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Shands at the University of Florida
Gainesville, FL



Respect, Trust, Engagement, Success!

In September 2008, Steven Hitt was hired as the new Associate Vice President of Operations for Shands at the University of Florida, a massive hospital with 852 beds and 2.44 million square feet spread across several health centers. One of his earliest tasks was to improve patient satisfaction. "Patients didn't believe the hospital was that clean," he said. Cleanliness scores averaged 52.9%, and the Emergency Department was even lower, at 17.3%. "We were not satisfied with the scores."

Shands already had a relationship with Crothall Healthcare for Clinical Equipment Services and Laundry Services. Hitt was responsible for reviewing Crothall's proposal to add Environmental Services. "It was a matter of looking at the patient satisfaction scores and the value proposition that Crothall brought in," Hitt explained. He recommended a 7-year contract, which started in March 2009.

HOW WILL IT AFFECT OUR EMPLOYEES?

EVS is one of the largest departments at Shands, with over 250 employees spread over six buildings. The director had been with Shands for over 25 years, as had his predecessor. Since the late 1950s, there had been virtually no shake-up in management. When Crothall was hired, there were rumors they intended to fire the staff and cut salaries. When Crothall's new Unit Director, Isaac Johnson, arrived, the atmosphere was tense. "They called us 'the Contractor,'" Johnson laughed.

Johnson moved away from the old-school, heavy-handed management style and created ways for the employees to participate in EVS decision-making. He set up committees for uniforms, new products, safety, activities, and newsletters. There is even a committee to help organize membership on the committees—they have been so popular, people don't want to leave. "People are eager to join the committees because they know I'm going to green light whatever they come up with," Johnson said. "We're allowing them to have a say in their jobs. We are co-workers now."



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The EVS team at Shands at the University of Florida

FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

Crothall established clear organizational structure and began reaching out to other hospital departments:

- Established clear chains of command, with a single direct report for staff
- Began twice-daily meetings with bed control to prioritize cleanings
- Introduced a new training manager
- Brought in a new patient ambassador to meet directly with patients and families

During a transition period, change requires sensitivity. “We had to really focus on building trust,” Johnson recalled. “We had to prove to them why this equipment was better than what they’d been using, why this schedule was better for the hospital. You can’t just tell people to do something and not say why. You have to explain it. You have to engage them.”

Johnson won the trust of the staff, and that started spilling over into not just their daily work, but into the EVS relationships throughout the hospital. For instance, EVS reached out to the Operating Department staff with ideas, training, and better supplies to help the OR improve between-case cleanings. It’s created a cleaner, safer environment for patients.

Hitt has also noticed the change in responsiveness. “We do rounds frequently, and if we notice something and point it out to the staff, they’re very receptive. They don’t get defensive, and that’s an approach that’s really important in a place like this. They have a positive, can-do attitude.” Hitt has noticed that the EVS staff will jump in to do what’s necessary, even in areas outside their responsibilities.

PRODUCTIVITY AND SATISFACTION UP

When Johnson started in March 2009, the EVS department had a turnover rate of 38%. Within a year, his leadership had changed the

department atmosphere enough to cut turnover to 13.9%.

To Hitt and to Shands, the primary concern was whether an improved department would be ready for the new cancer treatment facility, which opened in November 2009. “We needed to have those systems and procedures in place,” Hitt said. “Knowing what to use and systematizing things in this department is critical. It’s so huge and spread out.” Within a year, by March 2010, the scores were in:

- The emergency department’s cleanliness score rose from 17.3% to 79.1%
- The inpatient cleanliness score increased from 52.9% to 76.2%
- The number of units rated at or above the 75th percentile jumped from 12 to 21
- Bed turnaround time is 64 minutes, with 65% under 60 minutes (with 250 discharges a day)

Department productivity is also nearing Shands’ goal of the 25th percentile (lower is better) in all major areas from the University HealthCare System scores for transplant hospitals:

- 20th percentile for total expense per patient day
- 28th percentile for hours worked per square foot
- 28th percentile for hours worked per patient day

“We’ve seen productivity improvement and a reduction in overtime hours,” Hitt said. “We’re one of the best in the country.” The reduction in overtime, lower management salaries, and improved supply chains even saved the hospital about \$272,000 in the first year.

Hitt is especially proud that Crothall is now using Shands as a Foundations training hospital. “That’s consistent with our mission for training. We were able to do that in less than two years; that’s pretty remarkable. It’s been a very good partnership.”