

SHSMD26 CONNECTIONS

Health Care Marketing, Strategy & Communications

American Hospital Association Conference
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9 Lessons from a Values-Driven Culture

How Dayton Children's brought refreshed values to life through communication, leadership activation, recognition, patient experience and storytelling

Dayton Children's Hospital

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learning objectives



1. Describe how employee voice and strategic communication can be used to refresh organizational values and strengthen culture alignment.
2. Identify practical strategies to activate values through leadership engagement, storytelling, recognition and employee experience initiatives.
3. Apply a culture-activation framework to move organizational values beyond awareness and into observable behaviors that reinforce engagement, pride and connection across the workforce.

Lesson 1:

Build a case for change

build a case for change: Dayton Children's values refresh

THE ORGANIZATION CHANGED

The workforce, size, footprint and operating environment had evolved. The existing values had served the organization for about a decade.

LANGUAGE NEEDED TO CHANGE

Employees wanted plain, approachable language that reflected the current workforce and made expectations easier to understand.

CULTURE NEEDED A FUTURE FRAME

Preserve a strong mission-centered culture while strengthening ownership, speaking up, learning and interconnection.

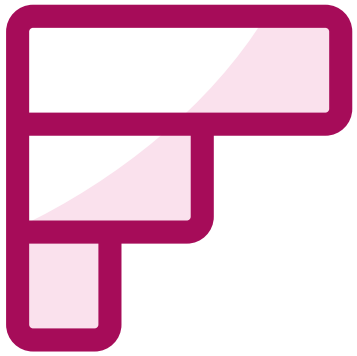
The goal was not new words. The goal was shared behavior.

the question behind the work

“How do you take values off the wall and put them into daily behavior?”

Most organizations have values. The challenge is making them visible, actionable and measurable.

Awareness is not adoption.



What describes your organization's values today?

Lesson 2:

Use employee voice

employee voice



11

senior leader interviews

23

director interviews

700+

online employee focus groups

People support what they help create.

what we learned about our culture



KEEP

- Pride in Dayton Children's
- Mission and values centered
- Focus on patients and families
- Quality and safety commitment
- People care for each other
- Belonging
- Collaboration within teams

NURTURE

- Consistent ownership for results
- Feeling valued by the organization
- Willingness to speak up
- Growth, learning and improvement mindset
- Inclusion in planning and decisions
- Interconnection across the organization
- Better prioritization

test the language before you launch it

CLARITY

Is it clear and easy to understand?



RESONANCE

Does it connect personally?



ESSENTIAL

Is it essential to everyday work?



STRENGTH

Is it currently visible in the culture?



2 rounds of digital focus groups • 700+ total voices.

Lesson 3:

Move words to behaviors

move from words to behaviors

we serve with compassion

we bring generosity, empathy and kindness to all interactions.



we commit to safety

we ensure every action and decision prioritizes the safety of patients, families and employees.



we value and respect each person

we create an inclusive space where everyone feels welcomed and respected.



we innovate with purpose

we adapt and change to improve pediatric care, for today and tomorrow.



we own every moment

we take pride in everything we do.



we're better together

we collaborate, communicate and support one another to deliver optimal care.



Each “we” statement was reinforced with personal “I will” behaviors.

Lesson 4:

Train your leaders to lead the culture

leadership came before the launch

MODEL



Build a shared understanding of the refreshed values and the culture findings.

COACH



Translate values into decisions, feedback, collaboration and daily leadership behaviors.

CONNECT



Equip directors, chiefs and managers to set expectations, coach in real time and connect work to purpose.

Communications creates awareness. Leaders create adoption.

leaders needed to experience the culture through training

Speed networking

Build relationships across divisions

Mood Elevator

Understand how leader energy affects decisions and relationships

Innovation & accountability

Generate ideas, build consensus, take ownership

Feedback practice

Strengthen real-time coaching

“I will” commitments

Translate values into personal action

shadow of leadership

How leadership behavior impacts the frontline.

leadership feedback on what “they” needed

PRACTICAL TOOLS

leader toolkit

PowerPoint, video, examples of behaviors, FAQs, what to cascade and when

TIME + REINFORCEMENT

Time to digest, reflect and practice; continued education, check-ins and consistent communication.

CONSISTENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Clear expectations and equal accountability across departments, leaders and levels.

Lesson 5:

Storytelling resonates

storytelling became the operating system

Focus News (FirstUp)

Patient stories



Focus Live (town hall)

Employee + leader stories

Teach the values through real examples of “what good looks like.”

