

"WE COULDN'T MANAGE OUR FUTURE BY LIVING IN THE PAST"

VALUES-CENTERED MANAGEMENT DEFEATED THE UNION CAMPAIGN

In a recent interview, Joe Swedish told us how he accomplished organization renewal, built his management team, and as an added bonus, defeated an unanticipated union campaign.

Joe Swedish, President, Mary Washington Hospital
Fredericksburg, Virginia

When I came to Mary Washington Hospital, I found disenchantment with the past leadership of the organization. The discouraged attitudes of our Associates were merely reflections of the managers' down attitudes. There was a lot of reminiscing of how things used to be. And I knew we couldn't manage our future by living in the past. There was very little understanding among the work force as to why they had to change at all. They thought change meant more work and the loss of the small hospital "personality". But I knew change was inevitable. Competitors were beginning to show interest in our market. The change process had to start by focusing on management.

We chose Dr. Clay Sherman and **The Uncommon Leader** course to help us with our strategy to pursue organizational excellence. We didn't want to do an amateur job in the renewal effort or lose time by trying to do everything ourselves. The change process had to get up and running fast in order to reach the results we wanted. I was familiar with Clay and Management House and the results his program had achieved in other hospitals. We decided only **The Uncommon Leader** would accomplish what we needed to do. Nowhere else could I have found Clay's experience, and more importantly, the results he helped our managers produce.

About mid-course, a heavy union campaign began, aimed at three-fourths of the work force. At first we considered postponing the course---and its change impacts---but as a team, we decided to continue as planned. We knew that only the managers could defeat the unions, and the managers were persistent. They involved Associates with the change process and decision making more than ever. With a lot of work we defeated the unions' efforts by teaching the managers how to manage. The changes that took place made the Associates understand that they didn't need the union to get their thoughts, ideas and opinions to us. The Associates learned that they had a voice in the organization without the union. Our initial projections for the course didn't include the union struggle, but the

course clearly gave us the guts and fortitude to win. Values-centered management defeated the union campaign.

Before we began the course, I was uncertain about the managers' commitment to the required change. They didn't believe Clay's program would work. But in one day, Clay had total commitment from both senior and mid-managers. And that commitment has remained solid to this day.

The Uncommon Leader course was a cultural phenomenon, a very intense experience. With Clay's guidance, we brought 50 managers together and turned them into one entity: a management machine. Now we capitalize on each others' strengths. We've eliminated the old feeling of failure. The new atmosphere is very creative and highly communicative. By sharing the same management values to guide our individual decisions, we've pushed decision making authority lower level and truly decentralized operations.

The bottom line is that we were able to get our Associates to commit to the change effort and to a values system. Then as a team they were eager to learn how to manage a hospital in the 1990's, responsive to the changes taking place in our industry and our market. It's the enthusiasm and commitment that Clay was able to generate within the organization that really made the course a success.

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