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Lessons on the road to performance excellence: Three organizations share theirs

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What do a faith-based health care institution within a major hospital system in Colorado, an organ/tissue donation center based in Denver and a community hospital in rural Nebraska have in common? All were recently recognized as recipients of the 2014 Rocky Mountain Performance Excellence (RMPEX) award.

The annual recognition program enabled Littleton Adventist Hospital, Donor Alliance and Community Hospital to share lessons learned along their respective journeys towards performance excellence. The key themes aligned along the topics of their employees and the organization's performance. Attendees at the event took away many nuggets that included the following:

- Focus on workforce:
 - Your employees are your #1 asset – they're the ones that drive the culture
 - Employee engagement and a feeling of pride/ownership are critical in the organization – it's like the difference between owning and renting a car. When's the last time you changed the oil in a rental car?
 - Jim Collins references getting the right people on the bus – recognize that some folks are just on the wrong bus and how to help them get off gracefully and with respect
 - Your employees are the foundation to everything. Invest in your employees' personal improvement. When they can tie their personal values to work, they have a better attitude in the work environment. Better attitude translates into more engagement with the patients/customers and each other as well as a desire to go the extra mile and ensure excellent performance, which ultimately translates to superior outcomes!
- Perspective on performance
 - Although it's great to be recognized by outsiders for performance, it's also humbling to know there's still a long way to go – the good thing is knowing there is a roadmap to follow.
 - Think logically – why would you ever conduct the budgeting process before the strategic planning process – that's backwards!
 - When measuring anything on a scale of 1-5, it's great to track the sum of the 4 & 5 results (very good & excellent) – it's a feel-good effort. However, try tracking just your "excellent" (5) ratings – that's an eye opener, and you've got to work that much harder for the smallest incremental increase!
 - Liken the journey of performance excellence to climbing a mountain. Once you've reached the top you can look back and see where you came from with a different perspective. But what you ultimately see in front of you is another mountain peak to climb! You're never done!

Change in the external environment is a great time to take advantage of changing the internal environment. And with all of the changes occurring within the health care industry, there is nothing like the present to take advantage of the chaos. Bottom line, all three organizations started their respective journey at different points. But they're all heading in the same direction.

Ultimately, each of these health care institutions view "saving lives" as an integral aspect of their organizational DNA. So it's fitting that they be recognized for the efforts they and others in their industry are putting towards this goal. Congratulations to all!

The RMPEX program is a feeder into the Baldrige National Performance Excellence program. Denver is fortunate to host one of this year's regional sessions Sept 2, 2015. This is an opportunity to learn from organizations considered best-in-class in a variety of industries. It's always interesting to observe how organizations learn and benchmark others outside of their industries. And it will be especially exciting to hear from Colorado's own Elevations Credit Union, the fourth organization from our state to be recognized at the national level. Come support them! Check out www.RMPEX.org for more information.