2-way communication with employees



values in action

✓ Following

Learn about Dayton Children's refreshed values.

Published August 26, 2025



Dayton Children's Hospital

April 08, 2026

see how Shannon owns every moment

What does "owning every moment" look like? For Shannon, it means stepping up and doing everything she can to deliver the...

values in action

👍 ❤️ 😊 20 Reactions



👍 Like 3



Dayton Children's Hospital

April 01, 2026

see how Sarah owns every moment

What does "owning every moment" look like? For Sarah, it means stepping up without hesitation, no matter the day or the challeng...

values in action

👍 ❤️ 🌈 39 Reactions



👍 Like 9



Teach the values through real examples of “what good looks like.”

Values video



Lesson 6:

Launch of Above and Beyond week and patient experience week



In one word, what employee behavior most influences patient experience?

key components of making culture visible



employee behavior



patient experience



how care is felt



how culture is
experienced

launch of Above and Beyond week

1 Above & Beyond recognition platform

Peer recognition, points and visible values in action

2 Patient experience awards

Celebrate how care is experienced and recognize performance

3 Leader rounding + recognition

Create connection across locations, shifts and teams

4 Engagement multiplier

Activate pride, belonging and confidence in the future

Recognition + patient experience + values = one enterprise culture experience

one enterprise experience among 5,000 employees



- One enterprise experience, not a smaller version for offsites
- Virtual photo booth and Teams backgrounds
- Patient experience awards
- Leader rounding
- Cards mailed to homes
- Focus Live (town hall)
- Extra recognition points to give to others
- Offsite kits with treats, prompts and surprises

Equity of participation had to be designed, not assumed.

**we innovate
with purpose**

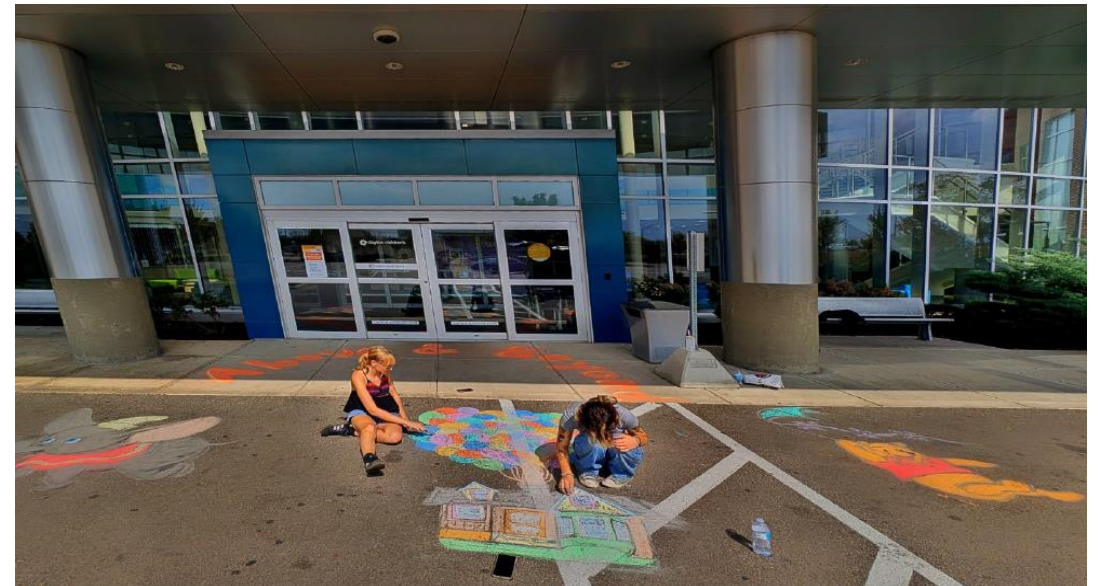
we adapt and change to
improve pediatric care,
for today and tomorrow



