

HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND CULTURAL VIEWS ON
COMMUNICATION, FEEDBACK, AND RECOGNITION (POST-MERGER)

by

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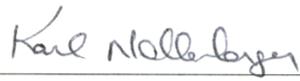
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To my mother who always believed in me. This part of my journey could not have been accomplished without your unfailing love and support. To my son who had to develop patience for me throughout these academic years. I know this was a long road for you too, but never forget that you witnessed your mom follow her dreams. I only hope that someday you will follow your dreams as well. Thanks to you both. Te amo.

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Chapter I

Literature Review

Introduction

The passing of the Affordable Care Act has forced the United States to reevaluate its health care system. The complexity of the issues created by this health care reform has caused continuous debate and has been a source of confusion and frustration for many Americans. Hospitals, clinics and individual physicians have been anticipating changes that will affect how they conduct business. John Iglehart (2011) noted, “Recognizing that physicians allocate most of our health care resources, Congress and the Obama administration challenged doctors in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to develop more accountable, quality-driven health care delivery systems, promising performance bonuses for those who succeed” (e35(1)).

In the future, more accountable care organizations (ACO) will be created in order to navigate the political waters of health care reform. In order to “qualify as an ACO, a group of health care providers must have the capacity to deliver the full continuum of care to at least 5,000 Medicare beneficiaries and to be held accountable for the costs and quality of their care” (Iglehart, 2011, e35(1)). Private practitioners may find that it is more financially feasible to join bigger organizations in order to survive further regulations and fee reductions.

Mergers and Acquisitions

Mergers and acquisitions are often seen as financial solutions to complex economic problems. Organizations, in general, undergo mergers in hopes of achieving profitable gains or attaining economic stability. Subeniotis, Kroustalis, Tampakoudis, Poulis (2011) believe there are many advantages of corporate mergers, “such as economies of scale and scope, cost reduction, administrative synergies, financial synergies, tax advantages, [and] diversifications” (p. 31). Financial gains may be of the essence with little attention focused on the human consequences of corporate decisions (Marks & Mirvis, 2011). Health care reform and an unpredictable national economy can force health care organizations to make hard decisions which involve mergers and acquisitions that may give rise to an unexpected aftermath. Mergers are not created in a vacuum and are often met with employee resistance.

According to Mitchell Marks and Philip Mirvis (2011), “Scholars have been conducting serious research on the human, organizational, and cultural aspects of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) for 30 years,” but it is of their opinion that “there have only been modest improvements in the M&A success rate” (p.161). A high percentage of mergers and acquisitions often do not achieve their original objectives despite increasing their firm size and capitalization base (Subeniotis et al. 2011). Completion of corporate mergers not only depends on legal, financial, or operational factors, but also on the human factor (Subeniotis et al. 2011). It is not uncommon for newly merged entities to experience culture clash within their organizations (Larsson & Lubatkin, 2001, Marks, 2006; Marks & Mirvis, 2011). This can lead to employee dissatisfaction and continued

employee resistance to new policies and procedures.

Merging organizational cultures is often an afterthought when companies consolidate their businesses. Despite ongoing research on this subject, it is unclear as to what may be the best process to integrate competing cultures. Rikard Larsson and Michael Lubatkin (2001) define acculturation as a “cooperative process whereby the beliefs, assumptions and values of two previously independent work forces form a jointly determined culture” (p. 1574).

Communication and Intervention During the Merger Process

One reoccurring theme in much of the research is the importance of communication. Some researchers believe employees need to undergo a grieving process before embracing a new culture (deKlerk, 2007). Others have found that a “merger preview” and ongoing communication during the merger process may help reduce employee uncertainty and resistance to change (Schweiger & Denisi, 1991). Employee satisfaction surveys can also help an organization address ongoing concerns, or new concerns, caused by a merger.

Mias deKlerk (2007) noted that mergers and organizational restructuring can have a traumatic effect on employees. Through observations and conducting a therapeutic intervention session, deKlerk was able to help employees process the loss of an organization they once knew and accept that it no longer existed. The employees observed were “asked to draw pictures in answering four questions: ‘What have we actually lost?’, ‘How do we feel about it?’, ‘What have we gained?’, ‘Why can we carry

on?”” (p. 51). Employees were allowed to express their feelings and begin a healing process. It is believed through this process employees can move on to acceptance and move past the traumatic event (deKlerk, 2007).

Some research studies found that empathy was important. Employees have a need to share concerns, uncertainties, and emotions. Through a structured interview format, Schweiger, Ivancevich, and Power (1987) discovered that employees experienced a loss of identity and purpose. Many “experienced shock, anger, disbelief, depression and helplessness” (p. 127). Schweiger et al. (1987) also learned that anxiety and a reduced sense of security were created by the lack of information and communication. People have a need to relate to others and it is important for organizations to find ways to connect with employees and help assist with coping (Schweiger et al., 1987).

Employee Satisfaction Surveys

Potential employee turnover associated with employee dissatisfaction can “threaten[s] organizational memory and can be expensive for an organization in terms of employee orientation and training” along with the fact there may be a reduction in organizational commitment by employees (Feldheim, 2000, p. 257). Employee satisfaction surveys can help merged organizations pinpoint areas that may need to be addressed. Judy Nixon and Marilyn Helms (2010b) conducted an employee survey that was administered after a merger in order to determine employee “level[s] of satisfaction with the workplace and culture as well as a number of key human resource practices and issues” (p.71). The Likert-scale survey focused on areas regarding: my job,

communication and feedback, compensations and benefits, and employee recognition. Employees in the study felt that communication was important and needed to be improved upon.

Schweiger and Denisi (1991) also conducted employee surveys, but unlike many surveys which are done post-merger, they felt it was important to administer the survey on four separate occasions during the merging process. They found that employee uncertainty appeared to increase over time and “with that increase there seems to be a rise in stress and a decrease in satisfaction, commitment, intentions to remain with an organization and perceptions of the organization’s trustworthiness, honesty, and caring” (p. 127). Their results also suggested “that realistic communications during a merger process in the form of a realistic merger preview can help employees get through the process” (p. 127).

