

Posted: May 07, 2014

## Lions, Tigers, and Bears ...

Sky Ridge Medical Center's Journey to Oz

*Triche Guenin*



If you recall, the main characters of the Wizard of Oz were all seeking something different:

- Dorothy – home
- Scarecrow – brain
- Tin Man – heart
- Lion – courage

Although they all started on their adventure together and ultimately reached their final physical destination (Oz), it wasn't the end goal that enabled them to achieve what they were all looking for – it was the lessons learned along their respective journeys.

Such is the philosophy of Sky Ridge Medical Center based in Douglas County. CEO Maureen Tarrant, Vice President of Operations Diane Cookson, and Chief Nursing Officer Marian Savitsky shared their story recently while accepting their recognition as a 2014 Rocky Mountain Performance Excellence (RMPEX) Timberline award recipient.

With all of the changes going on in health care, the thought that having a formalized construct from which to embrace and make these changes was viewed as a way to effectively move forward in this dynamic environment. Sky Ridge, a 10-year-old hospital with about 1,100 employees, 1,300 physicians and 250 volunteers, decided to use the Baldrige National Performance Excellence criteria, via the regional RMPEX program, to provide that framework.

So, back in 2007, they started their journey down the yellow brick road. They have not yet gotten to the Emerald City but shared the lessons they've learned so far in a Top 10 format:

10. **You gotta have heart!** Get ALL of your folks on board in understanding why there is a need for change. Be realistic in setting expectations and that it won't always be a bed of poppies
9. **It takes a village.** This journey can't be done alone. Get folks from multiple disciplines engaged. Redefine the concept of workforce so all are working towards the same goal(s)
8. **Clarify the vision.** Make sure there are common goals (via strategies that cascade down to tactical/personal plans).
7. **Learn a new language.** New concepts/terms are needed so develop a lexicon that can be understood by all (e.g. alignment/integration, work processes/requirements, balanced scorecard).
6. **Rewire the brains of the operation.** Focus on the critical few metrics. Learn from others - embrace benchmarking, especially outside of the industry. Emphasize accountability via closed loop systems and documented strategies and work plans
5. **Don't let the naysayers stop you.** Change is tough – acknowledge it. Tout the successes and learn from failures. Communicate often and solicit feedback. But keep going!
4. **Trumpet the message throughout the village.** Communicate the change(s) and assess the effectiveness of them as well as the messaging of them
3. **Win their hearts and minds.** Help the workforce understand where they want to be and get them engaged in figuring out how to get there.
2. **Have the courage to make changes.** Sometimes you're too close (can't see the forest from the trees), so solicit feedback from the "outside" and be willing to try new things that might initially appear to be insurmountable. These changes might be perceived as counterintuitive or seem to "buck the system/status quo" – but be creative/innovative and have fun.
1. **It's about the journey to becoming a destination facility.** Learn along the way to become what you want to be. (This is Sky Ridge's vision)

The lessons learned are generic enough for any group, regardless of industry, to incorporate into its own organization. If performance excellence is your "Oz", are you ready to lead your organization on its journey to see the wizard? If so, one option is the yellow brick road offered by the Rocky Mountain Performance Excellence program at [www.RMPEX.org](http://www.RMPEX.org)