



STANDING IN BOARDROOMS

Five Strategies for Human Resources Staff to get in,
then be invited back.



Insights from the 2017 Tri-State HR Leadership Conference

James A. Rice, Ph.D., FACHE
Managing Director & Practice Leader
Governance and Leadership

Integrated Healthcare Strategies
a division of **Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc.**

901 Marquette Avenue South, Suite 1900
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612-703-4687

www.IntegratedHealthcareStrategies.com

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Standing in the Boardroom

Insights from Tri-State HR Leadership Conference
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Participants in the Third Annual HR Conference were invited to share their insights into (a) the benefits from human resource executives expanding their engagement and influence with their Boards of Directors, as well as (b) challenging obstacles to building these important relationships between the Board and HR leaders. This paper provides a summary of these observations as a practical guide to human resource leaders and boards across the US.

These lists are shared in random order. Health system leaders are encouraged to discuss the importance of each of the observations in the two lists, and then identify the top 5 to shape their strategic planning to strengthen HR-Board relationships.

Define 2-3 actions that can remove, reduce or work around what the top 5 obstacles.

Establish 2-3 actions that can improve the opportunity to secure each of the top 5 benefits of enhanced Board-HR relationships.

Benefits from Enhanced HR Leadership Engagement with Health System Board Members

1. Better relationships will foster enhanced board understanding of the scope and nature of the health system's investments to recruit, develop and retain employees that represent at least 60-70% of the organization's operating budget.
2. The board will be more receptive to investments in talent development for the organization
3. More collaboration yields to improved patient care outcomes, quality, service line market share growth, and more cost-effective care
4. The board is more likely to ask for the HR implications of all strategic plans and programmatic initiatives
5. The organization is more likely to remain competitive in employee compensation
6. The board can better appreciate the impact employees play in the broader community to protect and promote health, not just restore health
7. More support for a culture that nurtures patient centered care and a culture of creative recognition and rewards
8. Closer relationships improve communications that minimize misperceptions about the work and needs of employees
9. The organization is more likely to achieve enhanced performance and results, fewer errors and less waste
10. Board more likely to take a balanced approach to investing in facilities, technologies, programs AND people
11. Board more willing to share wisdom and best practices from other industries to help us in healthcare
12. Board advocacy in the region can be more effective and impactful
13. Board support will foster expanded employee engagement which can help recruit and retain scarce employees and physicians
14. Engagement and learning from HR professionals can help board members be more effective in their interaction with other community leaders and policy makers
15. Engagement around workforce characteristics can enhance community image and reputation that can drive enhanced market position and payer relationships/influence

Benefits from Enhanced HR Leadership Engagement with Health System Board Members (Cont'd)

16. Board understanding and engagement creates culture from top for engagement that yields higher HCAHP scores
17. Credibility with the Board reinforces credibility within C-Suite and therefore job security and growth
18. More engagement with Board enhances and amplifies the voice and influence of HR leaders
19. Board support engenders leadership support which fosters enhanced employee morale and willingness to expand performance
20. Board more likely to see the human side of our work and up their support for philanthropy
21. Other more important benefits?

To help improve the probability that these benefits can be achieved, consider these actions:

1. Executive summaries and infographics for HR and talent development information and processes is essential to achieve board engagement benefits
2. Include HR infographics in each board member's initial orientation program, and I periodic refresher programs
3. Use positive stories of real patients and employees benefiting from your talent development investments
4. Ensure that all strategic program planning and budgeting includes explicit insights on the numbers and types of staff needed for successful implementation and to achieve peak performance/results
5. Arrange to provide a joint presentation to the Board with CEO and CFO on the organization's "Talent Development Strategy" that includes data and stories on numbers of staff being added each year, the turn-over rate by service/department, and the spending by service/department

Obstacles to Optimal HR Engagement with Board Members

Talk about practical ways to remove, reduce or workaround these possible obstacles or barriers:

1. HR leaders are nervous about how best to talk with, let alone influence the board members
2. CEO/CFO does not fully appreciate the value of HR leadership for talent development, so tougher to get messages to the Board
3. HR staff do not understand the needs, biases or characteristics of board members, so more difficult to fashion messages that influence the board
4. Board members have limited knowledge of healthcare landscape and its many challenges
5. Health sector is complex and rapidly changing, so difficult to master and know where it is going, or what it needs for talent
6. HR leaders do not show straight line of sight from staff to organizational performance and sustained vitality
7. HR does not master new forms of social media to communicate and impact thinking of board members
8. HR staff do not transform data into infographics and human interest stories
9. HR staff do not understand the numbers of staffing by type and service line, and cannot communicate the economic value of payroll in the market and community
10. HR not able to map HR investments to “value for money” challenges of the health system/hospital
11. Board members believe their experience in other industries can be blindly/directly applied to the health sector
12. Past mistakes by HR to explain HR investments and impact lingers in minds of board members
13. Board does not have enough younger and modern thinking members to embrace talent development
14. Board members have short attention spans and find it difficult to take time to understand the talent needs and resources of the organization
15. HR leaders do not have data management systems to array facts about the workforce by service line, specialty, delivery site job type or demographic profiles
16. HR staff are not well trained or prepared for modern, short powerful presentations to the board
17. Finance and legal biases of some board members frustrates focus on human side of the numbers, or the value of “culture” for employee engagement and performance
18. Board may see HR as too ill-defined, “fluffy” or not hardwired enough to gains in service volumes, market share or fiscal vitality of the overall enterprise

Obstacles to Optimal HR Engagement with Board Members (Cont'd)

Talk about practical ways to remove, reduce or workaround these possible obstacles or barriers:

19. Power struggles within the board distracts their attention from meaningful dives into talent development needs and challenges
20. Board may have public meeting constraints that make it difficult to discuss HR issues in public forum
21. More talent development can mean more money at time when it is scarce
22. Board members may have personal agendas that block attention on HR development and planning
23. Being a smart board member can take time and they are often too busy to focus
24. HR presentation styles are not engaging enough, nor colorful or powerful enough to grab the board's attention and support
25. HR staff do not strike the proper balance of numbers and emotionalism
26. HR staff do not make the message personal enough for board member interests
27. HR try to deliver the message too much on their own and do not bring along a patient, a physician or a board member for joint presentations
28. HR lack their "elevator speech" to get in, deliver the "value proposition" message and get out of the board room
29. Board members too political or closed minded to consider the HR messages and impact
30. Others that are more important obstacles than the above?

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

The Governance & Leadership practice of Gallagher Integrated uses proven, state-of-the-art governance design, educational programs, and tools to help boards use their time and talents more effectively. Our team of consultants have extensive experience in the assessment of board performance and in the development of strategies and systems to continuously enhance the governance of complex healthcare and hospital systems.

For more than 40 years, Gallagher Integrated has provided consultative services and people-based solutions to clients across the healthcare spectrum, including community and children's hospitals, academic medical centers, health networks, medical groups, community health centers, and assisted-care providers. Our Gallagher Integrated consultants and nationally recognized thought-leaders help organizations achieve their business goals, by ensuring top talent is attracted, retained and engaged, while measuring and maximizing human and organizational performance. With tailored solutions that extend well beyond a single service, Gallagher Integrated offers the knowledge, guidance, and insights that organizations need to not only survive the rapidly changing healthcare environment, but to thrive in it.



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For additional information about how to enhance the effectiveness of health sector governing boards,
contact us at: jim.rice@ihstrategies.com