CHAPTER **14**

Thematic Summary

The qualitative and quantitative research conducted by the editors and the contributors reveals four prevalent themes that relate to the Healthcare Causal Flow Leadership Model: high patient satisfaction, favorable healthcare climate, supporting artifacts, and successful leadership behaviors.

HIGH PATIENT SATISFACTION

In addition to the high patient satisfaction scores reported by the masterpiece organizations, we heard much anecdotal evidence of satisfied patients during the interviews. Even when they were frightened, facing a poor prognosis, or surrounded by a busy healthcare environment, patients made positive comments. They stated that they were "truly cared about," were "at a hotel," encountered "no surprises, and the "staff was wonderful." It is apparent through the stories from these satisfied patients that they were part of a healthcare climate that fostered positive staff/patient encounters. For example,

Patient Comments

"It's just the way they handle you, the way they move around, and the caring conversations they have with you."

"She talked with me everyday and truly cared about me. She was so nice to my grandson and really improved my health by creating a happy environment."

"I really appreciated the housekeeper I had on Sunday. She went and bought me a paper. That was so nice of her. I felt as if I were in a hotel."

"The nurse was very good. She is very calm and does a great job of answering my questions."

"Everyone, from the volunteers at the front of the hospital to the physicians and nurses, have smiles on their faces, and a very, very positive attitude."

"Doc, you are not going to believe this. I got my fingernails back. I'm going to come up later this week and show you."

FAVORABLE HEALTHCARE CLIMATE

The climate includes much more than employee satisfaction (Figure 3-3). Employees worked together as a team, had clear direction, and were recognized and rewarded for their efforts. They also felt a sense of pride in their work and ultimately produced a culture of greater accountability and dedication to patients. They were motivated to do the right thing and to continuously do better.

The above-average Healthcare Climate Survey scores (Figure 3-4) and the staff stories from the masterpiece organizations contain numerous examples from employees who feel energized about the environment they work in. For example,

Employee Comments

"I admire my manager. He speaks clearly about the values that have driven our success. When he wants us to work hard, we see him working hard. When he tells us to be responsive, we see him clearly setting the standard. He believes in us and we believe in him."

"We're not just good to our patients; we treat one another with loving care also. We nicknamed one of our nurse directors the *Queen of Notes*. She sends notes of recognition, thanks, encouragement, praise, and congratulations. You name it and she sends it—to everyone, not just employees."

"I was given ownership of that. It involved multiple departments, and I didn't have any red tape to run through to get it done. You have that confidence that if you are looking to improve something you automatically have support to do it, even if you are crossing departments."

"I feel that everybody rolls up their sleeves and pitches in when the going gets tough. Often times they step out of their job to help."

"My organization asks a lot of me. I would do anything for them, though."

"I love what I am doing. This community is important to me. We are creating a healthcare system for the next generation."

SUPPORTING ARTIFACTS

The high patient satisfaction and the favorable climate were not achieved solely by successful leadership competencies and style. We saw another variable in the causal flow that was vital in enabling the masterpiece leader. We refer to this variable as an *artifact*.

Definition

In the Healthcare Causal Flow Leadership Model (Figure 14-1), we use the term artifacts to represent *the unique processes or support structures that enable employee behaviors*. Although they are tangible and concrete and are often accompanied by specific tools, artifacts are not inanimate. They are constantly in motion within the organization.

We saw many examples of artifacts that the masterpiece organizations have built into their everyday work structure. A few examples of the artifact tools are thank you notes to patients, follow-up telephone calls, managing-up recognition, a 2:55 checkout greeting, mission moments, and service hero stories. However, these are not the artifacts per se. It is the 10-step process (Figure 14-2) of which the tools are a part of, that makes them true artifact.
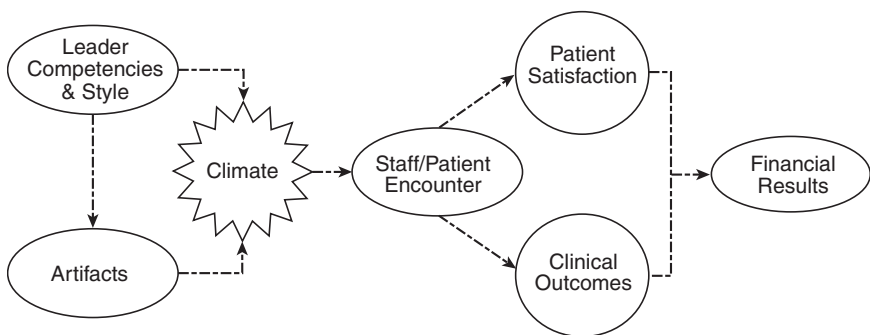