Mark and Mirvis (2011) believe a realistic merger preview can help better prepare organizations with the negative effects that occur with mergers. They suggested beneficial organizational interventions such as presentations, discussions, and readings. Schweiger and Denisi (1991) felt it was important for employees to be handled fairly in their realistic merger preview. Employees were provided with information that was “frequent, honest, and relevant about the merger” and efforts were made to answer questions and concerns that arose. Schwieger and Denisi (1991) believe that realistic communications “can help employees cope with uncertainty of the situation” (p. 127). They also found it was important to continue those communications after the actual merger took place.

Employee Involvement

The results of Larsson and Lubatkin's (2001) research suggest that "almost only one thing matters: involve the affected employees in such socialization activities as introduction programs, training, cross visits, joining retreats, celebrations and other such socialization rituals and they are likely to create a joint organizational culture on their own volition, as long as they are allowed autonomy" (p. 1594). If there is a lack of team building, this then could lead to a lack of creating good relations among the employees of different cultures (Bligh, 2006). Michelle Bligh (2006) stresses the value of understanding "the histories and uniqueness of the groups involved" and to keep that knowledge at the forefront when making new initiatives (p. 405). Marks and Mirvis (2011) believe it is important for merging companies to take three things into account: do not ignore the human side of mergers, form "integration planning teams with membership from both sides," and do not make the mistake of downplaying culture clashes (p.163).

Bligh (2006) and Schweiger et al. (1987) believe it is critical to involve staff and get their input in the process of making cultural changes. Employee input can be seen as potentially helping "resolve issues of cultural variation and increasing employee commitment to new practices" (Bligh, 2006). Bligh also emphasizes the importance of leaders needing to focus on integrating best practices to reach a goal that everyone could agree on. Different cultures can come together if they find a shared value they view as important. It is the leadership of a new organization that can immediately involve employees with focus groups, interviews, and surveys. This allows leaders to increase employee commitment and helps develop confidence in leadership within the

organization itself (Lipson & Riddell, 2000).

Leadership

Mitchell Marks (2006) found through individual and focus group interviews that employees of two recently merged financial organizations complained of poor communication, lack of clear vision and direction, culture clash, merger lag, and general malaise (p. 390). Some employees also felt disconnected from those who were in leadership roles. Bligh (2006) learned that employees of a Northeastern health care system needed effective role models to help facilitate the transition process of a merger. Organizations are better equipped to handle the negative aftermath of mergers if they have strong leadership in place and multiple forms of integration methods.

According to Lipson and Riddell (2000), it is up to an organization to determine the next step of their leadership strategy. Key questions to be answered are, “How do we present a unified front in order to blend the cultures? What best practices can we take from each organization and how can we institutionalize them?” (p. 114). Leaders need to integrate and modify existing cultural values as well as bring new values into the merging cultures (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Effective leaders need to recognize, understand, and utilize cultural differences during a merger and find a way to create unity. Employees need a “clear vision of a new and better organization” (Marks, 2006, p. 394).

Unification and Establishing New Cultural Values

Golensky and DeRuiter (2002) found that a “cohesive new culture” could be

created and a smoother transition is possible if leaders of merging facilities shared similar values, saw themselves as allies, and included staff as “active participants” early on in the merger (p. 183). If leaders do not completely embrace the merger, it can be very difficult for employees to fall in line when it is clear there is existing opposition at the top. The longer it takes for the cultural integration process, the longer the employees can continue to hold onto “their existing values and beliefs” (Bligh, 2006, p. 409).

Kavanagh and Ashkanasy (2006) discovered that leaders chose one of three methods to develop new cultures. Some leaders were indifferent to change, others took immediate action to change, and a few used an incremental method for change. Their study found that individuals were less resistant to change and more satisfied with the merger outcome when leaders used the incremental approach. Leaders need to determine how soon changes should take place within their organization as well as decide the possible timeframe in which those changes should be implemented.

Unification starts from the top. Employees can be sensitive to how leaders act in daily aspects of organizational life. Employees in Bligh’s (2006) study paid attention to how their superiors adapted to the changes created by the merging of cultures. Their leaders’ reactions to everyday occurrences were seen as “symbolic representations of their underlying values and beliefs” (p. 410). It is important for leaders to pay attention to their actions and reactions to everyday activities as well as develop consistency in new policies and procedures. Employees need effective role models to help facilitate the transition process of a merger. Role modeling can help with cultural integration by demonstrating new cultural values, putting an emphasis on success and showing a

willingness to embrace change (Bligh, 2006).

Chapter II

Research, Methodology, Results

Research Gap and Hypotheses

Studies often focus heavily on the effect a merger has on financial outcomes and less on the effect a merger has on employees. Companies often underestimate the consequences they will suffer if they ignore the social climate post-merger. In order to get a better understanding of the “human-side” of mergers, research must frequently rely on subjective questionnaires, surveys, observations and personal interviews. Employee satisfaction surveys are often given to staff members to learn more about the social environment of post-merger entities.

Larsson and Lubatkin (2001) hint that “service sector mergers are more sensitive to issues of acculturation, given the fact that these firms tend to be more human asset intensive” (p.1584). Research is more readily available regarding employee attitudes and satisfaction levels in the industrial workforce. There seems to be an extreme lack of research regarding the effects of mergers in the human services sector, including the health care industry. This report will focus on the employee satisfaction levels within a merged specialty health care clinic, which will be referred to as Company C.

There are several research questions being analyzed for this study. Will employee satisfaction levels differ between the two home-base clinics within Company C, possibly suggesting cultural differences in the merged organization? Or, will there be no difference in employee satisfaction levels? Could the employee satisfaction levels differ between the clinic staff versus the business office staff, perhaps suggesting subcultures?

Last, does the number of years worked affect the level of employee satisfaction?

Clinic Merger Overview

There are numerous reasons for health care mergers. Health care organizations merge in hopes of potentially cutting overhead costs and increasing negotiation power for insurance contracts. Independent clinics try to join forces with other independents to avoid the threat of having to join a bigger conglomerate, or ACO, to survive. This research study was conducted within a physician owned, health care specialty clinic in east central Wisconsin. The physicians of Company A and Company B realized that the looming changes to health care were inevitable. Both clinics felt it was in their best interest to join forces in order to keep their independent status. This organization underwent a merger in 2011. It has been argued by some employees that this merged organization is still considered to have two separate home-base clinics with two distinct cultures.

Company A and Company B were two competing specialty clinics approximately located within a fifteen mile radius of each other. The physicians of each clinic also practiced in outlying cities and had physician privileges at several of the same community hospitals. Prior to 2011, Company A and Company B had already developed a mutually beneficial relationship by sharing on-call weekends for the local area. This partnership allowed for a more manageable physician rotation for their mandatory weekend call schedule. Despite this collaboration, the two clinics were still able to compete within their distinct territories.

