

If Disney Ran Your Hospital: 9½ Things You Would Do Differently *by Fred Lee*

No doubt you or someone in your family has had the pleasure of partaking of the Disney experience. It might have been at a theme park, on a Disney cruise ship, or peripherally through Disney's television networks and stores. Disney has built its reputation as a premier customer service organization through the visitor experience. Routinely, their cast members go beyond mere satisfaction to provide an unbeatable and memorable vacation inspiring the loyalty of their guests. Disney's premier customer satisfaction and experience reputation has led to the creation of the Disney Institute which trains people, teams, groups, and companies in the Disney way. In 2004, Fred Lee, a former Disney Executive, published the book *If Disney Ran Your Hospital: 9½ Things You Would Do Differently* to provide healthcare managers with insights to improve the patient experience, the Disney way. He sought to take some of the key concepts that Disney managers use to create their culture and apply them to the healthcare setting. With Disney it is all about the culture...creating a management led culture to provide a premier guest experience. Despite being more than a decade old, many of the principles are still very valid and integrate well with our move towards High Reliability and drive to provide the premier patient experience.

CHAPTER	CONCEPT
1	Redefine Your Competition and Focus on What Can't be Measured (the ½ concept)
2	Make Courtesy More Important Than Efficiency
3	Regard Patient Satisfaction as Fool's Gold
4	Measure to Improve, Not to Impress
5	Decentralize the Authority to Say Yes
6	Change the Concept of Work from Service to Theater
7	Harness the Motivating Power of Imagination
8	Create a Climate of Dissatisfaction
9	Cease Using Competitive Monetary Rewards to Motivate People
10	Close the Gap Between Knowing and Doing

Within the book there are 10 concepts, prevalent in the Disney mindset, which Fred Lee exports to the healthcare setting.

In my career I have seen the use of several of these concepts for the betterment of our beneficiaries. While all of these concepts have things to teach us, I will focus on a select few which are applicable to our current landscape in the Military Health System (MHS) initiatives.

REDEFINE YOUR COMPETITION AND FOCUS ON WHAT CAN'T BE MEASURED

In order to truly understand satisfaction you need to understand the drivers of satisfaction. Studies have repeatedly shown that key facets such as teamwork, keeping the patient informed, friendliness, responding to patients in a reasonable time, talking to patients in terms they understand, and care and compassion are the most critical drivers of satisfaction. Many of these are based on a patient's perception. Perceptions can be difficult to manage, even more so than outcomes, yet both are important in building satisfaction and require very different skill sets. Perceptions are based primarily on one-to-one interactions with staff members. A culture needs to be instilled within healthcare that allows for the interactions necessary to create the perceptions we desire from our patients. Not infrequently, management will be told of poor perceptions through complaints. But when we focus on complaints, we are merely responding to issues that have already happened. We may be able to mitigate the situation but we cannot go back and correct the perception. Managers should look beyond the complaints, to the perceptions being created by their staff within those one-to-one interactions with patients. They would benefit from ensuring the culture necessary to create desired perceptions for our patients regardless of whether or not there are complaints.

MAKE COURTESY MORE IMPORTANT THAN EFFICIENCY

In order to truly be efficient, we need to break down the barriers between Departments, promote inter-departmental communication and cooperation, and build a culture of teamwork

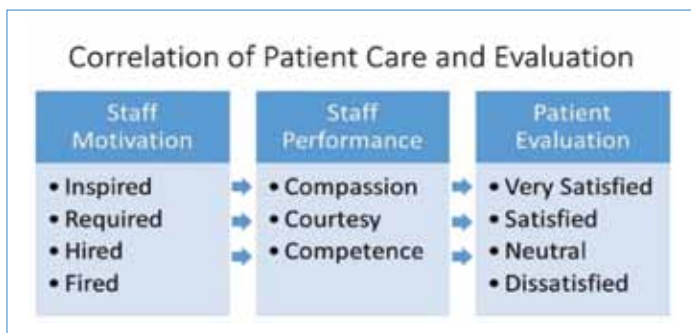
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focused on courtesy and service. When management creates a culture of courtesy above all else, barriers between departments fall, teamwork emerges, and efficiency results. Fred Lee says, “Accountabilities drive structure and structure drives culture.” He encourages healthcare managers to ensure that the culture of courtesy is the root upon which their organization is built and to see through the phony efficiency created when silos and interdepartmental barriers exist.



REGARD PATIENT SATISFACTION AS FOOL'S GOLD

Satisfaction is important but is it more important for our patients to be satisfied or to be loyal? Fred Lee argues that the true measure of your success in the patient experience is through patient loyalty. It only takes one memorable experience to create a story. A patient who had everything go as expected with no memorable event has no story to share. Those of us who have been to a Disney park likely remember a specific event or instance that created a memorable event...the story. These events and stories are the basis for loyalty. Healthcare managers need to create a culture which allows their staff the freedom and power to create these memorable experiences...the patient's story. Many cite three factors to create a memorable experience and loyalty: competence, courtesy, and compassion. It is the latter two that drive true satisfaction with compassion being the key driver more than the others.



DECENTRALIZE THE AUTHORITY TO SAY YES

This concept is the one that I have personally seen have the most impact in improving patient perceptions, the patient experience, and building patient loyalty. It can however be a difficult concept for many managers to grasp since it takes away some of their own decision-making authority. Studies have shown that in healthcare, the barriers to allowing staff members at all levels to say “Yes” comes from middle management, not first-line supervisors or senior managers. Fred Lee says, “It is not possible to create a world-class service culture as long as we keep structures that are defined by layers of bureaucracy and departmental barriers to speed and responsiveness.” The sooner we resolve a situation, the better for the patient and the organization. In order to achieve this effect, our staff, at all levels, needs to be empowered to fix patient situations in the moment they occur. This level of empowerment can only be achieved through an organizational cultural shift, one that is necessary with today's empowered patients.

CREATE A CLIMATE OF DISSATISFACTION

True change and improvement is driven by dissatisfaction. We are all bombarded with metrics on a regular basis. These metrics create dissatisfaction in the level of current performance and motivate us to improve through initiative and change. Dissatisfaction is not that dissimilar from the high reliability concept of preoccupation with failure. Preoccupation with failure tells us to expect that things will go wrong and try to identify the *what* and *how* of those failures in order to target your improvement strategies and effect change. With dissatisfaction, we are doing the same thing but more qualitatively, and in this context, more in line with the patient experience. By identifying areas of dissatisfaction amongst patients and/or staff, we can identify where we need to improve and target improvement strategies to effect change. As we do with our quantitative quality measures, we should use our qualitative dissatisfaction to target areas for improvement in the overall patient experience.

CONCLUSION

Many of the concepts within this book lend themselves to current initiatives within the MHS. The theme throughout the book is the need to create a culture of respect, trust, compassion, and empathy for our patients and staff. This is not dissimilar from what is necessary to be a High Reliability Organization. The APLSS survey already has questions about courtesy, trust, and loyalty, but we tend to pay more attention to the individual satisfaction questions. At least within our Military Treatment Facilities, we need to pay more attention to these questions. It can only help us on our journey to High Reliability and creating a premier patient experience.