FIGURE 14-1 Healthcare Causal Flow Leadership Model. Source: Published by the editor at UMMC. Adapted from the UMMC-Hay McBer Causal Leadership Model, 1998.
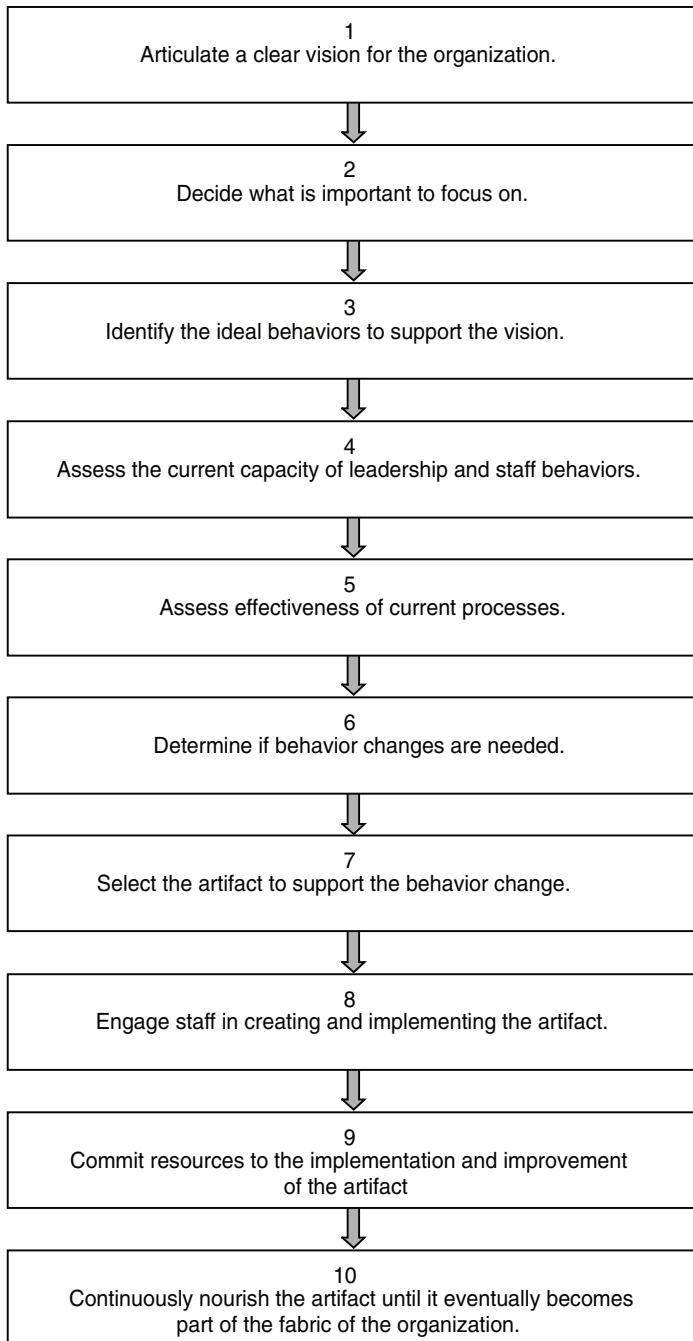
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│                        1                         │
│   Articulate a clear vision for the organization.│
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│                        2                         │
│        Decide what is important to focus on.     │
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│                        3                         │
│   Identify the ideal behaviors to support the vision.│
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│                        4                         │
│ Assess the current capacity of leadership and staff behaviors.│
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│       Assess effectiveness of current processes. │
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│                        6                         │
│       Determine if behavior changes are needed.  │
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│   Select the artifact to support the behavior change.│
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│                        8                         │
│ Engage staff in creating and implementing the artifact.│
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│ Commit resources to the implementation and improvement│
│                 of the artifact                  │
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│                        10                        │
│ Continuously nourish the artifact until it eventually becomes│
│        part of the fabric of the organization.   │
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FIGURE 14-2 Ten-Step Process for Leaders to Identify and Implement Artifacts

Function

We observed artifacts that worked well at all levels of the organization. They allowed staff to do their jobs well and as a result, the staff functioned better as a team, felt recognized for their contributions, and had a sense of pride.

