

ExceptionalLee – Lee Health Division 6A: Internal

Research/Situation Analysis: Lee Health is the largest health care provider in Southwest Florida, operating hospitals, physician offices, outpatient facilities, urgent care clinics, wellness centers, community health clinics and more in 75+ locations. Along with providing comprehensive care for every age and stage of life, Lee Health also is the largest employer in Lee County with 14,000+ team members. We also have a medical staff of 1,500+ physicians and a team of 3,000+ active volunteers. After significant growth and changes in long-term leadership, Lee Health completed an internal communications audit, which illustrated a need and desire to create more “system-ness” and to move away from siloed communication by facility, department, location—a clear call for cultural transformation to unite all of Lee Health. Concurrently, nationwide, changes in the health care environment are demanding positive patient experiences and satisfaction, as they are key drivers for financial outcomes. Lee Health has always been committed to providing safe, high-quality, compassionate care, but needed to unify the entire system under that strategic direction, so the Board of Directors introduced “Exceptional Patient Experience” as one of the health system’s four strategic priorities. With the strategic direction in place, we needed to create a scalable messaging platform for consistent, strategic, informational and engaging communication across our health system. A steering committee was commissioned to **research** and define “the Lee Health” experience. One-on-one meetings with leaders, focus groups, a listening tour led by President/CEO where employees could share stories and a health system-wide survey helped define what experiences are and should be at Lee Health. We also utilized **secondary research** from the Beryl Institute to better understand trends, changes and challenges and how health care professionals are structuring experience efforts across the globe—how they are elevating the human experience. Based on our research, including internal feedback and inspiration, we created the ExceptionalLee Promise, which reflects our collective commitment to creating exceptional experiences for our patients, their families and each other. It is not about doing more, it is about being more—showing up as our best selves every day and night. The Promise shifts experience from simply focusing on patients to focusing on everyone who comes to Lee Health, which creates better health care, more engaged team members, healthier families and stronger communities. We branded this approach to experience as ExceptionalLee and the Promise is the guiding principle of our cultural transformation. The ICARE framework of behaviors was developed to help embed the ExceptionalLee Promise.

Planning: A communications plan was developed to promote ExceptionalLee, the Promise and ICARE behaviors with the **goals** of aligning the health system under one unifying and compelling strategy and establishing a system-wide culture that empowers team members to live the Promise and take ownership of moving our strategy forward. To ensure the right message to the right person at the right time, we segmented our health system into specific **audiences:** Board of Directors, leadership (supervisors and above) and physicians, non-management employees (many are deskless) and volunteers. Our audiences are comprised of a variety of ages, education-levels, ethnicities, political persuasions and creeds, but are united by their dedication to our mission, vision and values. We needed alignment and buy-in across the top of the health system, from the Board of Directors down to the supervisors because we learned from our communication audit that our frontline employees want a unified leadership team, which gives them a sense of confidence and security. We also learned employees want to hear important news from their supervisor. To work toward our goals, we set these **objectives:** 1) Establish the Promise and ICARE as the guiding principles of our ExceptionalLee culture, and increase by 25% the confidence and preparedness of our employees to provide exceptional experiences to our patients within one year of introducing the concepts. 2) To establish a benchmark of 50% of all Lee Health employees being mostly or very familiar with ICARE within one year of introducing the framework. Along with employing our leadership team with sharing information about ExceptionalLee, we planned to utilize visual, written and interpersonal communication **strategies** to support the rollout,

including the following **tactics**: video, posters, pop-up banners, screensavers, intranet portal, special event, internal newsletters, town halls, print materials and communication toolkits. **Implementation:** To properly set the stage for this cultural transformation, we needed to align the hearts of our team members to the **message** of being more; video and face-to-face meetings helped the message resonate, and written communication helped reinforce our efforts. To reach the majority of leadership, ExceptionalLee and the Promise were unveiled at a quarterly leadership meeting. A video featuring senior leaders and a heart-wrenching patient testimonial introduced ExceptionalLee and set the stage for what leaders could expect in the coming months. To further prepare our leaders and physicians for their role in modeling and cascading ExceptionalLee and ICARE, we planned and hosted 20 leadership training workshops that walked them through our journey to becoming ExceptionalLee. Leader talking points and FAQs were created along with a toolkit that included a timeline for the rollout of an e-Learning module. Following the completion of the e-Learning by our workforce at the end of January 2019, we continued to embed the Promise and behaviors by launching a dedicated portal on the intranet called Living Our Promise, which features inspiring stories from employees across Lee Health, “fan letters” from patients, ICARE tools and resources, caring tips and more illustrating and reinforcing ExceptionalLee and the Promise. A multidisciplinary editorial board formed to help craft messages related to ICARE in a “Letter of the Month” campaign for leaders to use to start conversations about and role-play the desired behaviors. The President/CEO’s weekly communications also reinforced the messaging. We introduced ways for leaders and team members to recognize one another with “You are Exceptional” thank you notes and posters to display them, as well as special tokens for in-the-moment recognition. We rebranded and redesigned Lee Health’s highest employee award to the “Passion for the Promise Award,” and had team members nominate their colleagues in a variety of categories. Nominators and three finalists in each category were invited to attend a special gala where the winners in each category were announced. The new hire onboarding program was redesigned and relaunched as “Hello, Exceptional,” so new employees to our health system start day one with a strong understanding of our culture and standards of behavior. Throughout 2019, 20 ExceptionalLee Town Halls were held at locations throughout the health system, where employees could ask questions, provide feedback and share stories with the senior leadership team. At the first anniversary of the launch of ExceptionalLee, we introduced another video featuring a more heartwarming patient experience which highlighted the ways a nurse lived the ExceptionalLee Promise in every interaction with a homeless patient. **Evaluation:** Following the one-year anniversary of the introduction of the Promise and the ICARE behaviors, we conducted a survey that was sent to all employees to gauge their opinions on our progress toward our goals of strengthening our culture and providing better experiences to patients and team members. We met our goals and surpassed our objectives: 1) We increased the confidence and preparedness of our employees by 40% (57% felt prepared in 2018 compared to 80% in 2019). 2) We found that 72% of employees are mostly or very familiar with ICARE. **Budget:** Because patient experience is a top priority for our organization, and there is a need to unite everyone across the health system under one strategic direction, Lee Health invested significantly in this program. The budget of \$750,000 included consulting fees, events, printed materials, video production, intranet webpage design, promotional items and internal staff time. The budget for this program represents a percentage, around 0.04%, of Lee Health’s total annual budget of \$2 billion. Regarding staff time, in our Strategic Communications department, we had three of our six team members working on ExceptionalLee. We estimate that our three employees spent about 55% of their time planning, launching and operationalizing the communications plan accounting for \$150,000 of the total budget. In the nearly two years we have been working on this program, hundreds of people have been involved in planning, launching and sustaining the program. Determining the exact amount of staff time devoted to ExceptionalLee across Lee Health would be very hard to quantify, as it is part of meetings and huddles every day and night.