In 2010, the physicians announced to their staff of an impending merger. The first stage of the merger to take place was the creation of one corporate entity, which was accomplished by combining both billing departments in 2011. The two clinics worked under the umbrella of a new company name, Company C. It was also decided at that time that the two clinics would continue to practice within their separate facilities; each keeping their respective office administrators.

In 2012, the second stage of the merger entailed the formalization of management. The office administrator that was affiliated with Company B stepped down from her position, and Company A's administrator assumed responsibility for the entire organization under the direct supervision of the physicians. Office and clinic supervisors were officially appointed to oversee all the employees within Company C. This small management team was made up of several employees from Company A, later joined by one employee from Company B and two new outside hires.

Like many mergers, employees' feelings of uncertainty and apprehension originally began with the announcement of the merger and continued throughout the merging process. From an observational standpoint, there seemed to be a lack of effort for employee unification, which in turn, may have caused an "us versus them" atmosphere.

In 2015, the physicians of Company C agreed to allow an employee satisfaction survey to be conducted within their organization for this field study. It is important to note that this survey was conducted three and one-half years post-merger. Throughout that time, Company C experienced an unusually high employee turnover rate. The new

entity lost over 40 staff members either by employees quitting or employees having to be let go. Within that group of exiting employees, approximately 20 people had been employed by Company A or Company B prior to the merger. In 2013, the office administrator that had originally been chosen for the merged organization left the practice and a new administrator from out of state was hired months later.

Methodology

An employee satisfaction survey from a past study done by Judy Nixon and Marilyn Helms (2010a) is used in this analysis. The Nixon and Helms (2010a) survey obtained a baseline level of employee satisfaction in a manufacturing company. This survey was selected because a majority of the questions were applicable to any industry, including health care. The questionnaire is divided into four categories: my job, communication and feedback, compensation and benefits, and recognition. These categories specifically looked at “the job itself, key job satisfaction components of skill variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy, communication and feedback, plus areas of compensation, benefits, rewards and recognition” (Nixon & Helms, 2010a, p. 57).

Modifications were made to the original survey to address some concerns the physicians had about specific questions. The category of compensation and benefits was also removed. This category was not of interest for this study nor was it a subject matter that could be addressed by administration. Questions were added to the survey in order to gather more information that could potentially be useful for management staff. A copy

of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

The Qualtrics Survey Software was used to create and administer the employee satisfaction survey. Qualtrics provided the option of using an anonymous link for a one-time use. Employee email contact information was disassociated from the survey responses. Company C provided the email addresses of all 52 of their employees (excluding physicians and the office administrator). Survey participants were given a written explanation of the survey purpose and process. Total confidentiality was assured.

Three separate independent categories were created for research comparisons. Employees were asked which clinic they identified as their home-base clinic (Clinic A or Clinic B), the number of years they worked within the organization (0 – 4 years, 5 – 10 years, or over 10 years), and if they were clinic staff (i.e. nurse, triage, medical assistant, or surgery scheduling) or business office staff (i.e. billing, coding, patient services representative, or medical records).

A majority of the questions on the survey asked participants to rate each statement on a Likert-scale system ranging from “strongly agree” with the rating of 5 to “strongly disagree” with the rating of 1. The neutral mid-point of this rating scale was 3 in which the response was “neither agree nor disagree.” Participants were given eight open-ended questions, allowing them the opportunity to comment on training, workload, resources, communication, recognition and organizational do’s and don’ts.

A numerical value was created for each response category (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1). Question 23 and question 32 required the responses to be reverse coded because these

were the only statements that were worded negatively, while the other questions in the survey were worded positively (Nixon & Helms, 2010b).

Nixon and Helms (2010b) believed the easiest way to understand the survey results was to calculate the mean of the total number of responses to each statement. Once this was tabulated, a separate response index ranking system could be assigned within each category of my job, communication and feedback, and recognition. With this ranking system, “the implication is that those questions with a lower response [index rating] require more attention while those with a high response [index rating] do not require attention” (Nixon & Helms, 2010b, p. 78).

Overall Employee Results

Approximately 65% of Company C’s employees completed the employee satisfaction survey. Out of the 52 surveys that were emailed, 36 surveys were started. Of those 36 surveys, one survey was not filled out and one survey was only partially completed. This first section will review the overall employee satisfaction levels within Company C.

Using the Likert-scale system, the majority of the questions within the my job category scored a mean slightly above 4.0. Employees, on average, seemed to “agree” with 11 of the 13 statements pertaining to their job. They felt that the merged company was a good place to work, they had adequate resources and support, expectations were clear and realistic, they made use of their abilities and skills, and their efforts made a positive difference in the success of the organization. The two statements that scored the

lowest in this category regarded the level of cooperation within the company in helping employees perform their job (Question 15, $M = 3.94$) and employees receiving the appropriate training to perform their job (Question 16, $M = 3.68$). See Appendix B for calculated means and response index ratings.

In the category for communication and feedback, the responses stayed within the neutral range. The three highest ranking statements pertained to employee attitudes toward supervisors. Staff did “agree” that their supervisors were approachable and available (Question 27, $M = 4.15$), their supervisors listened to them when they had issues (Question 24, $M = 4.00$) and their supervisors had a good understanding of what was happening in their organization (Question 28, $M = 4.09$). Employees “neither agreed nor disagreed” with statements regarding effective feedback, effective communication of goals and objectives, and demonstration of uniformity and cohesiveness. The lowest scoring statement was “I am informed about big changes in advance, instead of being caught by surprise” (Question 20, $M = 3.03$). Out of 34 responses to this statement, 10 employees “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” and 11 respondents “neither agreed nor disagreed.” See Appendix C for calculated means and response index ratings.

Employees did “agree” that recognition or praise was something that they valued, but they remained neutral when asked if they felt their organization offered recognition to individuals in appropriate ways (Question 30, $M = 3.42$). See Appendix D for calculated means and response index ratings.

Comparisons of Independent Variables

In this next section, the data was further analyzed by looking at specific independent variables. If indeed there were two distinct cultures within Company C, the expectation was to find a significant difference between employee satisfaction levels between those employees who identified with Company A versus those who identified with Company B. If subcultures existed, the satisfaction levels between clinic staff and office staff would also be expected to vary. Independent-samples t-test was performed for each category in order to determine if there were any significant differences between these variables.