Artifacts were part of the daily routine that supported behavior changes. They minimized the risk of failure. Until new behaviors become part of a person's daily routine, they may not be sustained or utilized during busy or critical situations. Artifacts helped shift the thinking and supported the new behaviors until they became natural in all situations.

Artifacts also allowed leaders to try new behaviors that they might not otherwise attempt for fear of failure. It is this risk of failure that may keep some from trying new ways of leading: especially those in healthcare who work in a culture of minimizing risk.

Examples

Artifacts also helped individuals understand abstract concepts and theories by making them concrete. For example, the executive leadership team at one masterpiece organization talked about making an effort to spend more time recognizing staff. They decided everybody in senior leadership should send personal thank you notes to employees' homes. When this task "fell through the cracks," they developed a unique process, or artifact, they call "managing up." The first part of this artifact is the unique process that involves leaders sending an e-mail to their boss in which they recognize and compliment one of their staff members. The boss then sends a follow-up letter to the staff member's home. The second part is the supporting structures, namely, the weekly reminder that leaders receive from an administrative assistant to "mange someone up" and the database that contains employee home addresses. This weekly process personally rewards, publicly recognizes, and permanently documents employee actions. As reported, "The employees love it. The directors love it. It's a real positive thing."

Another organization wanted their patients to feel a personal connection with the staff as one component of their Five Star Service initiative. They created a unique process where each patient would receive a thank you card personally signed by each staff member they interacted with. This artifact forces the staff members to connect with the patients on a

personal level; thus, they will have something personal to write on that note. It has become "part of the staff's being, their belief system, and their value structure. They own it." The leadership reports, "They would be hard pressed if you brought a manager in who tried to stop them from doing it." As a result, we heard patients give high praise for the caring staff. One patient said on admission, "Hi everybody. I'm looking forward to getting my little message."

SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

The model that we saw emerging is one of leaders who are very comfortable with what we refer to as an interactive power and is a form of servant leadership. The masterpiece leaders see themselves as the leader–coach first and leader–expert second. They spend less time analyzing and trying to fix current problems but instead focus on leading, developing, and coaching others and focusing on positive ways to do things better. We have seen examples where masterpiece senior executives spend time in staff meetings asking managers and directors specific questions such as the following: "Who have you coached lately? How is that working? Who have you recognized? What resources have you committed to make things better?" They don't spend a majority of leadership meetings on minutes and numbers and graphs; they talk about how their leaders are relating to their staff. A classic example is the CEO who structured her board meetings to include inviting staff members to tell stories. When the board asked to hear about financial results, she replied, "Well, you can read."

What we have uncovered in our research is that a successful leader needs to focus on all four of these prevalent themes to be successful. If an organization focuses on one theme exclusively they run a high likelihood of failure. The more of the four themes you focus on, the greater the likelihood of success and sustainability. A focus distributed among leadership behavior, the work climate, the supporting artifacts, and satisfied patients will inevitably lead to better clinical outcomes and good financial results.

In summary, the masterpiece leadership has achieved a sense harmony by blending art and science. They invest in artifacts that support leaders and staff; create, energize, and motivate the healthcare climate; exhibit a high level of passion, excitement, and drive to perpetuate their success; and focus on the few competencies that set them apart. The essence of

that leadership is summed up nicely by one of the masterpiece leaders in the following statement:

> My job is to make everybody else successful. The exciting part of my job is in the coaching, the mentoring, getting people the resources, giving them the recognition, allowing them to be creative, and allowing them to run with ideas and to take responsibility for doing things right and doing things wrong and learning from them—to create a culture that has people excited about being here.