thank you

to: _____

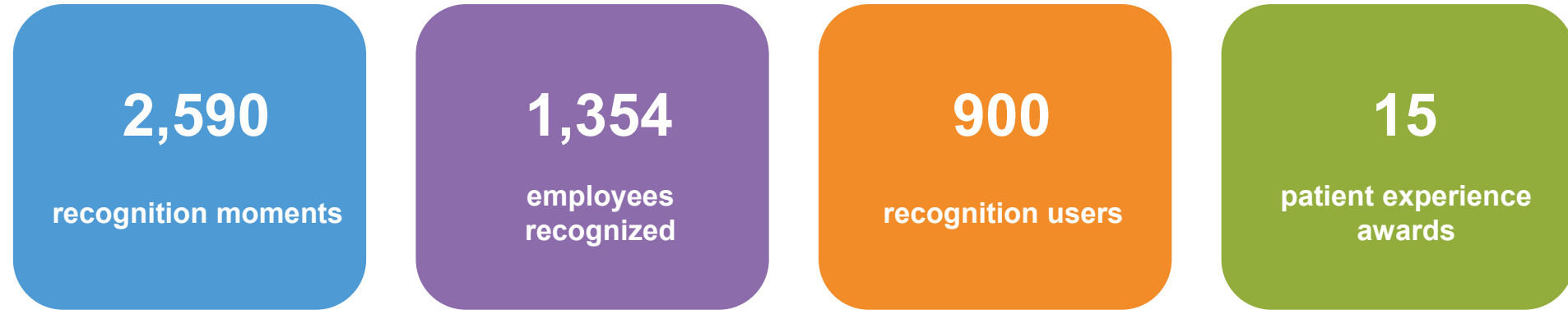
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Lesson 7:

Recognition teaches culture

recognition teaches the culture



Most recognized value

**WE'RE BETTER
TOGETHER**

Recognition of values into visible examples of “actions and behaviors.”

recognition + participation infuses culture

RECOGNIZE

Values-based awards + points

CONNECT

Focus Live + leader rounding

CREATE

Virtual photo booth + chalk art

SHARE

Focus News + employee stories

INCLUDE

Home mailers + offsite kits

CELEBRATE

Cookouts + local team moments

Employees did not just hear the values. They practiced, recognized and shared them.

Lesson 8:

Measure everything

measure culture like a strategic initiative

850

Focus Live (town hall) attendees

87%

Open Rate

89%

Reach

51%

Focus News engagement

79%

positive employee feedback

6

Leadership toolkits to cascade

Measure reach, participation, recognition, sentiment and leader behavior.

Lesson 9:

Build a system of culture

build a culture system



A launch creates a moment. A system creates repetition and accountability.

what we learned, and what changed to keep improving

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Recognition is powerful but can be unevenly experienced.
- Hero moments do not always scale.
- Leaders wanted clearer expectations during culture moments.

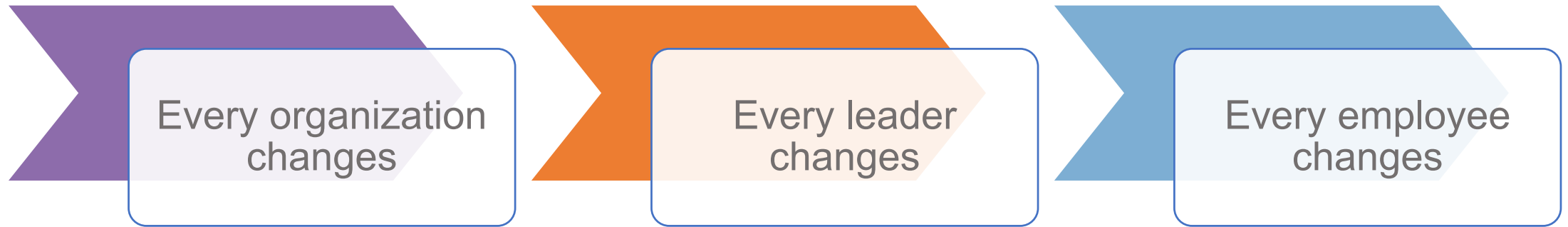
WHAT CHANGED

- Increased leadership presence through rounding and values cards.
- Expanded patient experience awards.
- Strengthened planning for offsites and remote teams.

WHAT STAYED

- Immersion in culture and values.
- Celebration of people.
- Authentic storytelling. Joy, gratitude, pride and meaningful surprises.

culture isn't math... it's never solved and done



Culture isn't a project with an end date; it's an ongoing responsibility of every leader and every employee.

9 lessons

1 Build a case for change.

2 Use employee voice.

3 Move words to behaviors.

4 Train your leaders.

5 Storytelling resonates.

6 Launch to create momentum.

7 Recognition teaches culture.

8 Measure everything.

9 Build a system.

Values are not what you say.

They are what you

RECOGNIZE

REINFORCE

REWARD

REPEAT

Make the culture visible. Make the behavior repeatable.



What will you take home to improve your culture?

contact us!

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