

The Health Care Improvement Foundation  
2017 Delaware Valley Patient Safety and Quality Award  
Entry Form

**1. Hospital Name**

Temple University Hospital

**2. Title Of Initiative**

Engaging Unionized Front-Line Staff in Innovative Customer Service Training Strategies

**3. Abstract (Please limit this description to 250 words.)**

Our healthcare organization provides a safety-net for the impoverished citizens of our community. These patients have a high disease burden; the highest in the state of Pennsylvania. Many of the organization's front-line staff is from the local neighborhood, and the staff in the Office of Patient Experience is no exception. Despite being well compensated, these individuals have had very low engagement in their roles and with the organization as a whole. Within our department, three unionized staff positions include: Patient Experience Representatives and Guest Relations Representatives from one bargaining union and Information Desk Clerks from another. These employees have been with the organization for a median of 10 years; some over 38 years. When new management was appointed in 2015, employee engagement was low while callouts and latenesses were high. Relationships across the department were strained, and teamwork was non-existent.

New management identified customer service training as a top priority for FY2017 to improve employee engagement and build a stronger relationship among front-line staff, unions, management and senior leadership. Management partnered with the health system's Organizational Development and Learning (ODL) to create an organic, low-cost customer service training that embodied our core values; Respect, Service, Quality. The program emphasized empathy, transparency and patient-and-family centeredness. This coursework is uniquely innovative in that it not only improved employee engagement, but brought about a realization that this training program is necessary to create the culture change needed. To date, this program has been replicated in six other departments with plans for system-wide deployment.

**4. What were the goals of your initiative?**

- o Increase Employee Engagement scores by empowering staff
- o Practice transparent leadership to enhance team dynamics
- o Develop an organic training curriculum that can be replicated throughout the healthcare organization

**5. What were your initiative's baseline data and the results of your initiative?**

As a result of our efforts, benchmarked against urban AMCs, our department's engaged employees increased from the 42nd percentile in 2014 to the 82nd percentile (100th=Best) in 2017(Appendix A). Similarly, in 2014 the department was in the 67th

percentile of disengaged employees, and in 2017 decreased to the 1st percentile (1st=Best,  $p < 0.05$ ) (Appendix A). The 2014 survey indicated that our department's lowest performing questions were:

- My manager is open & responsive to staff input
- My manager helps me balance my job and personal life
- My organization gives back to the community
- Conflicts are resolved fairly in the department
- My manager stands up for the interests of my unit/department

These questions were the baseline for the customer service curriculum as well as management's commitment to transparency. Of the 42 survey questions, our department's top strengths in 2017 survey were those pertaining to communication, Input and manager effectiveness, organizational mission and vision and employee support (Appendix B, B1-B4). As shown by the data, not only have the lowest performing questions become our top performing questions, they have also had statistically significant improvement. Furthermore, our other top performing questions in 2017 were those pertaining to professional growth and teamwork (Appendix C).

Staff's compliance with each union's respective time and attendance policies improved dramatically. In CY15, staff averaged 49 latenesses and 26 callouts per month. By CY17, staff averaged only 9 latenesses and 6 callouts a month (Appendix D). Qualitatively, the relationship between management and staff improved tremendously. Staff and management volunteered at community service projects, planned group events and developed a mutual respect and trust of one another.

Throughout this process, the most important thing management learned was the impact of transparency. Informing employees of 'big picture' plans and goals and not just focusing on daily tasks positively influenced our relationship with front-line staff as well as employee satisfaction in their positions. Partnering with HR and the unions was a key to our success in creating a more cohesive environment. Through transparency and investment in our employees, we were able to transform a group of long-term, disengaged staff into a group of reengaged individuals who have an understanding of the organization's mission, vision and values and a reenergized attitude toward their role, their teammates and their leadership.

**6. Describe the interventions that were instrumental in achieving the results for your initiative.**

In October 2014, our organization administered an employee engagement survey through the vendor, Advisory Board Company. Results from this initial survey were disseminated to department managers in April 2015 and those managers were instructed to create action plans based on of their department's top priorities for improvement. At the same time these data were disseminated, the leadership team of the Office of Patient Experience had complete turnover. Although the 2014 results did not reflect the new management team, they followed through with the department's top priorities. From July 2015 through June 2016, management executed the action plan around top

priorities, met with staff to understand their personal and professional needs and identified future goals for the department.

