



CUSTOMER PROFILE

University of Minnesota Physicians Uses Blended Learning to Create Strong Leadership, Reduce Turnover, and Improve Patient Satisfaction

As an academic medical center, with a focus on improving patient lives through breakthrough research and the training of tomorrow's physicians, University of Minnesota Physicians (UMPhysicians) needs to ensure that they're always operating at their peak potential. When UMPhysicians found itself lacking when it came to training employees to work effectively in a demanding and dynamic environment, it adopted a blended-learning approach in pursuit of becoming a leading learning organization.

Establishing a Foundation for a Culture of Learning

Even though UMPhysicians is known for cutting-edge care, it had become complacent and stagnant over the years around employee training. With a desire to keep its employees' skills fresh and relevant, the organization brought in Michelle Gross as the Manager of Staff Training and Development. Gross' first task was to formally establish a training department. As Gross explains, "We realized that no matter how hard our employees tried, we were not able to make real breakthroughs in improving patient satisfaction scores because we hadn't put the time and resources into establishing education and development as a primary corporate goal. Plus, we saw high staff turnover rates of 22% on average, and unacceptably high turnover rates among front-desk staff."

The goal was to provide training that would elevate staff skills to the level required to fulfill the organization's mission. With that in mind, Gross focused on three key areas: new employee orientation and training, front-desk training, and a leadership development program. To establish a foundation for blended learning and complement instructor-led training, she called upon eLearning courses from the HealthcareSource eLearning LibrarySM and selected the HealthcareSource NetLearning[®] Learning Management System (LMS) as a delivery platform.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
PHYSICIANS

About UMPhysicians

Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Overview: University of Minnesota Physicians (UMPhysicians) is a premier physician organization dedicated to providing comprehensive, patient-focused care in more than 100 specialty and subspecialty areas. With more than 900 physicians and 1,800 health professionals, it has the widest range of specialists available in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. As an independent, not-for-profit organization, UMPhysicians serves as the integrated group practice of the University of Minnesota Medical School faculty, and contributes substantially to fund the research and education mission of the Medical School.

Employees: 1,800 healthcare professionals and more than 900 physicians

HealthcareSource Solutions: eLearning Library, NetLearning Learning Management System

Reducing New-Employee Turnover

Utilizing a blended-learning approach, Gross' department first developed role-based training for new employees. All new staff members attend a two-day in-person orientation focused on the organization's culture, policies, and mission. They then complete role-specific eLearning programs that include patient safety courses, clinical skills training, and competency assessments. Once new employees complete relevant instructor-led courses, they take online tests and complete a new-employee satisfaction survey in the NetLearning LMS. As Gross says, "We want our employees to be highly functional from their first day on the job, and the online assessments in NetLearning help identify areas for remediation so we can provide that education to staff before they leave orientation."



With the orientation and training in place, UMPhysicians' new employees report less confusion and higher satisfaction. Perhaps the best proof of success is that turnover has dropped from 22% to 14%, concrete evidence that the organization has vastly improved retention during the critical first year.

Empowering Front-Desk Staff and Raising Patient Satisfaction

The next order of business was improving the satisfaction of front-desk staff, which went hand in hand with patient satisfaction. After conducting focus groups and research, Gross' department instituted physical structure changes at the clinic, introduced a front-desk script based on service-excellence best practices, and developed intensive training for a new front-desk process. To further improve employee satisfaction, UMPhysicians created a three-tier career track for front-desk staff. Now, in addition to becoming supervisors, Patient Representatives have the opportunity to graduate to Senior Patient Representatives.

To be promoted to this senior position, front-desk staff must successfully complete a number of pre-approved eLearning courses from the eLearning Library. They must also demonstrate proficiency at core job tasks, achieve a certain performance appraisal rating, and develop skills to train and mentor others. To date, 23% of employees have been promoted to this position. "Our employees love this program and the opportunity to pursue a career path. We see the proof in decreased employee turnover and in higher patient satisfaction ratings, which have risen from an average of 52% to nearly 97%," says Gross.

Setting Leaders up to Succeed

Last but not least, Gross needed to strengthen the organization's clinical and non-clinical leadership teams. Like many other organizations, when recruiting new managers UMPhysicians had historically promoted staff that performed well in their roles, despite lacking managerial experience. Without training or support, most of these newly appointed managers struggled when it came to leading teams. According to Gross, "If you don't prepare your managers to be great leaders, you won't see the results you want—employee engagement suffers, turnover rises, and you're not delivering the best level of patient care possible."

