

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**University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers  
Recognition Resources**

(continued)

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**301 Ways to Have Fun at Work.** Dave Hemstah and Leslie Yerkers. Berret-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco, California. 1997.

**1001 Ways to Reward Employees.** Bob Nelson. Workman Publishing. New York, NY. 1994.

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# Credits

## Best Practices Development Team 1999-2000

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|--|---|---|
| Dee Hansford, Team Lead<br>Dee Hansford Consulting | Fred Hibben<br>Sears                    | Bob Voyles<br>BI Performance Services               |
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## Best Practices Implementation Team 2001-2002

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## Best Practices Selection Committee 2002

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| Dinah Day<br>King County Solid Waste, WA    | Fred McCarthy, Ph.D.<br>St. Benedict School   | Vince Alonzo<br><i>Successful Meetings Magazine</i> |
| Ramesh Narasimhan<br>Quick Chek Food Stores |   |   |

## Best Practices Committee 2004

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| Theresa Chambers, Chair<br>City of Seattle | Barbara Glanz, Judge<br>Barbara Glanz Communications     | Rita Maehling, Judge<br>Achieve Consulting    |
| Chester Elton, Judge<br>O. C. Tanner       | Robert Chovenac, Co-Chair<br>Warner, Norcross & Judd LLP | Bob Nelson, Ph.D., Judge<br>Nelson Motivation |

## Best Practices Committee 2005

|  |  |   |
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| Kay Clark-Cox,<br>LaPorte Regional Health System | Rita Maehling<br>Achieve Consulting                      | Jan Seeger<br>Michigan Department of<br>Transportation              |

## **Best Practices Program Sponsor 2002, 2004, and 2005: Baudville**

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