When comparing employees who identified with their respective clinics, there was only one statement that stood out from the rest in all three categories of my job, communication and feedback, and recognition, as illustrated in Figure 1.

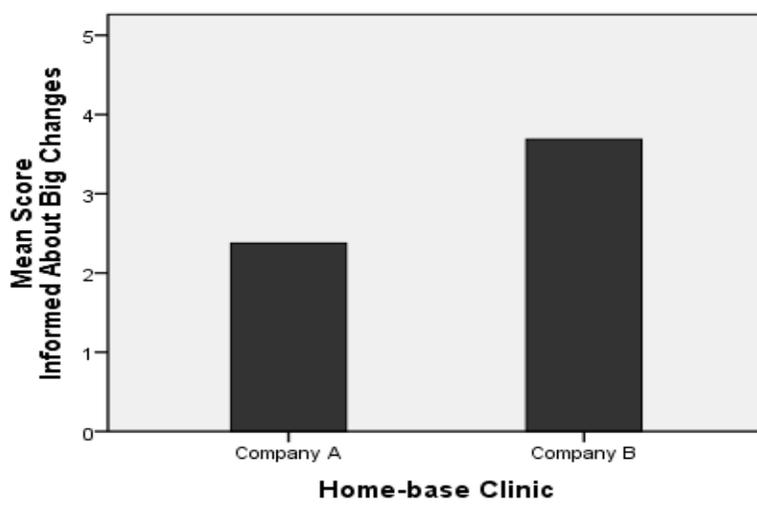


Figure 1 Mean score comparison between Company A and Company B with the statement "I am informed about big changes in advance, instead of being caught by surprise."

The independent-samples t-test for the statement "I am informed about big changes in

advance, instead of being caught by surprise” was found to be statistically significant for Company A ($M = 2.38$, $SD 1.31$) and Company B ($M = 3.69$, $SD 0.70$); $t(30) = -3.53$, $p = .002$. This result suggests that employees of Company A felt less informed of big changes within the organization than those employees of Company B. The independent-samples t-test was performed on all of the statements within the survey to compare Company A employee responses to Company B employee responses. With the exception of the above statement, all test results were found to be statistically non-significant between the two groups.

A one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to compare the Likert-scale ratings of all survey questions for clinic staff and office staff. This was used to see if there was any indication for subcultures within Company C. Participants had the options of identifying with clinic staff, business office staff, or prefer not to answer.

There were no statistically significant differences found between the groups with the exception of two statements. There was a significant difference in the employee rating of agreement with the statement “My work schedule allows me sufficient flexibility to meet my personal/family needs,” with a $p < .05$ level for the three groups [$F(2, 31) = 4.38$, $p = 0.021$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the mean score for the clinic staff ($M = 3.64$) was significantly different than the office staff ($M = 4.67$). However, those employees who decided not to identify with either category, prefer not to answer, ($M = 4.18$) did not significantly differ from the clinic or office staff employees.

Another statement that had a significant difference in rating was “Recognition or

praise is something I value,” with a $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 31) = 6.77, p = .004$]. Post hoc comparisons, again using the Scheffe test indicated the mean score for the clinic staff ($M = 4.79$) was significantly different than office staff ($M = 4.00$). Those who chose the option of “prefer not to answer” also differed significantly with clinic staff employees ($M = 3.91$). It should be noted that by allowing participants to choose the option of “prefer not to answer,” it is extremely hard to assume that there is any true significant differences between clinic and office staff.

The independent variable of “years worked” in regards to employee satisfaction levels was examined to see if there were any significant differences between newly hired employees versus those who had worked within Company A or Company B prior to the merger. Although the number of years worked within an organization would not create a subculture on its own, newly hired employees may have had less of a cultural bias on how they scored on employee satisfaction levels. Approximately 46% of the respondents were employees who had been with Company C between 0 – 4 years, 23% between 5 - 10 years, and 31% over 10 years. Comparisons made between these groups using ANOVA testing resulted with no statistical significance for any of the statements on the survey.

Open-Ended Questions Results

The last area of the employee satisfaction survey to examine consists of the open-ended questions in which employees were able to free text their thoughts and opinions. After reviewing the results of the Likert-scale statements, one might believe that

employees do not have much to complain about. Many chose to “agree” or remain neutral when rating most statements, and there were no significant differences found to suggest distinct cultures. The open-ended questions paint a slightly different picture.

In the category of my job, employees were asked to comment on training, workload and resources. When asked about additional training, some employees commented that they would like to learn or job shadow in different areas of the clinic, such as scheduling, pre-certification, billing or insurance. Other employees felt that the opportunity for continuing education for nursing staff would be beneficial. There were also a few comments that Company C lacked standard protocols which make it confusing for staff when things are not consistent. Comments regarding resources included updating equipment, better access to printers and copiers, and usage of laptops to help with time management. There appeared to be a few conflicting statements regarding workload. One participant commented that the workload could be overwhelming at times and another stated that the clinic is sometimes over-staffed, leaving employees bored with nothing to do. See Appendix E for additional comments.

The next set of questions invited employees to comment on communication and feedback improvement. It is important to remember that the overall Likert-scale rating results in the communication and feedback category averaged a score of 3 where employees neither agreed nor disagreed with each statement. A majority of the comments regarded a need for better communication within the organization. Staff suggested more employee input and participation, more organized and regular staff meetings, and more openness with changes. There were several comments regarding the

lack of uniformity within Company C. One employee commented, “Communication between clinics at times is not sending a uniform message. There is still an existing rift between Company A and Company B. Rules seem to apply differently between clinics.” Another employee said, “Perhaps time will make us more one.” A third comment suggested communication could be improved by “less rivalry between offices.” It is clear that communication is very important to staff and they are asking for a more efficient system. The comments in this section are also the first indication that there could actually be two distinct organizational cultures. See Appendix F for additional comments.

The statement “Recognition or praise is something I value” had a mean score of 4.29. This indicates that recognition is important to staff. Approximately 70% of the comments made in the open-ended section pertained to the desire of receiving verbal or written recognition of a job well done. A simple “thank you” can go a long way in this organization. There were four participants that also thought it would be beneficial if employees received recognition through bonuses, extra time off, gift cards, or the occasional coffee or lunch. See Appendix G for additional comments.

