

Acknowledging the Commitment of Healthcare Workers During the Pandemic is a Must

[VIDEO TRANSCRIPT – July 12, 2023]

[Music]

Nanne Finnis: Michael, you often shared, too, that healthcare is the only organization or the only industry that really has not recovered post-COVID. Can you just give a little reflection around that and then you know how in this recovery to come, if you will, you know, what can organizational leaders start to do to begin to change this culture?

Michael Bush: You know, my sister, my brother's a physician. My sister was an intensive care, critical care nurse, for infants. And my sister worked in nursing 30 years on the nightshift, 30 years on the night shift. Critical care, you know, infant delivery. Never took a day off, never took sick leave. 30 years, decided enough's enough. Now, when you got a person like that, which is just a crazy person, the most remarkable person I know is my sister. And she's like, "Don't miss it". Okay, that tells you everything.

This is a remarkable person, you know? Never took a day off. And any of you who worked night shift. know. You know what? You're in another world all the time. And then, like, time out and enough's enough. That tells you everything. You know, that this angelic person, which you mainly find in healthcare, is like, "I'm putting my wings down."

So that's what happened. And so you have people, people in hospitality have returned to hospitality. People in manufacturing have returned to manufacturing. It wasn't a great resignation. It was a great "you're disrespectful to me, I'm going somewhere else." But they stayed in the industry. People in healthcare. It's the only industry, people are like, I'd rather go work in the distribution center at Walmart than this.

And it's because it was a situation they didn't feel anyone cared about them. They didn't feel anyone cared about them. And these are people who are self-propelled, self generating in terms of life's purpose. And they were like, "no one here seems to be caring about me". So this is the situation and the angels who are listening, there should be a national day for you.

More than a month, just the National Day. There is nothing like what people in healthcare have done for this country and for the world. It's not even close. It's there's no place else. And we survey everywhere in every type of business. So that's the situation. I think acknowledging that is really important. I hope that people in at least a month got acknowledged.

At least a month. I hope the month doesn't end. I hope the month continues and because this is the foundation, there is no great future for healthcare in this country and any other. If we don't recognize what just happened and what people just did. There's no other demonstration of commitment. So people in an institution than what health care workers just did.

You just cannot find it. And so way beyond those who found the vaccine, people who worked on the vaccine, we know them. They were living pretty well. Okay? They were living pretty well. It wasn't the same. It wasn't the same. So this is you know, you can't, you got to start with honesty and an acknowledgment of what has actually happened.

This is certainly the place to start. And I believe it's the hope for going forward. Places that aren't doing this, they're going to deteriorate as we go forward. Yeah. Yeah. You know, so this is the great opportunity for organizations to acknowledge these things and decide we're going to use this miserable tragedy called the pandemic and change the way we behave.

I know a healthcare institution that we know them well. They're on our list. They did a program in 2021. Executives had to randomly pick an employee and go pick that employee up and drive them to work and then drive them home. It was remarkable. First of all, they had no idea about a person who worked a 16 hour shift that when they went home and came back, they only got 3 hours sleep because they did they dropped them off and had to come back and get them.

And they were like, "Oh my, can you believe?" And they're like, "Yeah, we've been doing this." But they had no idea. That act changed the relationship between leaders and the people on the front lines. So but this is a place that that clearly felt a need to keep every person they had and to, you know, make a make a change. That didn't cost any money.

It transformed now it didn't transform every leader, but it transformed most of them. And, of course, that person who had that experience from the worker side, that somebody picked them up and drove them and, you know, took them home. They told everybody about it. You know, that's just a minor thing didn't take a lot. That's not a compensation change. You know, you don't have to do anything, rewrite any job descriptions, nothing like that.

This is just the connection point that these executives have been transformed, I believe, because they spent time with butterflies: people who are already transformed. You know, they gained by being around these people. And then they were I'm you know, we've heard all the stories about, wow, wow. We were so disconnected for all these years prior to the pandemic with these people, totally disconnected.

So this is the power of the of the connection that we're talking about and the future going forward. And I just hope that leaders will sit and think about healthcare, COVID still here. Okay. So everybody else this way, oh, it doesn't exist anymore. People are, oh, yeah, it still exists. It's a real thing. It's still happening.

So they're the only ones still living in that reality. And I hope as a result will lead us into, you know, behaving differently in terms of how we treat one another. We know nurses need more money. We can go down the line at the dis-equity in healthcare in this country. That's nobody should feel proud about this, you know, I'm talking about the United States right now.

You know, nobody should feel good about this. So can we at least treat people in a respectful way if we're not going pay more, which we ought to do? Yeah, we absolutely ought to do. I'm not getting anybody off the hook on that. But we do this. Yes. Because, number one, you're going to keep them. Number two, you're going to keep remarkable people that you don't have to question their commitment like you do in technology and all these other things.

You're going to keep them. And you know, that's going to take care of your institution. Because if you think your institution is great without these people, I don't know what to say. You're dangerously delusional. I like being delusional to some extent. I like to think I look like Denzel Washington. Okay. But dangerously delusional is a whole different thing.

And so you need to shake that and come back to reality. And whatever you think you're doing for your community, you can't do it without these people. You've somehow looked at the spreadsheets. You spent too much time on spreadsheets and been, you know, completely disconnected from why you're still there.

[Music]