

Case Study: Emotional Intelligence Makes a Difference at The Brown Schools

Need:

One of the largest behavioral healthcare systems for adolescents in the US, The Brown Schools acquired a group of seven private-pay facilities. Changes in the marketplace and in senior leadership had created a stressful work environment in many of the facilities, employees felt disconnected, and departments were struggling to collaborate. This group was under-performing financially, turnover was high, and census was inconsistent.

Intervention:

After meeting with leaders from all of the facilities to agree on a strategy, the "Lights, Camera, Action" Organizational Climate Survey was given to all employees. Structured interviews were conducted at all levels to add depth to the survey data. The COO and the Six Seconds Healthcare team presented findings to the full staff at each site to gain buy-in and increase the commitment to change, and then worked with the leadership teams to develop a 90-day strategic change initiative.

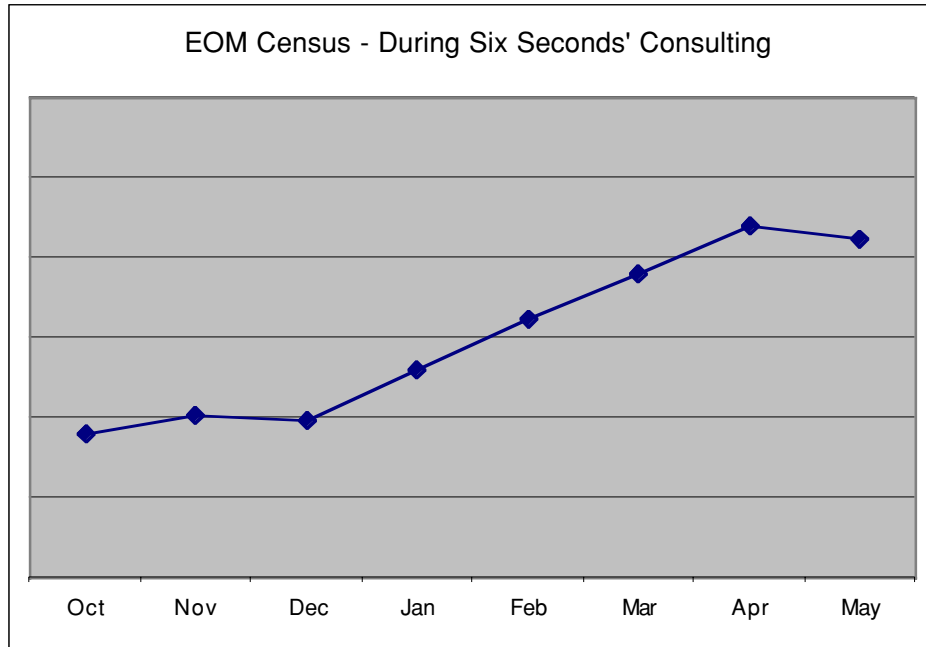
Over the next year, Six Seconds' EQ consultants worked with each facility according to the needs identified by the leadership. System-wide, all staff participated in a one-day training on accountability and a half-day training on emotional intelligence. A variety of workshops were presented to different sites, primarily focused on increasing collaboration/teamwork and also on integrating emotional intelligence in their programs. The team facilitated strategic planning retreats at several facilities using a unique design where both leadership, line managers, and influential staff members participated in planning. As in all Six Seconds' programs, a climate for reflection and dialogue was created to foster increased collaboration and understanding -- so the team was able to honestly communicate and thereby increase trust.

Consultants participated in leadership team meetings and provided 1:1 coaching to CEOs and program directors at key locations. A project manager worked closely with the COO and with the regional Executive Directors to assist with enhancing internal and external communication. The 90-day strategic plans were updated quarterly, and a similar system was adopted for the executive team and for the national sales and marketing teams. Six Seconds' team members worked on a variety of restructuring initiatives including a redesign of the management structure, hiring, compensation, performance evaluation, sales and marketing, and educational curricula. New metrics were built into the management system to measure leading indicators on a weekly basis. Over 200 staff-days of consulting and training were invested over the course of a year for seven sites.

Results:

Overall census in the seven facilities increased by close to 25% over the course of the project. Incidents/accidents decreased, as did turnover. In fact, over a dozen veteran employees returned to work for the company by the end of the year. One facility slated for closure was successfully redesigned and the new program was launched with zero attrition of either clients or employees, and the program remained 15% ahead of plan for

the duration of the project. Two other restructures were accomplished with less than 5% loss of clients and less than 3% turnover of staff.



Conclusion:

In healthcare, the organizational climate has a material effect on the bottom-line metrics. The quality of staff interaction is an effective predictor of the facility's health. As COO, Sherry Thornton, said in an article, "I could get an impression of the quality of care within a few minutes of walking in the door, simply by seeing how I was greeted and how people interacted." This focus on relationships and climate made a significant difference in this healthcare organization. The national management team made a commitment to turn around these seven facilities, and the effort paid off. The EQ Climate Improvement initiative and Six Seconds' unique approach to collaborative consulting was an essential component of the turn-around -- but the bottom-line benefit was as a result of employees communicating more openly and honestly, feeling more positive, and becoming more engaged in the organization.

"The process helped us more rapidly identify and address issues that were keeping us from optimal performance. Six Seconds helped us improve the workplace climate -- which had a direct impact on effective leadership, employee attrition, and customer care."
- Robert Naples, CEO