The last set of open-ended questions of the survey allowed participants to comment on what the organization should start to do, what the organization should continue to do, and what the organization should stop doing. These comments can be found in Appendix H. Employees want Company C to continue having clinical staff meetings and quarterly company meetings. One participant stated it is important to continue to “encourage employees to have the ability to make decisions on their own”

and “continue to encourage independent thinking.” Many employees expressed their interest for Company C to start having more meetings, improving communication, discussing process development, and creating clearer guidelines and instructions on job completion. This open-ended comment section once again indicates that communication is important to staff members. In regards to what should be stopped within the organization, one participant commented, “Stop thinking one clinic is superior over another. Employees are no longer Company A staff or Company B staff, they are Company C staff.” This last comment shows the possibility that culture clash exists in this health care clinic.

Chapter III

Conclusion

Conclusion

The employee satisfaction survey results are quite favorable for Company C. Overall, employees are satisfied with their jobs and believe Company C is a good place to work. Employees believe they are treated appropriately by their supervisors, they have adequate resources and support, expectations are clear and realistic, they are able to make use of their abilities and skills, and their efforts make a positive difference in the success of the organization. However, results from the communication and feedback category may be an indicator of an area that Company C will want to address.

One of the biggest drawbacks of this survey is the fact that it was conducted three and one-half years post-merger. The time lag is one possible explanation for why many of the scores on the employee satisfaction survey averaged the response ratings of “agree.” It is possible that, had this survey been conducted shortly after the initial merger, employee satisfaction levels could have scored lower. Also, within the three and one-half years post-merger, Company C experienced a higher employee turnover rate than what was considered usual for Company A or Company B prior to the 2011 merger. Prior to this employee satisfaction survey, Company C had lost over 40 employees and approximately 20 of them were employees that were hired prior to the merger. Had there been a higher number of employees who had been employed with Company A or Company B prior to the merger, the survey results may have looked different and cultural differences may have been more prominent. With approximately 35% to 40% of the pre-

merger staff gone and enough time passing to let the dust settle after the merger, feelings of anxiety, fear, and frustration may have subsided.

It is also possible that the favorable survey results reflect employee concerns that individual surveys could be linked to them directly, despite being notified that complete confidentiality would be assured. Those that took the survey may have answered more favorably, fearing repercussions from the physicians or management team. The employee satisfaction survey adapted from Nixon and Helms (2010a) was easily transferable from the manufacturing industry to health care, but for this particular study it did not seem to be a good tool for finding cultural differences in a merged work environment.

Shortly after this survey was conducted, Company C announced to its employees that the organization would be undergoing a third phase of this merger process. The physicians determined that the next logical step would be to merge the two separate home-base clinics into one main facility. If culture clash is not evident now, there is a strong possibility that this issue will surface in the future. The “us versus them” mentality will come to a head when employees are faced with the differences of what was once considered two separate clinics.

Two all-staff meetings have been conducted in the last nine months to keep employees up to date with the new building plans. Ideally, it would be beneficial for Company C to increase their communication and staff development efforts prior to the actual merger. There is an effort to involve employees in the vision of the new facility. Company C is attempting to engage their employees by giving them the opportunity to

join several different committees. The management team is also actively seeking thoughts and opinions from staff regarding process improvements and innovation.

It is important for the physicians and management team to understand the impact that a merger has on employees. A merger can be a traumatic event and employees could undergo a gamut of emotions, including the loss of identity and purpose (deKlerk, 2007; Schweiger et al., 1987). The human side of mergers should not be ignored, integration planning teams involving employees from both clinics should be encouraged, and culture clashes should not be downplayed (Marks & Mirvis, 2011). Ongoing communication pre- and post-merger is extremely important. It will also be the responsibility of the physicians and management team to send a clear message of unification. According to Alan Zuckerman (2011), “Blending cultures is central to the eventual success of the merged organization...and a clear plan and concerted effort to address cultural integration is essential” (p. 40). It will be crucial for Company C to make a conscious shift to a new and unified culture. The success of their organization could very likely depend on it.

Appendix A

Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

1. Please indicate the total number of years you have been with your current organization.

Answer	%
0-4 years	45.71%
5-10 years	22.86%
Over 10 years	31.43%
Total	100%

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in regard to your job?

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
2. Overall, I feel this is a good place to work.	9	24	2			35
3. I clearly understand the expectations of my job.	14	19	1	1		35
4. The workload expected of me is realistic.	10	20	5			35
5. I feel I have adequate resources to do my job.	10	24		1		35
6. I feel I have adequate support to do my job.	5	27	2	1		35
7. I have the decision-making authority I need to do my job well.	9	24		2		35

8. Additional training would be useful in: (write your answer in the space provided)

See Appendix E

9. Additional comments about the workload or resources available (i.e. equipment, supplies, computers, printers):

See Appendix E

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in regard to your job?

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
10. I feel my efforts make a positive difference in the success of this organization.	12	19	3			34
11. I have the chance to make daily use of my abilities and skills.	14	18		2		34
12. I enjoy performing the day-to-day activities of my job.	11	21		1	1	34
13. My work schedule allows sufficient flexibility to meet personal/family needs.	13	13	6	2		34

Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in regard to your job?

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
14. Employee relationships are based on trust.	15	16	1	1	1	34
15. The level of cooperation within the company helps me in performing my job.	8	19	4	3		34
16. I received the appropriate training to perform my job.	5	18	6	5		34

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in regard to the communication and feedback within your organization?

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
17. My organization regularly and effectively communicates organizational goals and objectives.	5	13	11	4		33
18. My organization demonstrates uniformity and cohesiveness.	2	11	13	6	2	34
19. New and existing policies are clear, communicated in a timely manner and easily available.	3	16	13	2		34
20. I am informed about big changes in advance, instead of being caught by surprise.	3	10	11	5	5	34

21. Communication at my organization could be improved by: (write your answer in the space provided)
See Appendix F

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in regard to the communication and feedback within your organization?

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
22. I receive regular and effective feedback that helps me improve my job performance.	3	10	18	3		34
23. My supervisor is not specific enough when giving me feedback about my job performance.	2	2	14	14	2	34
24. My supervisor listens to me when I have issues or ideas about improving my job.	11	15	5	3		34

Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in regard to the communication and feedback within your organization?