Interventions included all management participating in an open door policy, daily huddles with all shifts, monthly team meetings and management rounds. At the end of FY2016, management met with each individual employee to review their annual performance evaluation, discuss FY2017 goals for the department as well as each employee's personal goals; a practice that was not done in the past. In June 2016, management partnered with ODL to create a customer service training curriculum for all staff. The baseline data to measure the success of the curriculum was the 2014 employee engagement survey data which were benchmarked against Urban Academic Medical Centers (AMCs). This training was taught on a monthly basis with two groups of staff. The groups consisted of staff members from each of the three roles as well as members of the management team.

Furthermore, woven into the customer service training was a commitment from management to be more transparent and provide education around each union's time and attendance policies. Time and attendance tracking was benchmarked year over year. Each month, management met with staff to discuss their standing in respect to time and attendance so that staff were informed and empowered to comply with the organization's policy. Advisory Board Company and our organization administered the subsequent Employee Engagement Survey in January 2017. Both the 2014 and the 2017 employee engagement surveys consisted of the same 8 domains and the same 42 questions. Of the original Office of Patient Experience staff (N=18) who took the survey in 2014, 73% were still part of the department. The Customer Service Training curriculum ended after ten months with a graduation ceremony attended by Patient Experience leadership as well as senior leadership of the organization, including the system VP of Human Resources and the system Chief Quality Officer.

**7. How can this initiative be replicated through the region? (Please limit this description to 100 words.)**

This organic Customer Service Training can be easily formatted, and replicated to fit a specific organization's needs and employee population. The training curriculum uses educational content available publically, and weaves it in with organizational service standards, patient satisfaction and employee engagement data. The training is adjustable for all shifts, and can be taught in a variety of different formats tailored to the employee's roles, responsibilities and shifts. Furthermore, successful replication is dependent on a commitment from management to be transparent with frontline staff before, during and after the training.

**8. Explain how the initiative demonstrates innovation (Please limit this description to 100 words.)**

When employee engagement survey data were determined to be low, management identified customer service training and leadership transparency as top priorities. Management partnered with ODL to create a homegrown, low cost, training curriculum.

The curriculum used patient satisfaction data, patient grievance and praise letters, and previous employee engagement data to structure the interactive learning program. This program was piloted in the Office of Patient Experience, which includes front-line staff from two different bargaining units. Uniquely, management completed the program alongside frontline staff. This maneuver fostered a rejuvenated relationship between management and the groups of staff which previously did not exist.

**9. How does this initiative demonstrate collaboration with other providers within the continuum of care? (Please limit this description to 100 words.)**

At the beginning of fiscal year 2017 the entire health system participated in a retreat focused on effectiveness, efficiency, survival, safety, and satisfaction. The satisfaction team is comprised of leaders and middle management from clinical and non-clinical areas across the health system. Annually, this team identifies five system wide tactics that each organization works on during the year to implement and improve. Unanimously, customer service training was selected as the top tactic for each hospital within our health system. The implementation at our organization involved not only a strong partnership with leadership, but also with front line staff.

