

- **Teachers** receive performance pay bonuses, scholarship benefits, and 30-days per year of in-service training.
- **Administrative overhead** cut from 25% to 10% of state and federal funds, putting the savings and a growing amount of foundation support into instructional programs.

PEARL RIVER'S TURN AROUND

Pearl River was facing low test scores, low teacher morale, and high turnover rates. They were losing students to other school choices. The district committed to long-term systemic internal and external improvements. Since 1992, Pearl River has been focusing on the Malcolm Baldrige continuous improvement model. The hard work has reaped rewards:

- Budget and bond issues have passed by margins of 2-1 to 3-1 since 1995
- 90% of the area families now choose to send their children to public schools even though there are 80 private schools nearby
- school faculty and staff rate the district high in overall satisfaction
- 92% of the students report overall positive satisfaction

(More info from www.chugachschoools.com, www.pearlriver.k12.ny.us, and www.quality.nist.gov)

HAND - ADDRESSED ENVELOPES = BETTER BEHAVIORAL RESULTS

In our impersonal, high-tech culture, the personal touch carries significant impact. Fasprint (Malone, NY) resides in a rural community of about 6-7,000 people. "We did direct mail to promote our business. We hand addressed 1,000 pieces to customers. Then followed up with phone calls. Of those who received our mailing, 100% opened it. And we were able to sell to 14% of them, compared to the usual 1-2%," Royal Forgues told *pr*. He was so convinced about the success of hand-addressed mail that his shop now offers the capability of hand addressing 200,000 pieces per day. And he has many repeat customers.

"I tried hand-addressing some mail and it worked," Eleanor Hall, survey research associate for RCF Economic and Financial Consulting (Chi), told *pr*. The mailing pieces were requests to participate in a survey (with a follow-up phone call). "The response has been very favorable, much more so than with our previous envelopes with computer printed addresses. I'm sold. I'll keep using hand addressing. It's well worth the time it takes."

ITEM OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **Spam Fosters Contention Between Journalists And PR Pros.** 96% of journalists say the Internet and e-mail are the technologies that have had a significant impact on their profession, according to a survey by Vocus of 142 journalists primarily from newspapers, mags and online publications. While spam is a problem, 83% still choose e-mail as their preferred way of receiving news releases over fax and mail. 42% prefer e-mail with attachments; 41% e-mail with Web links. Overwhelming message from survey's results is not new but is a good reminder: Know the journalists you are sending news to, tailor the news when possible, and use technology to help build your relationships, not break them down. (More from www.vocus.com or call 800/345-5572)

CASE STUDY: HOSPITAL REJUVINATES STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS – CREATES EASY ACCESS TO TOP MANAGEMENT

About 15 years ago, Eastern Idaho was served by two hospitals: one Catholic, the other Mormon. When these facilities closed, the decision to replace them with a secular, **for-profit** hospital left bad blood. "A lot of people felt that if they couldn't have a religious-based hospital, they should have a community hospital," Amy Stevens, director of community relations, Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center (Idaho Falls) told *pr*. "This hospital was born out of a great deal of turmoil." Furthermore, she says, people tend to be suspicious of the idea of a hospital being for profit. "There's the image of Florence Nightingale and the Catholic sisters caring for the sick." The fact of the matter is, she says, many of the nonprofit hospitals are operating in the red.

When Stevens came on-board in the late 1990s in the wake of a CEO departure and administrative overhaul, these conceptions were not all that EIRMC was up against. Although the 341-bed hospital, which has 1,400 employees on staff and 200 affiliated physicians, had new equipment, a trauma unit, well-trained staff, etc., **surveys showed that doctors and employees were unhappy.**

"Good physician relations are critical. If a doctor doesn't like working at a given facility, he won't refer patients to it; if employees don't like it, they'll tell their friends that it's not a good place to work." While the surveys, performed by Gallup, showed patient satisfaction was at 89%, the numbers weren't impressive. "It meant that of 625 patients admitted daily, 30 or so were leaving the hospital feeling unhappy. That perpetuated the ill feelings in the community."

STRATEGY: GET TO THE HEART OF THE DISSATISFACTION, THEN FIX IT

Stevens found that the survey data needed to be supplemented by more comprehensive studies. "We did focus groups and telephone surveys. We interviewed employees to find out what was causing this dramatic slide in satisfaction." Concerns:

- **Employees and physicians.** "The technology is state-of-the-art, but people felt the relationships had deteriorated."
 1. lack of **access to upper management**
 2. lack of **communication**
 3. lack of **name recognition** – people felt anonymous, working in an impersonal environment.
- **Community, customers.**
 1. **Lingering bad feeling.** "Because of the bitterness of the political battle, people felt disillusioned. They didn't feel the hospital cared about providing a quality facility."
 2. **Costs.** "People thought that for the amount of money they're paying, they're not getting their value" partly because hitherto, the hospital had been unwilling to talk openly with the community.