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
25. My supervisor's actions and behaviors are consistent with her words.	4	21	6	2		33
26. I am satisfied with how complaints and concerns are dealt with.	1	13	15	3	1	33
27. My supervisor is approachable and available whenever I have a need.	13	13	6	1		33
28. The supervisor has a good understanding of what is happening in this facility.	13	13	4	3		33

29. Communication with my supervisor could be improved by: (write your answer in the space provided)

See Appendix F

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements in regard to recognition within your organization?

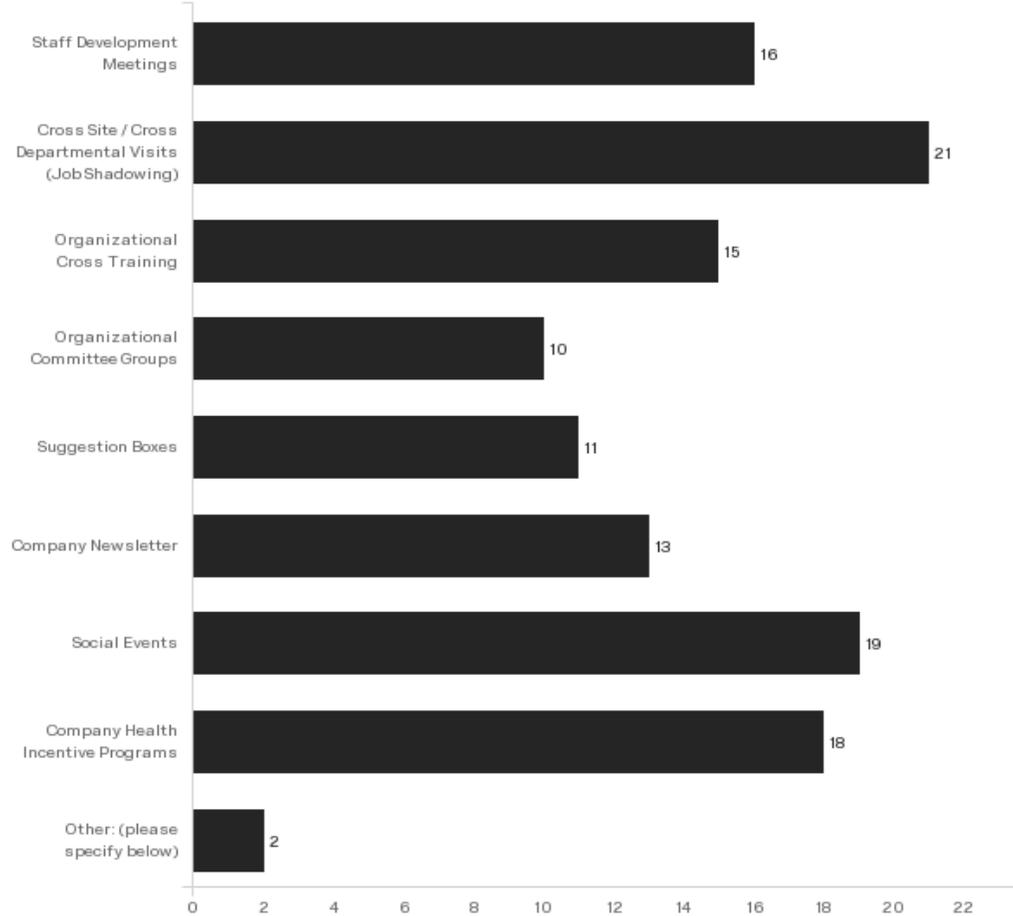
Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
30. My organization offers recognition to individuals in appropriate ways.	2	16	9	6		33
31. Recognition or praise is something I value.	15	15	3	1		34
32. At my organization, recognition or praise for doing a good job is rare.	1	4	16	10	3	34

33. For me, recognition or praise could take the form of: (write your answer in the space provided)

See Appendix G

Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

**34. Which of the activities listed below would you consider to be beneficial for your organization?
(check all that apply)**



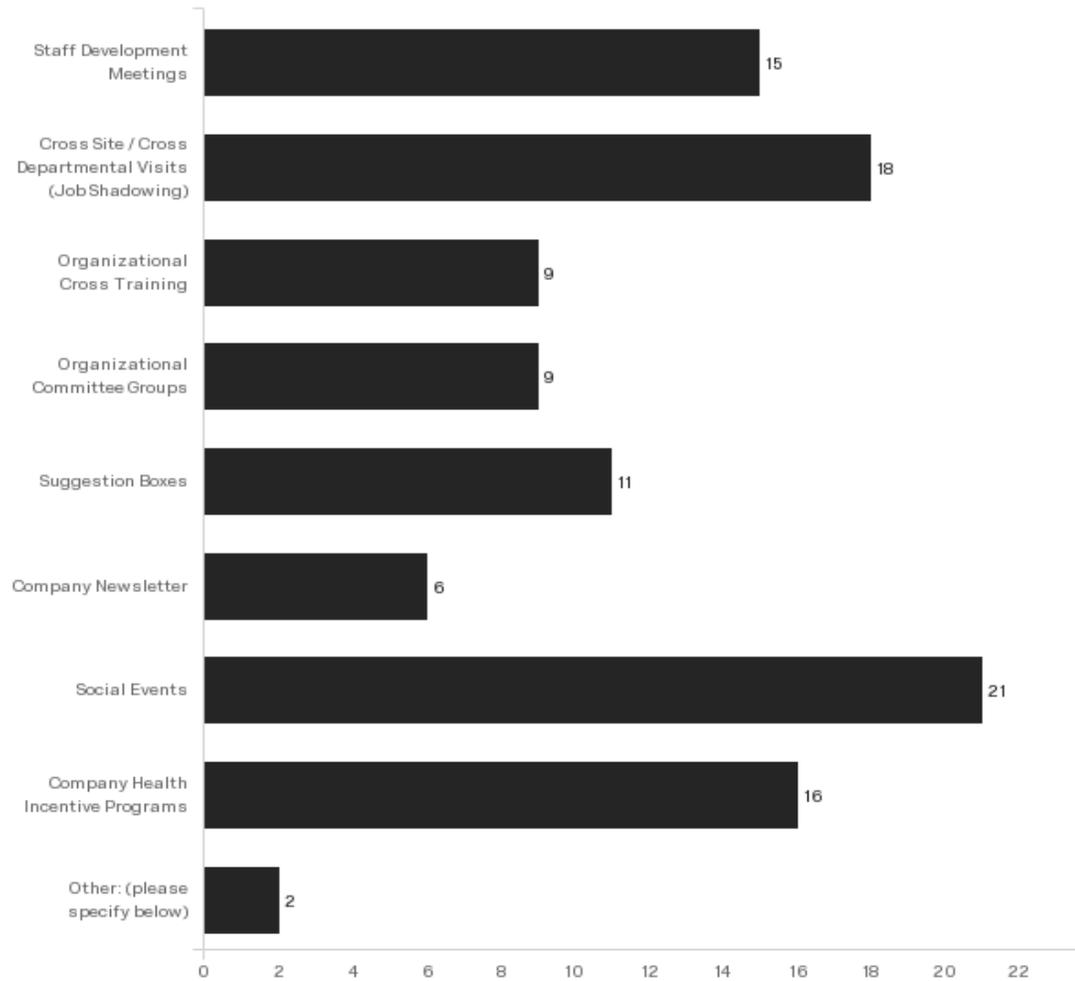
Other: (please specify below)

