Connecting as an Organization Post-COVID

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Nanne Finis: When you think about COVID and this last couple of years, so many organizations have been challenged with rethinking their culture, reimagining culture. And then on top of that, the interplay of technology and how technology can support that. So can you describe the last couple of years and, if that makes sense to you, JoEllen, think about how technology has aided some of that and what you've needed to do to pursue that greatness, that mission.

JoEllen Frain: I think it's so important because part of our hope and wish and desire is that we can get past the pandemic. And I think the acknowledgment that we're not the same organization that we were before the pandemic, coming out of the pandemic, for lots of different reasons. And so there's a couple of different things that we sunsetted during COVID because we had to that have been slow to come back. So I think that's one of the first things.

But I think the other part that we've started to understand and explore more, is more around the wellbeing of our staff post-COVID and understanding what that looks like. And we've provided venues and opportunities for staff to share their journey through that because everybody's journey is a little bit different. There were staff that were working when most of their colleagues were sent home, and they have a different lived experience than we have with those that were sent to be remote and have not yet returned to campus.

And so, it's not a one-size fits all, but it's really grounding ourselves in terms of this being an intentional path forward, of things that we are going to do to ensure we don't lose that connectivity because that is the secret sauce of our organization. And quite honestly, I would argue in health care and health care is centered around the patients.

And we have our direct patient care providers. But in many organizations now, we have their support systems that are removed from the office and are working remote. And I think we have a little bit of a tension between those that are able to work from home in their yoga pants and et cetera and those that are on the front lines.

And I think it's important that we find intentional ways that we continue to bring those groups back together so they know that there is a visible and tangible support. And we've intentionally done that with many of our teams, as saying you have a very hands-on practice component with the groups that you serve. So from an HR, finance, IT perspective, you're not only getting it from your lens, but you're there in order to kind of share that with the practice and the practice sees that visible support.

They see that we're still connected as an organization, right? I think the other part that we have to recognize is that how we do business is different. And I think the pendulum swung a little bit too far. We all got really, really comfortable with Zoom meetings and technology. And I think for many, we have

leaders who are going from Zoom to Zoom to Zoom to Zoom to Zoom, and they may be in their office, but they don't open their office door.

I think we're starting to do some intentional leadership rounding and we take on a couple of different ways. And it may sound a little bit hokey, but during COVID, we started treat carts as a way for shared service staff that had been on campus and went home to come back on campus and see and feel the practice so they can again kind of fill their buckets and understand the purpose of what we're driving towards, plus interact and thank our clinical staff.

Those were wildly successful and we've continued those on today and the expectation in our leaders across our practices as well as our leaders across the different shared services, is that they have a visible presence on campus. So the expectation is they're out and they're rounding with their teams. Many of them take the treat cart because oftentimes if they don't show up with the beef jerky or the Sour Patch kids, there's a question.

But I think it's such a great way to get staff out and get staff talking around just a simple snack. I think that's really been impactful. And really understanding we have a vision of what the needs are and we synthesize the data and we think about it and we put together these operational plans. But oftentimes that's not what the staff are asking for.

They just want reinforcement of one: we understand the challenges they're facing, whether it be staffing deficits, whether it be scheduling challenges, and two: how are we enabling those leaders, those areas, as well as others to help them solve the problem? They don't have to wait for a different fix that comes at a different level. Certainly, if there's a collection of those things, we want to solve it at a system level.

But if there's things that can be augmented or changed or bring a little bit more kind of joy to their workforce, we should be acting on those and supporting our leaders and acting on those. And the last part that I'll say is we've been intentional in being able to return staff towards professional development, not certainly to the full extent that we were prior to COVID for lots of different challenges, but just that investment and staff and that opportunity for them to understand that we're invested and want them to feel the passion about their profession and continue to build their skill and support them in building those skills.

And so we've been intentional about that with our staff as well, to say "We want to make sure that you're getting that opportunity to refresh and refill your bucket too." as we're facing these challenges. So those are just a couple of the items that we've contemplated and done.

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