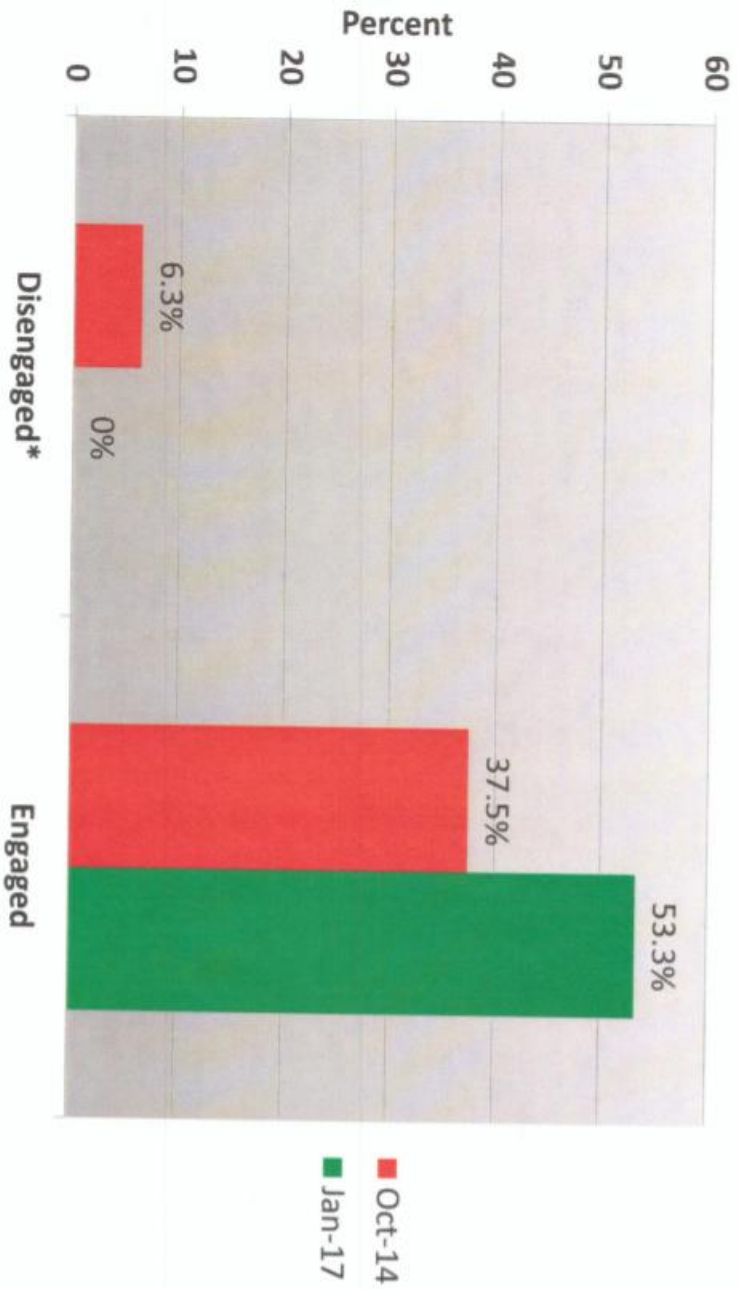
**10. Explain ways in which senior leadership exhibited commitment to the initiative (Please limit this description to 100 words.)**

Senior leadership demonstrated commitment to the initiative by presenting at many of the scheduled training sessions, and meeting with front-line staff to understand barriers in their roles to delivering exceptional customer service. Senior leadership also rounded and recognized the program's progress at system-level and hospital-level Performance Improvement and Patient Safety Committee meetings. Senior leadership's commitment to the front-line staff, in turn, drove the employee's commitment to the customer service training. The program was mutually beneficial in that front-line staff learned big picture vision for the organization, and senior leadership learned details of every day operations.

**11. Appendices (i.e., tables and graphs)**

# Appendix A

Employee Engagement Trend Oct. 2014 v. Jan. 2017



\*Statistical significant change in disengaged employees ( $p < 0.05$ )

