

Building a Great Team

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In April of next year, St. Dominic - Jackson Memorial Hospital will celebrate its sixty-fifth year in Jackson. During this time, this 535 bed facility has had a major impact on healthcare in central Mississippi. Today, the organization employs 2,800 nurses, physicians, and skilled caregivers. In addition, St. Dominic Medical Associates employs twenty-seven primary care and specialty physicians, and St. Dominic Health Services owns the ten MEA Clinics in the greater Jackson area that represents thirty physicians. St. Dominic's is a non-profit organization and has consistently followed its mission to be a "Christian healing community called to provide quality, compassionate care and an Exceptional Encounter Everytime."

Given the success of the organization in pursuing this mission, I wanted to learn more about how they do it. I recently visited with Claude Harbarger, President of St. Dominic Hospital, to discuss his thoughts on leadership. I learned that they truly are a values based organization and that they use the acronym "I-CARE" to express their core values. I-CARE stands for Integrity, Collaboration, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence. According to Harbarger, "We use these values to stay focused and connected as a team so we can do our best to anticipate and meet the needs of our patients."

I also learned more about the goal to provide an "Exceptional Encounter Everytime." In his bestselling book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins emphasized that a company should consider what it could do to be considered world class. Harbarger noted that, "We strive to deliver an exceptional encounter for our patients, patient's families, physicians, and visitors each and every time." Given the size and scope of the organization, that is no easy task; however, this is a unifying goal of the organization and one that sets a bar for excellence.

Harbarger has spent his career in healthcare administration. He grew up in Huntsville, Alabama and graduated from Auburn University in 1976 with a degree in psychology. He then earned a master of Science degree in Hospital and Health Administration from the University of Alabama-Birmingham. Harbarger began his administrative career at Humana Hospital Augusta where he worked his way up to be Associate Executive Director. He then joined National Medical Enterprises and served as Administrator of Seven Rivers Community Hospital in Crystal River, Florida, and later as Administrator of University Medical Center in Lebanon, Tennessee. Harbarger joined St. Dominic's in 1987 as Senior Vice President – Professional Services. In February 1991, he was appointed acting President of St. Dominic Hospital and named President in December 1991, a role in which he continues to serve today.

Serving in a leadership role is never easy, particularly in the complex world of healthcare with its economic and regulatory challenges. Harbarger has embraced these challenges and leads with a humble and servant heart. There are many good books on leadership and running a great organization. However, even though we may have knowledge of how to do something, there can still be a big gap between knowledge and execution. We discussed this gap and how Harbarger has successfully addressed this challenge as a leader. Harbarger emphasized the importance of building a great team and shared some core principles that have helped his organization execute well which

include the following: (1) establish a clear and compelling direction for the organization; (2) create an appropriate structure including team size and boundaries; (3) select the right people for the team; (4) support the team with data, training, compensation, and encouragement; and (5) provide development including appropriate feedback and review. St. Dominic's is committed to development and education on leadership and offers both in-house training as well as supporting continuing education.

Today, St. Dominic's is focused on operational excellence and developing and executing its strategic plans "to meet the needs of the patients and communities it serves." They are also working on a new Behavioral Health Services facility which should be complete by April 2012. As I observe the strength of the healthcare providers in our community such as St. Dominic's, I am convinced that there is a great opportunity to leverage healthcare as an economic engine for the region and the state.

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