Sending staff to educational seminars

A lot of these are new to the company and rarely done before

Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

35. Which of the activities listed below would you consider participating in? (check all that apply)



Other: (please specify below)

Continuing education/learning opportunities

Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

36. Additional comments about communication within your organization: (write your answer in the space provided) See Appendix F

37. Things you believe your organization should continue to do: (write your answer in the space provided) See Appendix H

38. Things you believe your organization should start or stop doing: (write your answer in the space provided) See Appendix H

39. Please indicate which clinic you consider to be your home-base clinic.

Answer	%
Company A	50.00%
Company B	50.00%
Total	100%

40. Please indicate below if you are clinic staff or business office staff.

Answer	%
Clinic Staff (i.e. nurse, triage, medical assistant, surgery scheduling)	41.18%
Business Office Staff (i.e. billing, coding, psr, medical records)	26.47%
Prefer Not to Answer	32.35%
Total	100%

* Adapted from Nixon and Helms (2010a) Study

Appendix B

My Job Response Index Rating

My Job Response Index Rating

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Response Index Rating
Overall, I feel this is a good place to work.	35	3	5	4.20	.531	6
I clearly understand the expectations of my job.	35	2	5	4.31	.676	1
The workload expected of me is realistic.	35	3	5	4.14	.648	8
I feel I have adequate resources to do my job.	35	2	5	4.23	.598	5
I feel I have adequate support to do my job.	35	2	5	4.03	.568	11
I have the decision-making authority I need to do my job well.	35	2	5	4.14	.692	9
I feel my efforts make a positive difference in the success of this organization.	34	3	5	4.26	.618	3
I have the chance to make daily use of my abilities and skills.	34	2	5	4.29	.760	2
I enjoy performing the day-to-day activities of my job.	34	1	5	4.18	.834	7
My work schedule allows me sufficient flexibility to meet my personal/family needs.	34	2	5	4.09	.900	10
Employee relationships are based on trust.	34	1	5	4.26	.898	4
The level of cooperation within the company helps me in performing my job.	34	2	5	3.94	.851	12
I received the appropriate training to perform my job.	34	2	5	3.68	.912	13
Valid N (list wise)	34					

Appendix C

Communication and Feedback Response Index Rating

Communication and Feedback Response Index Rating

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Response Index Rating
My organization regularly and effectively communicates organizational goals and objectives.	33	2	5	3.58	.902	6
My organization demonstrates uniformity and cohesiveness.	34	1	5	3.15	.989	10
New and existing policies are clear, communicated in a timely manner and easily available.	34	2	5	3.59	.743	5
I am informed about big changes in advance, instead of being caught by surprise.	34	1	5	3.03	1.193	11
I receive regular and effective feedback that helps me improve my job performance.	34	2	5	3.38	.779	7
* My supervisor is not specific enough when giving me feedback about my job performance.	34	1	5	3.35	.917	8
My supervisor listens to me when I have issues or ideas about improving my job.	34	2	5	4.00	.921	3
My supervisor's actions and behaviors are consistent with her words.	33	2	5	3.82	.727	4
I am satisfied with how complaints and concerns are dealt with.	33	1	5	3.30	.810	9
My supervisor is approachable and available whenever I have a need.	33	2	5	4.15	.834	1
The supervisor has a good understanding of what is happening in this facility.	33	2	5	4.09	.947	2
Valid N (list wise)	32					

*Question was reverse coded to match the scale on the other "positively-worded" responses of the other questions in this sections (Nixon & Helms, 2010a)

Appendix D

Recognition Response Index Rating

Recognition Response Index Rating

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Response Index Rating
My organization offers recognition to individuals in appropriate ways.	33	2	5	3.42	.867	2
Recognition or praise is something I value.	34	2	5	4.29	.760	1
*At my organization, recognition or praise for doing a good job is rare.	34	1	5	3.29	.906	3
Valid N (list wise)	33					

*Question was reverse coded to match the scale on the other "positively-worded" responses of the other questions in this section

Appendix E

My Job Open-Ended Questions

My Job Open-Ended Questions

8. Additional training would be useful in: (write your answer in the space provided):

- Pre-Cert & Billing
- Understanding insurance/Insurance coverage
- Human Resources, OSHA, effective education
- Surgicals and post-operative time off for pts
- Training in other areas of the office that I am not involved in
- Nurse educations
- Continuing education in new clinical findings, treatments, and research
- Additional knowledge in all aspects of the clinic. PSRs to follow floor staff or triage staff and vice versa. Everyone can then understand a little more where the others are coming from.
- Scheduling appts from beginning to end as we have had several new hires and things are not being done correctly or completely.
- More initial training in specialty areas of clinic, so while training, it is easier understood.
- Additional training would be useful in some set up and protocol of procedures.
- More protocols to go by. It is difficult to train a new employee when there aren't many specific protocols in place. It is great to be trusted to make our best judgements, but most employees do things differently, making it confusing for new employees who train with multiple employees.
- I believe I receive the training I need to complete my job. If I need more, I just ask.