# Appendix B

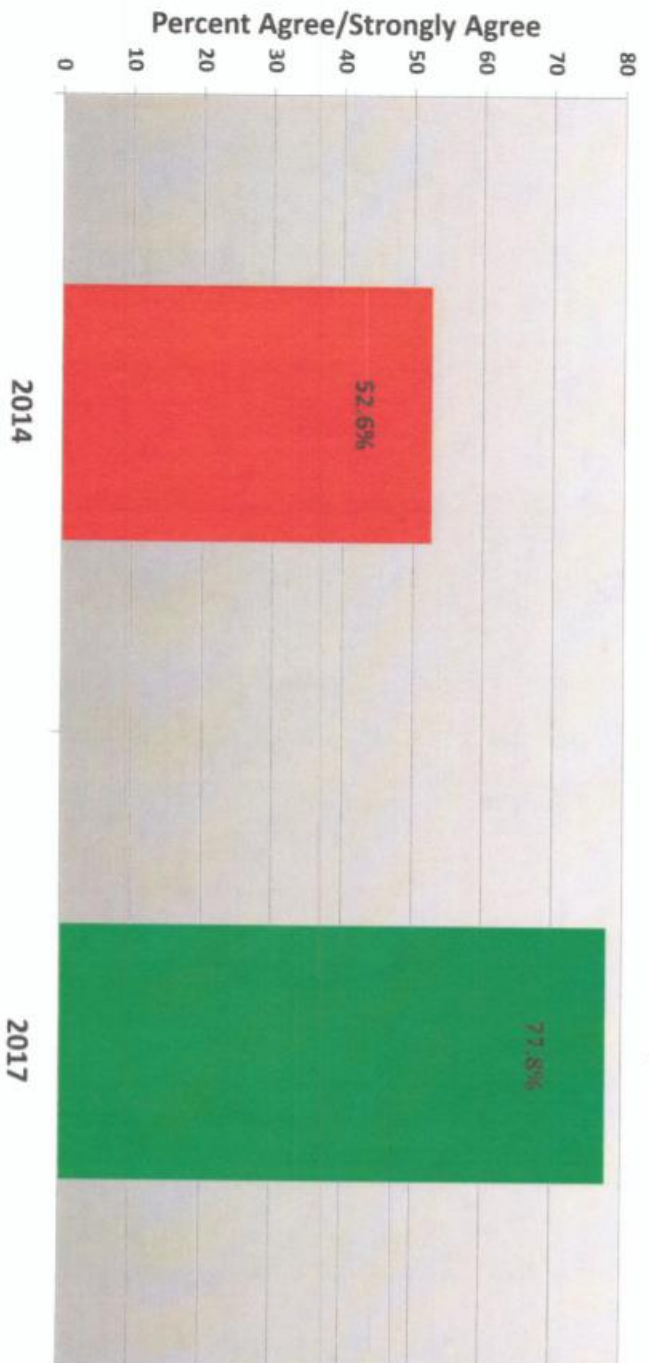
## Employee Engagement Results: Trended Driver Performance

QUESTION	CATEGORY*	2017 SCORE	% CHANGE	STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE
My manager is open and responsive to staff input	Communication and Input, manager Effectiveness	77.8%	25.1%	p<0.05
My organization supplies me with the equipment I need	Employee Support	77.8%	19.9%	p<0.05
My Manager helps me balance my job and personal life	Employee Support, Manager Effectiveness	72.7%	24.9%	p<0.05
Over the past year, I have never been asked to do something that compromises my values	Mission and Values	88.9%	16.7%	p<0.05