To address this shortcoming, Gross' department developed a leadership certification program revolving around three training

CHALLENGES

- Employee training had become stagnant over the years which was reflected in patient satisfaction scores
- A lack of investment in employees' professional goals led to high turnover rates
- Managers recruited from internal positions often lacked the managerial experience to successfully lead teams

RESULTS

- A focus on blended learning rejuvenated UMPhysicians education program
- A new employee orientation program caused turnover to drop from 22% to 14%
- New career tracks, backed by eLearning courses and performance rating appraisals, led to greater employee satisfaction
- Leadership certification programs, comprised of eLearning and instructor-led programs, built a strong foundation within the organization
- Patient satisfaction ratings increased from 52% to 97%

tracks: Emerging Manager Skill Builders (EMSB), Advanced Manager: Clinical, and Advanced Manager: Business. "As our organization has grown and become more complex, we needed to find ways to elevate the skill set of our managers. Our leadership certification program enables us to do that, while setting up our managers for promotions and other opportunities," continues Gross.

New managers or staff who have been identified as having leadership potential are invited into the EMSB track, consisting of 10 instructor-led, group classes that cover everything from personnel management and budgeting to how to build influence. Current leaders and managers go into the Advanced Manager tracks, a combination of instructor-led and online courses that dive deeper into EMSB topics and take two years to complete. These are followed by mandatory completion of about 12 contact hours annually to maintain certification. To earn contact hours, employees must choose from a set of eLearning courses, available from the eLearning Library, selected by the training department and delivered via NetLearning LMS.

As Gross says, "Because the eLearning Library offers a huge selection of well-written courses, there was no need to find subject matter experts or invest in course development for our leadership program, which saved my team an enormous amount of time and money." The eLearning Library courses also allow employees the flexibility to focus on the



development of their skills when it is most convenient for them. “We’re not held back by the availability of an instructor and don’t need to work around the busy schedules of our leaders. With the eLearning Library, we can easily provide a customizable learning experience to employees who want to maintain their leadership certification. We’ve identified a number of courses that we think will be the most valuable to leaders at all levels and then they select the eLearning courses that will benefit them most, based on their role, needs, and interests,” explains Gross.

Serving Expansive Needs with a Small Training Staff

With a solid blended-learning program in place anchored by the eLearning Library, UMPHysicians is now able to deliver the training and knowledge that its staff was craving. Plus, the use of eLearning Library courses, integrated with NetLearning, allowed Gross to ramp up training programs quickly. “When I was brought on board, I was a department of one and my first hire was a trainer. Having NetLearning and the eLearning Library courses available were essential to quickly launch sophisticated training and certification,” explains Gross.

Raising Quality While Slashing Costs

Since deploying the eLearning Library and launching its blended-learning program, UMPHysicians has made tremendous strides. Its employees are more engaged, as reflected in lower turnover rates. As Gross explains, this translates into better institutional memory and patient care. “Helping our employees elevate their knowledge and skill set in turn elevates the tenor and quality of the entire organization,” says Gross.

In addition to reducing turnover, increasing employee engagement, and raising patient satisfaction, UMPHysicians has realized tremendous cost savings through its blended-learning approach to developing a learning organization. Managers used to leave out of frustration over to getting so little support in their roles. Now that UMPHysicians helps managers succeed in their roles, turnover has declined and that translates into lower recruiting and onboarding costs.

Preparing Confidently for the Future

As UMPHysicians relocates most of its staff into a cutting-edge academic health center, the eLearning Library and NetLearning LMS will play a major role in preparing employees for new roles. “Our clinical staff will need to be cross-functional in high-level skills to deliver on the vision for this advanced care center. By using the eLearning Library integrated with NetLearning LMS, we’ll help staff effectively adapt to a new environment so they can meet patient needs,” concludes Gross.

About HealthcareSource

With more than 2,300 healthcare clients, HealthcareSource is the leading provider of talent management solutions for the healthcare industry. The HealthcareSource Quality Talent SuiteSM helps healthcare organizations recruit, develop, and retain the best workforce possible in order to improve the patient and resident experience. The company’s cloud-based talent management solutions include applicant tracking, behavioral assessments, reference checking, employee performance, compensation, competency and learning management, and eLearning courseware. A private company focused exclusively on the healthcare industry, HealthcareSource consistently earns high marks for client satisfaction and retention. KLAS Research recently named HealthcareSource a category leader for Talent Management for the third consecutive year, in addition to recognition in Healthcare Informatics 100, Modern Healthcare’s “Healthcare’s Hottest,” Inc. 500|5000, Deloitte Technology Fast 500, and Becker’s “150 Great Places to Work in Healthcare” list.

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