

Supporting Staff Through Patient-Centered Innovation

[VIDEO TRANSCRIPT – September 14, 2023]

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Anne Dabrow-Wood: Well you know, JoEllen, and you know, obviously we know Mayo Clinic's unique, but what is that secret sauce? What is it that makes you all so unique? And what can you share with others in health care who are on the journey of trying to improve their health care organizations and become great organizations?

JoEllen Frain: You know, it's such a tough question because, again, I don't want to gloss over the real and significant pressures that we face day-to-day and Mayo Clinic is not immune to them. We are not immune to recruitment challenges. We are not immune to some of the peaks and valleys with compensation and other challenges. But I think what I would describe as unique to Mayo is that our 'why' is really sound and it has remained unchanged. And we revisit that 'why' routinely and for the right and important reasons.

And I think so often when people talk about their 'why', they're like, "Oh no, no, we have that printed on our pamphlet and we have it etched in our wall and so of course everybody knows our 'why'." But I think it really becomes a differentiated 'why' when they can see our leaders living in that 'why' and acting that out.

And I think as I experience Mayo Clinic we use that 'why' to help formulate our decisions and that 'why' is the patient and we revisit that routinely and regularly. But it is coupled with that patient-centric focus that this relentless pursuit of innovation is coupled with it. And so it's not being happy within the routine and being able to just care for our patients today.

But it's ensuring that we're looking around the corner, that we're asking ourselves the tough questions, that we're challenging ourselves to say, "Couldn't this be done differently and better on behalf of our patients?" in the constant balance that we work with them? And one example that I just want to give you is Sister Generose. And so you'll hear me reflect upon many of the sisters who are leaders across our organization over the many, many years.

Sister Generose was actually our last sister administrator, and she took the helm of Saint Mary's in 1971. And so she led one of the largest hospitals at that time. But she has such an important quote that she gave. And routinely and up until her passing at the age of 97, she kept open office hours. And this would be right in the hub of Saint Mary's campus, where you could walk by and she would invite you in and you couldn't help but know the 'why' and you couldn't help but leave that office feeling something different.

And her quote was so important. And I think this is really what we gravitate towards and we reflect on that. It's "We must not be content only to see things as they are. We must have the vision, faith and

hope to see what things can and must become.” And so when we face really significant challenges, we have to understand that things do need to change.

And that's okay. But we have to have the hope and the faith and the vision to see what things could become. So I think that's one aspect of things. I think the other piece is really around how we carry that out with our staff and how we keep the 'why' in the presence of our staff. And we do that through a number of different ways.

One is consistent listening and that listening has to be with purpose and plans. And so we routinely, like many other organizations, do listening strategies, and we do staff surveys to kind of measure our progress or gaps. But it's one thing just to measure where we are. The second is really taking thoughtful action to say, “Where is it that we're falling short on supporting our staff in order to support their patients?”

So one real example that came out of our listening from last year's survey was just really the different generations that we have in the workforce and the meaning behind their benefits. What some individuals highly, highly value, other individuals don't see value in at all. And so how is it that we have so many different generations with so many different needs?

How are we responding to them as an employer? So we formed a task force to modernize our benefit offerings. And really the fundamental piece about that is one trend that's coming out loud and clear across many, many different avenues is really around flexibility. And I think sometimes when we mention flexibility to leaders, they equate that with chaos and loss of organization and controls and purposes and processes and all of those things.

And I really think that flexibility is different than that. Flexibility is one in terms of choices. Flexibility is oftentimes a currency for some that says, “You know what, I'm willing to work nontraditional hours in order to have the payoff of being home between these hours and these hours.” Too often our schedules were forcing people into eight hour or 12 hour blocks that didn't have flexibility within them.

So we started to crack those open and we're leveraging our new technologies to help us with that. In terms of staff scheduling, to provide that flexibility, bring some more transparency and tools to our staff that will afford them that. So I think those are a couple of the items that I would say is key to us working on those things.

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