\* Categories taken from Advisory Board Employee Engagement Survey criteria

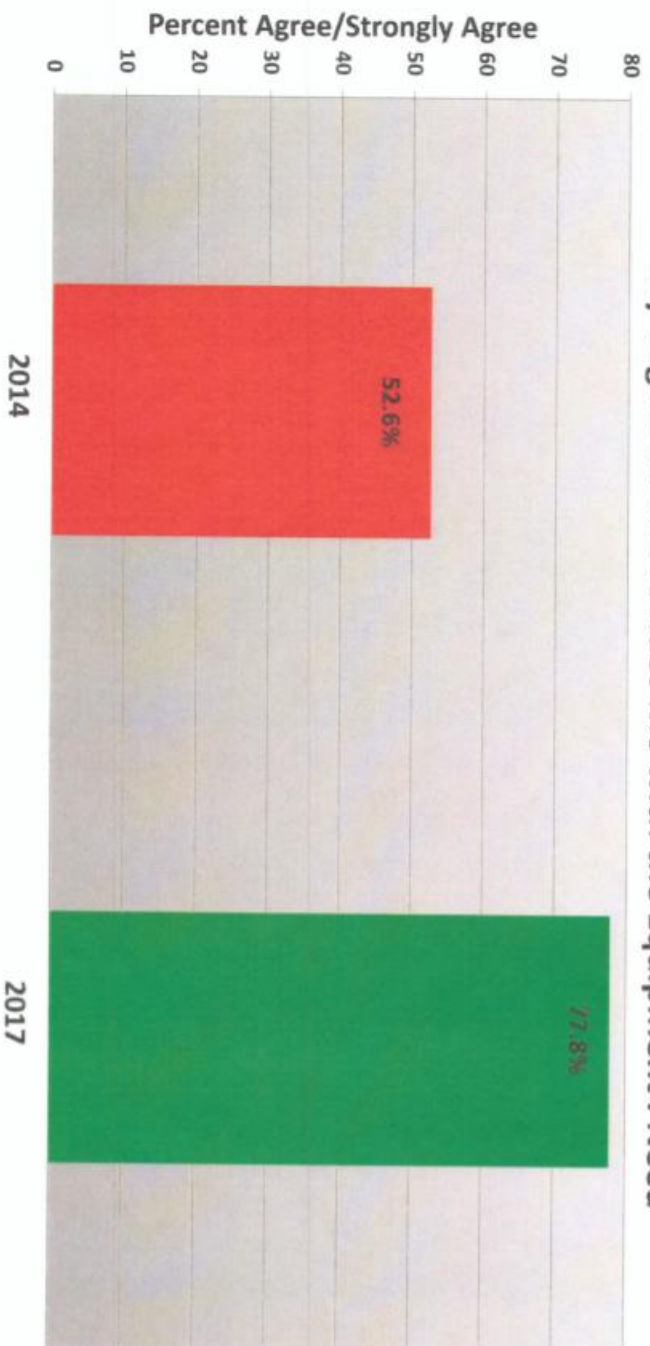
# Appendix B-1

My Manager is Open and Responsive to Staff Input



# Appendix B-2

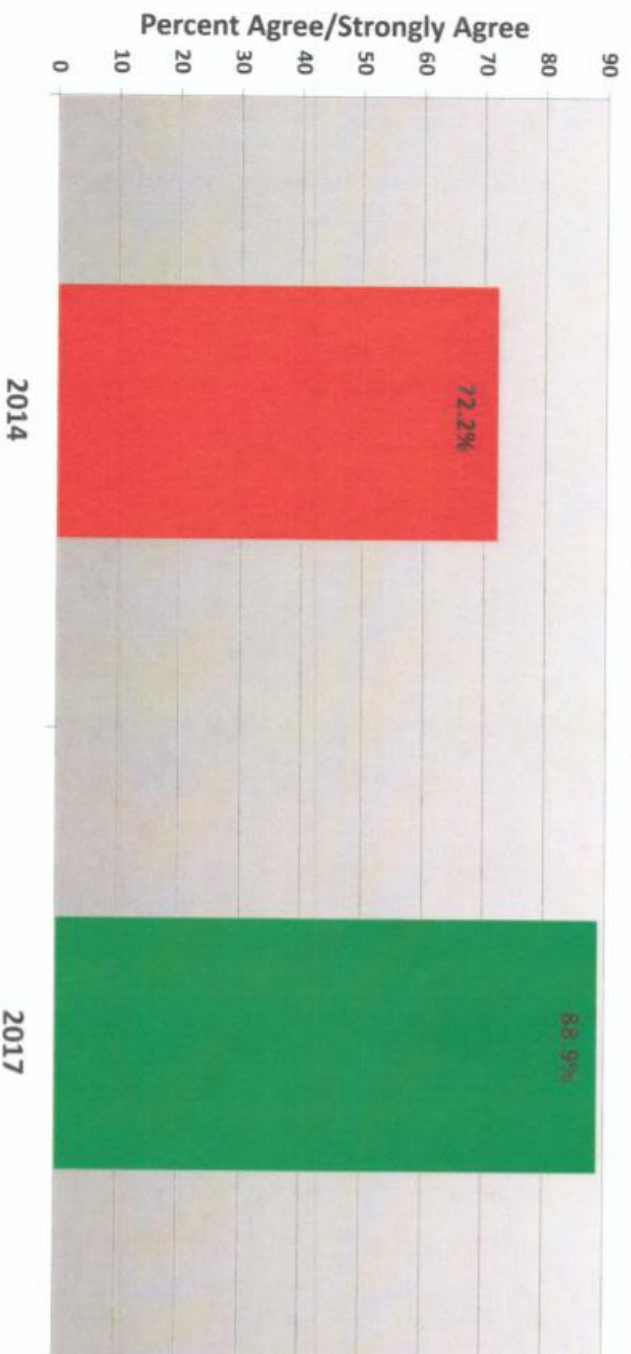
My Organization Provides Me with the Equipment I Need





