

INTERNAL HARMONY

Team Health Helps Combat Challenges

By Matt Ottinger

Operating a health care company in the middle of a global pandemic is undoubtedly a difficult task. Yet, several Indiana organizations were able to not only overcome the challenges of the past year but also maintain cultures worthy of Best Places to Work in Indiana recognition.

Don't stress the stress

Navigating the stressful nature of a life and death industry is a critical starting point toward a winning culture. This is most visible for a company like Lafayette-based Indiana Emergency Care (IEC) – a private, physician-owned group that staffs emergency rooms in hospitals around the state.

“The (working) life of an ER physician is short,” states CEO Erika O’Brien, adding many don’t practice beyond the age of 50. “It’s running to trauma and it’s very stressful. You don’t get to sit and relax and chitchat with the patient.”

Building a sensible schedule for her staff is beneficial for both employees and patients, she notes, as blending a financially rewarding workload while staving off burnout pays dividends in the long run.

Indiana’s favorable malpractice lawsuit climate (the company also provides malpractice insurance as a benefit) as well as monthly bonuses and flexible scheduling have been pathways to worker satisfaction – and additions.

“During COVID, we’ve seen a huge migration out of the big cities into the state,” O’Brien points out. “It’s been a fantastic recruiting year for us.”

Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice of the Wabash Valley

(VNA) in Terre Haute knows well the pressures of patient care. COVID-19 altered its operations and the manner in which it serves its several hundred daily patients.

“The growth and need for home care have grown because people aren’t being admitted to nursing facilities or hospitals as much,” explains Kim Streeter, human resource and technology director. “We’ve had to change our entire practice with (personal protective equipment) our staff wear.”

She adds that the company has leveraged telemedicine to conduct more visits remotely.

“It’s been a stress to our staff to adapt to all of these changes,” Streeter asserts. “For a while, it felt like changes were coming daily when the pandemic started. But in the end, our staff came out as champions and figured it out and carried on.”

Dreams and discipline

Zotec Partners is the largest privately held health care solutions and revenue cycle management company in the country. It supports hospital-based physician groups, health care systems and medical groups, servicing over 18,000 providers across the nation. The Carmel-based company is among those considered both a tech and health care company.

“Regardless of your chosen profession, people want to work where you have an environment of inclusiveness and community,” reports Aimee Harvey, executive vice president of people and organizational development. “We tend to think of tech populations as wanting that more, but it’s true that all of our people want that.”

Competing for talent is an ongoing challenge. Zotec Partners emphasizes a robust internship operation to engage potential workers.



Properly equipping its off-site team members to serve its hundreds of patients has helped Visiting Nurse Association become a Best Place to Work. For Indiana Emergency Care, conscientious scheduling is critical to maintaining a work-life balance for physicians.

“We want to create an experience for those individuals when they come into an internship and create a learning environment where they feel connected to one another, so they’re learning not only about their chosen profession but professional life skills,” she relays. “We also bring in financial advisors to help them learn about money management as they enter the workforce.”

Helping staff with life skills like financial literacy is also a benefit at TrueScripts – a Washington, Indiana-based pharmacy benefit management company. Additionally, an emphasis on helping colleagues achieve their life goals is a cultural amenity at TrueScripts, which stresses celebrations of birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and promotes “You Rock” shoutouts among colleagues.

“We’re also implementing a dream management program based on Matthew Kelly’s book *The Dream Manager*,” reveals Hannah Wiscaver, human resources director. “We’ll have our own dream manager on-site to help employees’ dreams come true both professionally and personally.”

Communicating transparency

When it comes to staff programs, VNA brings the perspective of a smaller non-profit organization in the world of health care.

“It’s difficult competing on benefits when you’re a small company compared to a large corporation,” Streeter offers. “We don’t have deep pockets. What sets us apart is our culture. It’s all about communication and caring.”

What the company can’t provide in benefits and amenities, it makes up for in transparency.

“The management staff has to emulate what we want staff to do,” Streeter adds. “We try to keep the communication channel open and say no question is off limits. Sometimes you get ideas from staff on solutions that way too.”

Remotely giving back

The evolution of a Best Places to Work culture often incorporates an outward benevolence toward its communities and celebrated causes. How does one manage that during an extended lockdown?

Zotec Partners did so by offering team members virtual volunteer opportunities to collaborate and enjoy camaraderie. It conducted group activities via Zoom to assemble kits for foster children and participated in people-powered research through Zooniverse. This is part of the company’s Zotec Effect program that supports the philanthropic efforts of its staff.

Noting the emotional impact of not being in physical proximity with the team, Harvey says that the company also increased its employee assistance program benefits “so individuals would have more and better access to free mental health care during this time period and beyond. Our people have been really receptive to that.”

And she credits the tech savviness of her colleagues for laying the groundwork for a relatively seamless transition.

“We went literally overnight from being an environment where people worked in the

office to an environment where everyone worked from home,” Harvey recalls. “So, our information technology resources and multiple teams across the company rallied together to make that happen so our people could continue working and providing service for our clients.”

The pandemic also illuminated an opportunity to re-evaluate staffing schedules for IEC in what O’Brien calls “a valuable lesson.”

“We, of course, had physicians who got COVID, so for those two weeks they’re out, you have to find a physician or provider to cover those shifts,” she explains, noting hour and compensation adjustments were made to allow for hiring more people. “If I get in a similar situation, we have the staffing to accommodate that.”

Companies of all stripes have been forced to look differently at the future. For TrueScripts, it’s altered the near term in both growth and employee considerations.

“We were going to build another building and expand and potentially buy real estate and start satellite offices,” Wiscaver outlines. “We’ve nixed that and plan to just hire people remotely and go to a permanent hybrid schedule ... and stay in the same building.”

“We also have to be inclusive and make sure everything we do incorporates our remote employees,” she adds. “So, every single meeting and every party will be set up as Zoom meetings. We’ll bring our remote people into the meetings and offer interactive experiences on the web since they can’t be in the office.”

RESOURCES: Aimee Harvey, Zotec Partners, at www.zotecpartners.com | Erika O’Brien, Indiana Emergency Care, at www.indianaemergencycare.com | Kim Streeter, Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice of the Wabash Valley, at www.myhospicevna.org | Hanna Wiscaver, TrueScripts, at www.truescripts.com



Despite the pandemic, TrueScripts found a way to remotely continue its community projects for children and adults. The Zotec Ambassadors program allows representatives from each department to provide feedback to build a more cohesive company.