



Lenoir Memorial Hospital

A community hospital begins its journey to becoming “provider of choice” in its marketplace with a systemic revitalization of its leadership capacity.

When Lenoir Memorial Hospital set a goal of becoming the “provider of choice” in its competitive eastern North Carolina marketplace, the not-for-profit medical center recognized that success would require a huge commitment to change as well as a new leadership model.

“Our bottom line is to be thought of as a valuable community resource – where patients can get the highest quality care right where they live,” said Jim Dobbins, vice president of human resources. “We came to realize that traditional management thinking would not get us to that customer-focused level, but that we could really differentiate ourselves by collectively improving our leadership capacity and abilities.”

Led by CEO Gary Black, Lenoir Memorial approached the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) in early 2002 with ideas for a broad-based change initiative that would go beyond piecemeal executive training. “Gary had the vision that leadership development was critical to our future and he wholeheartedly supported the initiative from the beginning,” noted Dobbins. The desire was to create a leadership process capable of bringing about an organization-wide culture shift.

The hospital worked with CCL to create a two-year process for 65 executives, directors, managers and supervisors, built around a framework of a shared vision, a leadership strategy, and a capability of connected leadership needed to continue moving forward. At the core of this change was the discovery and definition of a new core capability required by the organization. *Professional Ownership for Patient Confidence* became the focus for the culture change effort.

Delivered in three phases, the process got underway in the summer of 2002 with a select group of Lenoir Memorial’s directors mapping out the process and airing specific environmental issues to be addressed. Phase two featured a series of

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a clear and compelling vision of the organization as “provider of choice”
- Establish a model of leadership that fosters trust and collaboration
- Engage employees in customer satisfaction by distributing decision-making

OUTCOMES:

- Effective process for moving toward organizational goals
- Creation of a genuinely collaborative environment
- Strong gains in employee and customer satisfaction

leadership development intensives for the executive team, directors, managers and supervisors. These learning intensives included exercises aimed at fostering collaboration and decision-making at all levels of the organization. “This leadership model demonstrated to them that we value their input and that we are committed to change,” said Dobbins. In phase three, CCL provided evaluation services that included both individual- and organizational-level analyses of improvement in leadership practices.

Lenoir Memorial considers its leadership initiative not an end in itself but the start of a journey, and did not necessarily expect to see dramatic short-term change or dividends. But it has. Beth Arruda, director of education and staff development, said there is a marked sense of openness and engagement in the organization’s day-to-day operations now. Scores on both the hospital’s employee-satisfaction survey and the customer satisfaction survey have soared. As a result of the initiative’s emphasis on the concept of “distributed leadership,” Lenoir Memorial has established a leadership academy it believes will help retain top young talent and imbue them with the strong professional leadership skills the hospital will need in generations to come.