- 3. **Quality of outcome.** “There was a **gap between performance and the expectations** of quality outcome.” For example, the average turnaround time of an emergency room patient, from entering the ward to being admitted as a patient or released, is two hours at EIRMC. People were unsatisfied with the turnaround time, not realizing that the average is four hours. “Two hours is something to be proud of.”
- 4. **Rumors.** EIRMC had to battle untrue tales of high infection rates.
- 5. **Customer service.** There was a perception that the hospital was cold and uncaring.

SOLUTION – OPEN DOOR INITIATIVE

- **Envoys** – teams of at least two, which included managers, nurses, cafeteria workers, armed with manuals, notebooks and listening skills – went into the business community. “We tried to match envoys with some kind of personal connection.” For example, a team member might have a brother-in-law who worked at a local bank – that’s where that team would go. The idea was to visit businesses, rotaries, chambers of commerce and listen to and discuss their concerns about the facility. “We had about 60 meetings. There were no presentations, no preparations, no debates. **There was a lot of listening, a lot of dialog about how to correct the problems.**” The envoys were able to provide information, such as the benchmarks for turnaround time, updates about the new open-heart techniques, about state of the art technologies, and discuss realities and expectations.
- **Daily Paper Route** (ongoing). Senior managers and senior nursing staff participate in a daily paper route, **bringing the morning paper to patients and talking to them directly.** “They’d find out how patients were doing, see what they could do to make things better.” A lot of times complaints were easy fixes – something as simple as cold oatmeal or a light that wasn’t working properly. The goal was to let patients know the hospital staff cared. The paper routes continue.
- **Internal Communication.** Internal newsletters, including a bathroom “privy press” sheet, were resurrected.
- **Open Access to the CEO.** Group meetings with top management proliferate and the **CEO maintains a strict open door policy to any physician or employee who wants access.** “They don’t have to go through their supervisor before they can go to the CEO.”

“Instead of focusing on several individual issues, **we focused on the underlying culture, or soil, from which all our issues grew.** The new management team’s objective was to build strategic relationships, with specific goals to improve the satisfaction scores, increase and improve our media coverage, shape database legislation, affect market competition and, most of all, begin to repair historically ailing perceptions in our community.

“**Individuals and departments from all levels were involved** in the initiative, from officers and management to clinical staff and contract employees. The process was highly interactive with external constituents, as well as patients, physicians, employees, community influencers, the media and the community at large,” explains Stevens. For this work, EIRMC recently received the **2002 Chase Award for Excellence in Issue Management** from the Issue Management Council.

SATISFACTION RATES HAVE SKYROCKETED

1998. In 2001, 71% of employees said they were satisfied compared to 52% in '98. And, at the

First quarter 2000 showed customer satisfaction at 92%, up from 89% in

beginning of 2002, 87% of the physicians indicated satisfaction with the hospital, up from an astonishing 42% in 1998. (More from Stevens at 208/529-6111.)

BALDRIGE AWARD SHOWCASES CUTTING - EDGE PR – IN SCHOOLS

Revealing the cutting-edge professionalism of school pr, two school districts received the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award out of five winners in 2001. This award goes to organizations that have exemplary achievements in seven areas: 1) leadership, 2) strategic planning, 3) customer and market focus, 4) information and analysis, 5) human resource focus, 6) process management, and 7) business results. The two winning school districts are: 1) **Pearl River (NY) School District** and 2) **Chugach School District** (headquartered in Anchorage, Alaska, but serves students who live throughout a 22,000 mile area) – *the smallest organization to win a Baldrige Award, with only 30 faculty and staff.*

When a school district applies for this award, it also agrees to participate in a rigorous evaluative process that helps it build on its strengths and tackle its weak points, explains *Network*, NSPRA’s newsletter. The examination process ranges from 300 to 1,000 hours of outside review. Final-stage applicants are visited by teams of examiners to clarify questions and verify information. All applications are reviewed by an independent board of examiners primarily from the private sector. Each applicant receives a report citing strengths and opportunities for improvement.

CHUGACH BEGAN WITH STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

Regular district meetings held in Anchorage included all stakeholders – staff, students, parents, community members, elders and business owners.

Stakeholders worked together to identify needs and goals. The whole system was then redesigned to achieve those results.

In 1994, the average Chugach student was 3 years behind grade level in reading and lagging in other areas as well. Now they’ve moved from the 28th percentile nationally in reading to the 71st percentile; from the 53rd percentile in math to the 78th; and from the 22nd percentile in spelling to the 65th, reports *The Washington Post Nat’l Weekly Edition* (April 23-28) Changes include:

- **Curriculum goes beyond basics** to include technology (a laptop is provided every student), science and social studies.
- **Special emphasis** on service learning (involving students in community projects) personal health (to offset alcoholism), cultural awareness (to broaden horizons), and career development (to ease transition to work).
- **Individual work plans developed for students** allow them to proceed at their own pace. Teachers monitor progress constantly and report to families. Students also meet graduation requirements at their own pace – some at 14, some at 21.

The Baldrige Award was established by Congress in 1987 to enhance the competitiveness of US businesses. The education category began in 1999, which includes any for-profit or not-for-profit public or private organization that provides educational services in the US or its territories. **2001 was the first year that winners were named in the education category.** A total of 46 organizations have received the Baldrige Award since they were first awarded in 1988.