

November 2006

**THANKSGIVING**

Everybody looks forward to the thanksgiving feast - the turkey, the pies, and the family celebrations. However, Thanksgiving is incomplete without a moment of reflection. Spare a moment and say a prayer of gratitude for life's blessings. It is the celebration of God's blessings that enrich our lives and the real heart of Thanksgiving. On behalf of Chris Thrash and our staff, Happy Thanksgiving!

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”  
**John F. Kennedy**

**Inside this issue:**

<i>The REAL Competition for Hospitals</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Identity Theft</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Thanksgiving Thoughts</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Harris County Hospital District ... ServiceFIRST</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Study: Hospitals Struggle Providing Leadership</i>	<i>2</i>

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**The REAL Competition for Hospitals**  
by **Chris Thrash, MHA**

When I am speaking to healthcare audiences about customer service, I love to ask staff members the question, “Who is your competition?” Logically, the majority of staff will begin to name other hospitals located in their community or region of the country. When I tell them other hospitals are not their REAL competition, staff members usually look at me like I am from another planet. They are especially shocked when I tell them I believe a hospital’s greatest competition today are Starbucks, Disney, and Marriott. What many times we fail to realize in healthcare is that our patients and hospital guests are also customers of other places as well. Many stores, restaurants, and hotels today consistently deliver friendly customer service and create great experiences for their patrons. It is a wakeup call to those of us in healthcare to realize that many of these businesses have been far ahead of us for a very long time in establishing successful service cultures.



As hospitals, our challenge is to raise the bar of exceptional customer service many times just to play catch up with other businesses serving our patients as their customers. Hospital staff members today are not only compared to the friendliest staff at other hospitals. All hospital staff members are compared to the friendliest employees offering service anywhere. We have to look at competition from a whole new perspective. Encourage hospital staff to look at customer service from a new angle by paying closer attention to their own interactions with employees of other businesses.

**IDENTITY THEFT**

An organization’s Identity is not only who they say they are, but more importantly, who others say they are.

**IDENTITY = REPUTATION**

How would patients, family members and vendors describe your organization? What words would staff members use to define their job satisfaction? A hospital’s identity can be expressed through its

values and what it believes through its mission statement. However, a hospital’s real identity will only be known by the service provided by each staff member who clearly demonstrate values like Compassion, Caring, or Respect to patients and co-workers. Any staff member who is not aligned with the hospital’s values and does not convey empathy in interactions with others can suddenly be an Identity Thief who steals away the organization’s reputation.



*Inspire. Engage. Ignite.*

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### Client Spotlight

For the 2nd consecutive year, Chris Thrash and Associates are proud to be partnering with Harris County Hospital District in Houston to provide customer service training. In October, Chris spoke to 450 leaders at their Management Forum to celebrate their success stories from this last year: Northwest Health Center moved from

78.4% to 86.4% in Overall Rate of Care. Ben Taub's NICU celebrated 100% in their Overall Rate of Care and patient satisfaction. By focusing on Information/Education and Emotional Support, LBJ Hospital's 4A moved to 94.4% Overall Rate of Care. Congratulations to the staff members of these areas! Chris Thrash is presenting fifty 1-hour employee sessions to 8,000 frontline staff members over several weeks in Oct and Nov 2006. Kudos to Harris County Hospital District for their ServiceFIRST success !



### Study: Hospitals Struggle Providing Strong Leadership, Employee Supervision Nashville, TN - Oct 18, 2006

ISR, a global employee research and consulting firm, has announced the findings of an employee opinion study that reveals U.S. health care companies are facing the need to drastically improve leadership and employee supervision. The findings show health care companies might be responsible for an increasingly poor work-life balance for employees, even as sectors of the U.S. health care face shortfalls in talent. Through June 2006, the health services sector has the highest job openings rate among all major U.S. industries at 3.7 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Strong leadership is a critical success factor for the health care market, affecting everything from financial performance to patient care," said ISR Executive Director Soni Basi. "In order to achieve sustained success, leadership teams must address problematic communication gaps between mid and senior level managers that will help maintain quality while improving employee satisfaction." ISR Senior Project Manager, Kelly Harkcom, agrees, "Senior health care leaders responsible for establishing strategic directions and overseeing operations need to focus on building cultures that support all employees. Midlevel managers need assistance, perhaps facilitated by an impartial outsider, in order to help them understand how to best manage the culture disconnects that exist."



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