

Communication, Conflict and Culture: Getting the Workplace Back on Track

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Background

- Leadership behaviors to support a culture of continuous improvement is key to success in the rapidly changing business of medicine
- Emphasis on the social and behavioral components of leadership are essential foundational components
- The Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine (KSOM) at UNLV and the associated physician practice plan, UNLV Health, opened in 2017
- UNLV is also in the strategic planning phase of forming an academic health center
- In the first four years, the two organizations experienced the stress of high turnover in the leadership and executive positions.
- The need to rapidly react to the COVID-19 public health emergency was a major stressor
- Workplace culture satisfaction scores are low for UNLV Health and employee turnover is high
- Strategic leadership culture transformation with a focus on consistent and quality behavior is necessary

Program Objectives

- Implement a phased approach to improve the workplace culture at UNLV Health
- Improve workplace culture for the faculty practice group with outcomes of improved employee retention and culture survey results
- Develop a workplace culture framework for the ensuing academic health center
- Focus on competency in communication and conflict management for the leadership

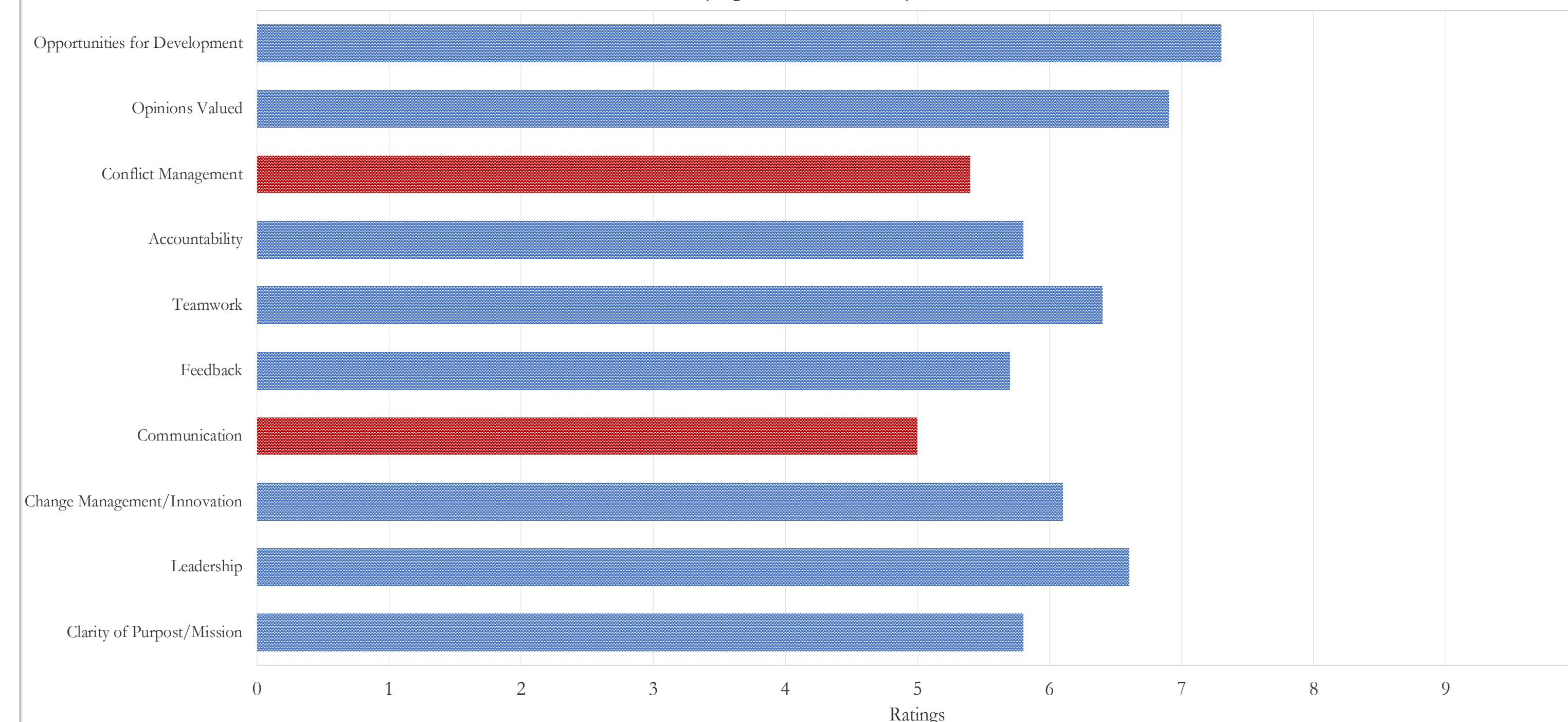
Methods

- Literature review on leadership culture in academic health
- Obtain staff and leadership turnover data
- Culture survey and results evaluation: A culture survey with ten areas of focus was completed by an external consultant and data was collected using a 10-point Likert scale (0=poor, 10=excellent)
- Collaboration and brainstorming with external organizational consultant and current leadership
- Identify areas of initial desired change
- Create implementation plan to execute project that includes communication and conflict management leadership training (future)
- Identify methods for scalability for the larger organization of initial phase and roadmap for added competencies (future)

Results

- KSOM (Dean, Vice Deans and Department Chairs) turnover from 2017-2021=71%
- UNLV Health employee turnover in 2021=49%

Figure 1. Mean culture survey ratings across the 10 focus areas. (0=poor, 10=excellent)



Culture survey lowest scored areas

- **Communication ***
- **Conflict management ***
- ***These will be the initial target areas**

Culture survey highest scored areas

- Opportunity for development
- Opinions being valued

Conclusions

- Improved communication strategies and conflict management skills are two areas that should be the focus on leadership development at KSOM and UNLV Health
- The conjoining of a new medical school startup, high rate of leadership turnover and the past two years of public health emergency has created a marred culture that requires deliberate repair and rebuilding
- Workplace culture has significant impact on patient outcomes and revenue in the practice of medicine
- This project creates a realistic process that is transparent, competency based, measurable and scalable
- The success of this project will position the organization to succeed in the changing academic medicine landscape of the future

Implement → Measure → Maintain → Expand



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Project Title: Communication, Conflict and Culture: Getting the Workplace Back on Track