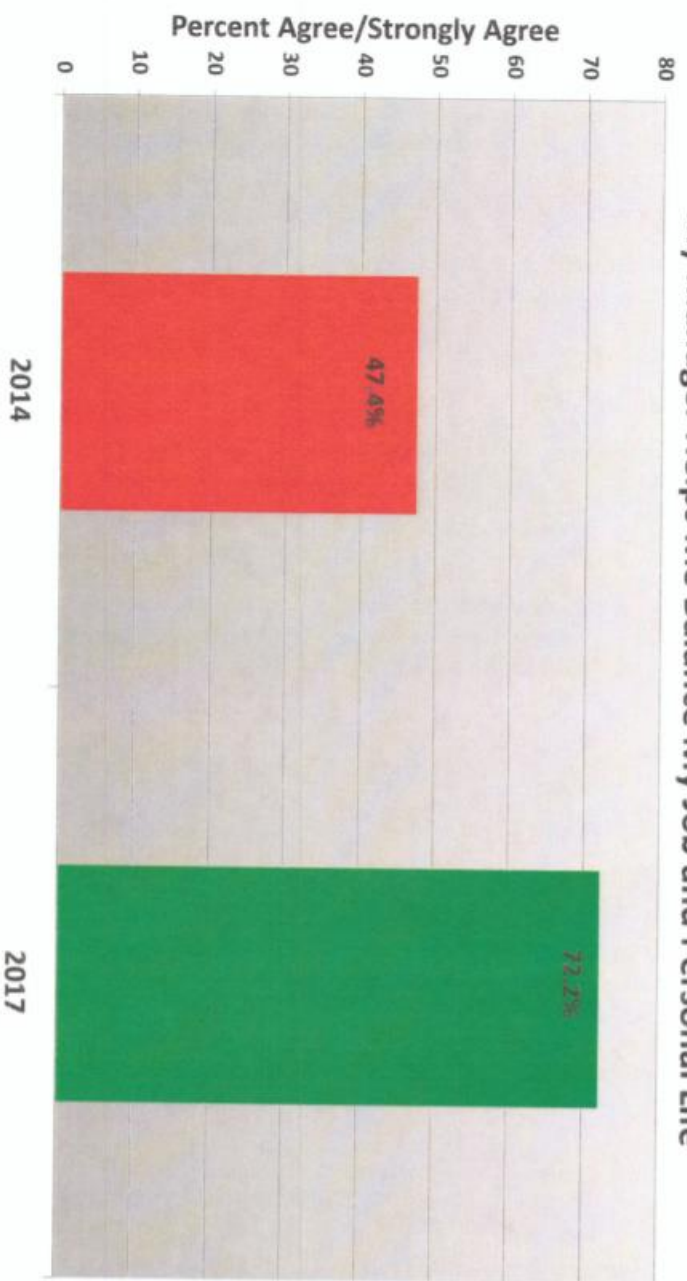
## Appendix B-3

Over the past year, I have never been asked to do something that compromises my values



# Appendix B-4

My Manager Helps Me Balance My Job and Personal Life



# Appendix C

## Employee Engagement Results: Other Top Driver Strengths

QUESTION	CATEGORY*	2017 SCORE	2014 SCORE	% CHANGE
My most recent performance review helped me to improve	Professional Growth	77.8%	68.4%	9.4%
Abusive Behavior is not Tolerated in my Organization	Teamwork	94.4%	89.5%	5.0%
Conflicts are resolved fairly in my unit/department	Teamwork	66.7%	52.6%	14.0%

\*Categories taken from Advisory Board Employee Engagement Survey criteria

# Appendix D

## Time and Attendance Tracking: CY 2015-Present