My Job Open-Ended Questions

9. Additional comments about the workload or resources available (i.e. equipment, supplies, computers, printers):

- Resources are readily available however equipment does not seem to be up to par at all times.
- The fax machine is terrible. A new fax machine would be greatly beneficial to everyone in the clinic.
- Computers are slow; staff availability due to working on phones is difficult
- We definitely could use printers/fax machines that are able to do scanning/emailing.
- Better access to printers and copiers
- Portable laptops would help with time management. Less time to log in. More portability. It would be nice to have more patient rooms to handle high patient volume
- Replacing the remaining small screens for the computer with the wide screen would be nice so we can see all of the information in a patient's chart on any computer. Right now on the small screens, we have to scroll over to see or chart certain things, which wastes time.
- I feel we have ample equipment and supplies to do our duties; some organization may be needed from time to time.
- As far as workload: It appears that the more you do, the more they continue to add on to your plate. If someone doesn't want to do a particular job, it can be shifted in a different direction instead of being done by the person that is most qualified or should be doing it.
- Some days the workload can be overwhelming, but we have a good team that pitches in together to get it done.
- We are sometimes over-staffed which leaves us bored with nothing to do.

Appendix F

Communication and Feedback Open-Ended Questions

Communication and Feedback Open-Ended Questions

21. Communication at my organization could be improved by: (write your answer in the space provided):

- This is definitely improving and I feel we as a group are in a good place
- Trusting employees to have more input in decisions before they are finalized
- Being open with changes in the organization and keeping staff informed of changes or possible changes; having clear guidelines of how a job should be completed.

- More small meetings with updates in the different divisions of the practice; examples of the changes, process; the ability to feel as if you can say anything without repercussion.
- Changes to policies are often presented too early and are then updated multiple times. Makes for confusion.
- To let know of changes either in a meeting or talking, email isn't always the way to go
- Regular office staff meetings
- Organized meetings - with notes being taken

- Better employee participation, less rivalry between offices, team and all staff meetings
- Communication between clinics at times is not sending a uniform message. There is still an existing rift between Company A and Company B. Rules seem to apply differently between clinics and then communication becomes ineffective.
- Unsure. Perhaps time will make us more "one". Difficult to change long standing employer preferences.

- Information seems to be secretive...It would be nice if the managers and physicians would keep us employees updated...If we could see how the organization is actually doing financially, it may help us to work harder toward income oriented goals. It's hard to get motivated to make positive changes within the organization when we feel that we are often in the dark and that our suggestions based off of our experiences in the clinic are either ignored or not followed through on. I believe that communication between the "higher ups" and the rest of the employees is the organization's weak point...

Communication and Feedback Open-Ended Questions

29. Communication with my supervisor could be improved by: (write your answer in the space provided):

- Printed weekly updates are not beneficial, no follow through on training, daily huddles would be great
- My supervisor is in to many locations to get ahold of at times
- Supervisor's workload as a roomer being decreased, giving her more time to focus on her supervisor duties. She is a great supervisor, however, especially with everything that she has to juggle.
- Having a stronger feeling that she is willing to make a decision instead of leaving it in employees hands
- I feel that my supervisor does not treat us all equally. Some get away with things that others would either be fired or reprimanded for.
- Certain behaviors are tolerated which in turn creates animosity amongst the group. This behavior is not addressed and then the negativity trickles down throughout the company. It starts at the top and then works its way down.
- I have no concerns or need for improvement

36. Additional comments about communication within your organization: (write your answer in the space provided):

- Very enjoyable company to work for and wonderful employees we work with. A few little bumps to work out but no different than any other company.
- It feels like there is a lot of times when everyone in a department isn't informed of the goings on.
- Have monthly meetings to keep everyone up to date on things that are happening
- I think having so many different locations it is difficult for employees to feel connected. So communication is very important so no one is feeling left out.
- Am sure very difficult to

Appendix G

Recognition Open-Ended Questions

Recognition Open-Ended Questions

33. For me, recognition or praise could take the form of: (write your answer in the space provided):

- An email
- A simple thank you, nothing public
- Written notice for all to see
- Verbal comment from physicians or other staff members

- A thank you and to let you know you did a good job, not writing it in a newsletter each month
- Having the doctors walk thru the clinic offering thanks for the work done that day by staff.
- Verbal communication and an occasional bonus.
- "Thank you" and verbal appreciation, extra vacation hours, coffee or lunch from the providers on tough days, some kind of bonus for picking up extra hours
- Earning additional time off, rewarding those who go the extra mile and allowing bonuses to recognize employee effort
- We have "bliss" notes and the same people are giving/getting them all the time. Getting recognized for cleaning, stocking when that is a regular part of our job.
- Gift card

Appendix H

Organizational Do's and Don'ts Open-Ended Questions

Organizational Do's and Don'ts Open-Ended Questions

37. Things you believe your organization should continue to do: (write your answer in the space provided):

- Have clinical staff meetings
- Quarterly meetings with everyone.
- Employee appreciation and incentives
- Keep in touch with the employees
- Continue to make the patients #1, as they are the reason we are all here!
- Continue to encourage employees to have the ability to make decisions on their own; continue to encourage independent thinking.
- Upper management could be a little more visible at all locations, daily greetings, getting to know staff.
- The doctors should not change. They are amazing to their patients and treat us very well.

38. Things you believe your organization should start or stop doing: (write your answer in the space provided):

- Have clearer guidelines and instructions on how a job should be completed
- Start doing more outings. Start doing a meeting every two months with the PSRs and Nursing staff to discuss issues/concerns or ways to make our process better.
- Start communicating with staff more about what's going on and stop keeping everything so secretive.
- Treat all employees as equals. Supervisor and some nurse practitioners have their "favorites."
- Backstabbing; have more informational meetings
- I sometimes feel that my supervisor has her favorites and lets them get away with things. Then if some of us do the same thing, we get in trouble and are in the office being spoken to.
- It sometimes seems like the people who work the hardest keep getting more work piled on them. It would be nice if an effort was made to assign new/extra duties to staff who don't have as much on their plate, or to distribute the extra duties a little more evenly.
- If possible stop hiring people out of desperation. Take your time and interview and have the person shadow. This will help with hiring someone that doesn't fit in or enjoy the job duties.
- Stop thinking one clinic is superior over another. Employees are no longer Company A staff or Company B staff they are Company C staff.
- Tracking A/R - and sharing that information with the right people so that they can see what needs improvement and set goals to make sure that Company C stays financially sound in the future. Share the status and goals with everyone...it helps people know how we are doing as an organization and if things or areas need improvement it might help employees come up with more suggestions on how to make that happen effectively.

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