
How Health Systems Forge Partnerships with Their Physicians



The performance and resilience of a health system heavily depends on having aligned, collaborative relationships with physicians. Honest, trusting and transparent relationships leads to improved clinical care and innovative care-delivery models.

This can only be achieved if physicians have an integral role in setting the purpose for the health system, moving beyond a transactional environment into a supportive one where they set common values and a shared purpose for the health system.

McLeod Health, a midsize health system, serving patients in South and North Carolina share their process in achieving alignment between McLeod and its physicians.

McLeod physicians, executives and board members defined a set of principles and characteristics that make physicians the best, and in check with McLeod's mission and its core values. They are meant to represent pillars of professionalism, providing clear expectations of what is expected of a physician, should they choose to work at McLeod.

Each year, physicians at McLeod who embodied the pillars through demonstrated practice and leadership were nominated and celebrated at an annual formal event. The goal is to highlight ideal team players and their commitment to improving the system.

With every hire, they recruit on the basis that individuals demonstrate these characteristics and ensure the pillars are incorporated into the employment contracts of physicians.

Most physicians are used to having a level of autonomy that involves them making their own decisions in the field, rather than following instructions. Therefore, organisations must ensure they understand their unique perspective, what drives the individual physician, and work to finding solutions with them rather than for them. In these instances, physicians have the right to disagree with decisions when they feel it is not in the best interest of their patients - this is what creates true alignment.

McLeod recognises that by providing physicians the time to tap into their passion, they are, in-turn, able to deliver more for the organisation.

Creating change in the health system requires skill, and in order for physicians to enable change, they must undergo training and support, teaching them how to get ideas implemented at scale. McLeod launched two programmes to help achieve this.

The first programme is for clinical effectiveness(CE) teams to engage in solving narrow problems that require a combination of research, design and implementation, within a 90-day window. The practice has enabled CE teams to solve clinician challenges and improve care quality.

The second programme is a physician-executive leadership academy, training physicians to become successful leaders, and to lead larger teams in more complex work.

McLeod's experience demonstrates how a healthcare system can work alongside physicians, helping them to realise how their work can tie into the large goals of the health system. True alignment ultimately leads to serving patients better.

Source: [Harvard Business Review](#)

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