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Collaborators and Mentors: Marc J. Kahn, MD, Joann Strobbe, M.Ed., and Simmons Consulting Group

Topic Category: Administration

Background, Significance of Project: Leadership behaviors to support a culture of continuous improvement is key to success in the rapidly changing business of medicine. The emphasis on the social and behavioral components of leadership is essential for a successful organization. The Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine (KSOM) at UNLV and the associated physician practice plan, UNLV Health, opened in 2017. UNLV is also in the strategic planning phase of forming an academic health center. In the first four years, the two organizations experienced the stress of high turnover in leadership and executive-level positions and needed to react to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Important workplace culture metrics for UNLV Medicine in 2021 showed low workplace culture satisfaction scores and low employee retention. Strategic leadership culture transformation focusing on consistent and quality behavior is necessary.

Purpose/Objectives:

This project aims to implement a phased approach to improve the workplace culture at UNLV Health and develop a workplace culture framework for the ensuing academic health center. The first goal is to improve workplace culture for the current faculty practice group with year-over-year outcomes of improved employee retention, improved scores on culture survey, and improved self-assessment scores. The second goal is to develop a road map of other workplace culture competencies for the desired outcome of improved patient satisfaction scores. The third goal is to determine a scalability model for the academic health center. At the end of this project, UNLV Health will see increased employee retention and year-over-year improvement in culture survey results.

Methods/Approach/Evaluation Strategy:

- Literature review on leadership culture in academic health
- Obtain staff and leadership turnover data
- Culture survey and results evaluation: A culture survey with ten areas of focus was completed by an external consultant, and data was collected using a 10-point Likert scale (0=poor, 10=excellent)
- Collaboration and brainstorming with an external organizational consultant and current leadership
- Identify areas of initial desired change
- Identify leadership self-assessment (future)
- Create an implementation plan to execute the project that includes communication and conflict management training for leadership (in progress)
- Identify methods for scalability for the larger organization of initial phase and roadmap for added competencies (future)

Outcomes/Results:

Based on the culture survey, communication and conflict management skills were the lowest-rated areas and opportunities for development and opinions valued were the highest-rated. UNLV Health employee turnover rate in 2021 was 49%. KSOM leadership (deans and dept. chairs) turnover rate from 2017-2021 was 71%.

Discussion/Conclusion with Statement of Impact/Potential Impact:

Workplace culture has a significant impact on patient outcomes and revenue in the practice of medicine. The conjoining of a new medical school, high rate of leadership turnover, and a two-year pandemic have created a marred culture that requires deliberate rebuilding. This project begins a credible process that is transparent, competency-based, measurable, and scalable. The success of this project will position the organization to succeed in the changing academic medicine landscape of the future.