Chapter 4.12

Aurora Health Care:
A Knowledge Management Strategy Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Aurora Health Care, Wisconsin's largest employer and healthcare provider faces intense competition, consolidation, and reform. Its choice is to view these challenges as opportunities instead of problems. A key component to realizing Aurora's opportunities is an aggressive knowledge management system. They understand that to maximize their potential, they must get the most out of their knowledge management. The purpose of this chapter is to present to you a case study of knowledge management applications in the healthcare industry through the many lenses of Aurora Health Care. First we will describe the background of this accomplished healthcare provider. We will then look at their business and knowledge management strategies. Next will be a review of the major components: core competencies, knowledge base, culture, implementation, and key success indicators.

INTRODUCTION

Successful healthcare providers will employ robust knowledge management systems that promote positive clinical outcomes, align clinical business aims, and enable effective assistance to the surrounding communities. This chapter will describe Aurora Health Care's knowledge management strategy. We will explain Aurora's history with a SWOT analysis completed by the authors. Then we will show the organization's business and knowledge management strategies. This is followed by communicating Aurora Health Care's knowledge management strategy and its major components: core competencies, base, culture, implementation, and key success indicators.

AURORA HEALTH CARE'S HISTORY

In 1984, Aurora Health Care, a not-for-profit Wisconsin integrated health care provider, was created

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Aurora Health Care, prepared by Tom Ginter and Jane Root, May 2009.

Strengths	**Opportunities**
• Leadership • Financial Assets • Human Assets • Training • IT Infrastructure • Human Resources & Compensation • Centralized Decision Control	• Innovation • Access to Knowledge • Customer Service • Knowledge Reward System
Weaknesses	**Threats**
• Varied Business Unit Processes • System Interface • Knowledge Management Focus & Control • Best Practices	• Competition • Knowledge Loss • Poor Patient Outcomes

around one idea: there is a better way to provide health care. This concept has been a hallmark of the organization and central to its vision. Aurora Health Care believes there is a better way for:

- people to get the care they need in settings that are convenient and comfortable;
- families to receive the services and support they need to lead healthier lives;
- physicians to offer the latest technology and treatment options to their patients;
- talented people working in health care to fulfill their professional callings;
- employers to provide for the health care of their employees, more cost-effectively;
- building healthy communities.

Aurora simplifies the translation of this belief for its employees through a motto of their *#1 Priority*, "Our patients deserve the best care. When we achieve top performance in our clinical quality, patient satisfaction and caregiver engagement, patients receive a better care experience than they can get anywhere else," (Aurora Health Care, 2009a).

Aurora Health Care serves a large geographic base with sites in more than 90 communities throughout eastern Wisconsin, including 13 hospitals, more than 100 clinics and over 130 community pharmacies. In excess of 3,400 physicians are affiliated with Aurora Health Care, including more than 700 who comprise Aurora Medical Group. The many strategic business units that form Aurora Health Care are dedicated to enhancing organizational knowledge. A portion of the Aurora Health Care mission statement is as follows: "We are committed to improving the quality of health care and health outcomes for people today, through the rapid and broad application of current knowledge," (Aurora Health Care, 2009b).

AURORA KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SWOT

An analysis of knowledge management strategy begins with a SWOT analysis to identify if Aurora Health Care is getting the most out of its knowledge management system. Table one represents a knowledge management SWOT analysis of Aurora Health Care.

Strength: Leadership

As identified in their mission statement, Aurora recognizes that organization knowledge is critical to improving the quality of healthcare and health outcomes. Leadership's ability to manage know-how will help ensure effective performance. Examples of this begin at the top. Aurora has established several multidisciplinary councils to provide leadership and input on strategy, policy,

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