

## More Than Just A Banner Year

Michael Fleming, Ed.D, is the Chief People Officer of Banner Health Care, one of the largest nonprofit hospital systems in the country. Fleming tells us, “Our hospital leaders have been charged with doing more with less. People who once clamored to



work in a healing profession have become increasingly disillusioned by changes within healthcare.” Noting political uncertainties, staggering increases in individual workload and span of control, and the need to manage complex dynamics associated with government regulations, outside clinics, revenue recovery and patient rights and expectations have made employment within hospitals less attractive in general and less financially rewarding specifically. Fleming talks about the intention and effort expended to help people stay focused on what

matters. They always wonder: Will we have jobs? Will we ever make any more money? Will we be able to do good work? What’s coming next?

Fleming believes that a major driver of value for Banner hospital system is retaining talent intimacy by modeling our valuing of concise, clear communication. “By this **I mean that those who provide contributions for us need to know that they will not be better heard, valued, or treated anywhere else than they will with us here at Banner.**” To make that happen, Banner has developed great sensing systems — surveys, forums, and the freedom to express oneself. These practices have helped keep the unions away or kept them from becoming powerful. Employees know they are cared for and that Banner is doing the best they can to stay tuned in through active listening and factoring in the employee’s needs, according to Fleming.

**“We promote open and candid dialogues, and equip managers with the information they need and the clear expectation to ensure the people they lead feel in on things, know how the work they do makes a difference, every day, and that they are supported in innovative work arrangements so they can take care of their families and improve themselves.”** Some of what makes Banner

sustainable and able to dominate in their markets seems to be that they seek to hire and retain people who are motivated by doing good deeds, altruism, and pulling themselves up by the bootstraps. This kind of person is especially interpersonally

capable, adapting to individual preferences and knowing how to leverage the strengths of others. “We are especially interested in people who have demonstrated resilience and can bounce back from unwanted change, who are glad to be part of a team, and not the shining star.” Other key selection characteristics for leaders are the ability to listen, to consider the needs of others and the capacity to admit they need help, or might not know all the answers. We have developed practical approaches to motivating people based on telling them the truth, providing them with relief by making time to listen and encouraging everyone to pull together.”

“Overall, we develop people to be able to give and receive feedback, crisp, clear and quick. No time for mucking around.” Banner’s business moves too fast, the stakes are too high. They have to be open to what their employees think and need and offer honest responses. Says **Fleming “we have the beginnings of a feedback rich culture, for the most part. We invite people to participate in dialogues without concern about conflicting points of view. We want people to know where they stand — every day of every week.** If you are thin skinned, do not apply. If you want to grow and learn, this is your place.”

Given these foundations and level of alignment and commitment, it looks like the high performance flag will keep waving at Banner for a very long time, easily seen by the growing cadre of leaders skillful in the use of Interpersonal Lens.