



CASE STUDY:
Cascade Health





34Strong & Cascade Health

Cascade Health is a non-profit healthcare organization whose mission is to enhance the quality of life in Lane County by providing quality, charitable, compassionate healthcare. Cascade serves over 50,000 people each year through a diverse array of services, including comprehensive occupational health services, diabetes education, behavior health, home health, palliative care, hospice and a recently opened 14-bed hospice house. As a healthcare provider, Cascade Health relies on expert, dedicated and compassionate staff to provide care to the people we serve. A strong culture, that values and supports employees, is the reason that Cascade Health has been recognized as one of the Top 100 Non-Profits to Work for in the State of Oregon for the past eight years. Currently, Cascade Health has 200 employees and annual revenue of \$18 million.

The Challenge

Along with most health care organizations, Cascade Health is experiencing a “perfect storm” from the unprecedented change and challenges that are dominating its industry. *Health care reform* has turned the industry upside down.

- Workers at all levels are experiencing *change burnout*, and are struggling with *increased workloads*.
- Experienced health care professionals are leaving the industry; there is a *scarcity of talent*.
- *Reimbursement for services is declining*

Cascade Health has felt the impact from these changes. Additionally, Cascade is planning for a transition in the top leadership with their CEO/President, who has lead the organization for 14 years, planning to retire in late 2018. Over 50% of the management team is new to Cascade Health or to their management positions during the past four years.

In 2016, Cascade Health engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process to prepare for a strong and viable future. It was critical that these strategies align with the supportive work environment culture, core to Cascade Health’s values.

Approach

After researching different strategic approaches, Cascade's senior leadership team made the decision to incorporate Gallup's StrengthsFinder into the culture to strengthen its leadership team and enhance the engagement of all employees. Based on research of companies qualified to lead this effort, 34 Strong's team of coaches and consultants was engaged to deliver a comprehensive Engagement Initiative with a Strengths-Based approach to human development.

Phase 1:

In September 2016, 34 Strong introduced the strengths concepts to 20 managers and senior leaders in a one-day session. The session provided a great overview of the strengths material and initiated a 12-month plan for each manager to increase awareness of their own strengths and how to utilize their strengths to achieve their highest potential. Throughout this first year, the 34 Strong coach provided coaching sessions and leadership workshops to the senior leaders and managers to help them leverage their strengths to enhance their effectiveness in their role and to strengthen the leadership of Cascade Health. The Gallup Q12 survey was administered to the management teams and reviewed with senior leaders.

Phase 2:

In October 2017, the management teams participated in the two-day Best Manager Academy. This workshop focused on how to utilize strengths to coach employees and how to enhance employee engagement. The Q12 survey and coaching techniques to engage employees was an integral part of this training. 34 Strong provided a follow-up coaching session with each of the participants during the following month. In early 2018, the management teams will complete the Q12 survey and compare the results to national statistics for other health care organizations.

Phase 3:

In February 2018, Cascade Health plans to have four individuals trained and certified as Strength trainers through 34 Strong. In March 2018, all employees of Cascade Health will take the strengths assessment and will participate in a StrengthsFinder Discovery Day Workshop. In November 2018, the Gallup Q12 survey will be administered to all 200 employees of Cascade Health. Two-hour sessions will be conducted with each department to discuss their team results and to identify performance goals for their team.

Results from the First Phase:

1. All managers increased their self-awareness about how they show up as leaders. Additionally, they learned valuable lessons about effective leadership and the importance of supporting and coaching team members to reach their highest potential. There is a much higher level of engagement from our managers, and they have taken the initiative to coach employees from a strengths perspective. Managers have started interviewing and hiring based on the strengths that are the best fit for each position.



Major increase in manager self-awareness, team cohesion, trust, effectiveness, and function. The culture had already begun to flourish.



Employee turnover fell 10% below national average. People are staying.



5% revenue growth.

2. Strengthening of the senior leadership team. Prior to this initiative, there were team members who did not appreciate the strengths of other members on the team. This sometimes resulted in conflict, misunderstandings, and distrust. There has been a transformation of this team over the past year. Team members have learned to respect the differences among themselves and they have become more transparent, trusting, and able to handle tougher issues. Members grew in their ability to be vulnerable, to laugh about their mistakes, and to talk openly about their balconies & basements. The team is evolving into a cohesive, highly functioning leadership team that embraces servant leadership.
3. Management team. This process has strengthened the bond between managers on this team. Prior to the strengths initiative, managers functioned as individual silos within their departments. They have now evolved into a unified, cohesive team that reaches out to each other to access their strengths to solve issues and to generate new ideas. The strengths process also was key to identifying that a manager, who was struggling in his role, was in his basement the majority of the time instead of using his strengths effectively. 34 Strong's strengths training provided an opportunity to discuss this manager's role and the impact it was having on his personal wellbeing. This led to a mutual agreement that the manager role was not a good fit for his strengths. He transitioned to a role that utilized his strengths more effectively and he has been exceptionally successful. The strengths training helped another manager realize that she was most successful, and found higher levels of fulfillment, as a clinician. She decided to move from management to a provider role and is currently performing at a much higher level.
4. Turnover at Cascade Health continues to be well below national averages. When recruiting for vacant positions, Cascade is now receiving applications from quality, experienced applicants, including Millennials. Applicants value the opportunities for growth and development and the fact that the organization is purpose driven. In 2017, voluntary turnover was 14% as compared to 23.31% for health care organizations in the Western Region of the United States.
5. The strengths material helped the Board of Directors understand and appreciate the differences between the strengths of the current CEO and the strengths of her successor. Both are committed to the mission and culture of their organization, and share the same philosophies regarding the strategic direction that will position Cascade Health for a strong future. However, there are differences in how they make decisions and develop strategies. Understanding the strengths of each has allowed the Board members to understand how they can support the future CEO and assist him to reach his highest potential as a leader.
6. Financial Results. Cascade Health's revenue has grown 5% in 2017. As the leadership teams become more proficient in the use of the strengths, and as a strengths-based culture is embraced throughout the organization, the hope is that this will result in a higher growth rate in revenue, improved profitability, and higher levels of employee engagement.