



Reading Hospital Medical Group Builds Physician Practice Group from the Ground-Up in Six Months

Best-in-class recruitment process outsourcer designs and implements new HR Function; Fills positions for 50 physicians and more than 278 staff employees

In 2006, The Reading Hospital and Medical Center in Reading, Pennsylvania, saw an opportunity to establish a physician practice group to boost its market share, maintain its revenue stream, expand its quality patient care, and ensure an adequate supply of primary care physicians in the community. The Hospital's plan was to identify partners, integrate physicians into the system and develop a marketing strategy for what would be known as The Reading Hospital Medical Group.

Customer Challenge

This expansion plan was a major move for the not-for-profit healthcare center providing acute care, post-acute rehabilitation, behavioral, trauma and occupational health services. To seize this opportunity, Reading faced the daunting task of designing and implementing a new Human Resources function that would need to service a medical group that would include 50 physicians and more than 270 staff members scattered across 13 locations. The new HR function would play an indispensable role in supporting the rapid growth anticipated for the new medical group.

Demand for Dedicated Human Resources Staff

To ensure the successful transition of independent physician practices into the newly created medical group – as well as into the hospital's overall environment of 600 physicians and 5,900 employees – it was vital that the human resources infrastructure be unique to the physician organization and not merely a replica of the infrastructures common to healthcare systems.

The health system chose to partner with Pinstripe Healthcare, a division of Pinstripe Inc. that specializes in talent management solutions. With its experience in healthcare – many of the firm's key people had held leadership or managerial roles in healthcare organizations – Pinstripe knew the steps required to create a new Human Resources department in a competitive market.

"Outsourcing firms must have the tools and flexibility to move quickly. It isn't just about following a standard to-do list, but about listening to what the client needs and collaborating with them to help reach a goal," said Jill Schwieters, Executive Vice President for Pinstripe Healthcare.

As competition for hard-to-find skilled workers increases in the healthcare field, more healthcare systems and hospitals are choosing to outsource many human resources functions in an effort to attract and retain solid employees, while keeping costs low and ensuring high-quality patient care. Pinstripe gave the hospital immediate access to an experienced human resources management team that was able to identify and address the human resources demands of the start-up organization.

Provider Enabled Hospital to Concentrate On Engaging Physicians

Even the best human resources team has limited resources to deal with the growing demands of regulatory issues, recruitment, benefits, and compensation. They are already charged with handling the current human resources functions, and often lack capital for investing in the technology needed to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

“To successfully and efficiently integrate independent physician practices into our hospital community, we needed an organization with the expertise to manage the day-to-day employee and human resources issues without overwhelming the existing human resources team at the Hospital,” said Scott Griffin, Executive Director of The Reading Hospital Medical Group. “That way, executive leadership would be able to focus on physician recruitment and engagement. The Medical Group would not be where it is today without this outsourced solution to our human resources challenges.”

The Nuts and Bolts of Building a Human Resources Staff

The Reading Hospital Medical Group and Pinstripe collaborated to establish a Human Resources department dedicated to addressing the unique needs of a start-up physician group. Pinstripe handled all sourcing, hiring, on-boarding and training of the human resources staff, and implemented compensation and benefit systems that were specific to the Medical Group.

This new staff was dedicated to supporting the new physicians’ medical group and any open positions that needed to be filled. The new staff was able to partner with existing systems of the Reading Hospital, which allowed additional streamlining of the on-boarding process in the areas of a Human Resources Information System (HRIS), a payroll system, and available scheduling technology. Pinstripe provided access to a state-of-the-art applicant tracking system and created an employment brand by collaborating with the Hospital to design a recruiting brand and career site hosted on the Hospital’s existing website. Leadership was also selected for the operation of the Medical Group.

In order to begin building a strong leadership team, all leaders were subsequently oriented and trained on the new organization. This included a 2-day leadership conference on fundamentals and advanced leadership skills, specifically designed to provide a solid foundation of the tools, information and resources critical to success.

The energy and work that went into the creation of the new Human Resources department and functions were only the beginning of the process. To ensure that the new physicians’ group would remain a vital and growing part of the hospital’s healthcare mission, and to ensure employee performance consistency

throughout the group, it was necessary to provide extensive training for all new employees. This training helped to facilitate a smooth transition for the employees, and began the process of establishing a culture of excellence for the new organization. The training would also provide the groundwork for maintaining consistent and effective operations thereby ensuring a positive patient experience.

“We literally started with only a vision and in a short period of time, all of our plans and processes were put in place. This enabled us to exceed our original goals,” said Griffin. “The existing human resources team at the hospital clearly did not have the depth in manpower to accomplish all the tasks that needed to be completed in such a short time period, and I think that most healthcare organizations our size would have had similar problems.”

High-Quality Healthcare: The Ultimate Goal

Although the partnership was highly successful, the real benefit was the healthcare system’s ability to achieve its goal: Delivering the highest possible quality healthcare throughout the community – a goal ultimately shared by all healthcare organizations.

In the end, the establishment of the Medical Group enabled the hospital to form and administer a network of primary and specialty care services, which now includes more than 85 physicians and over 550 staff working out of 36 locations. All of this growth has remarkably occurred in a span of a little over one year’s time and would not have been possible without the support of the hospital, the Medical Group’s leadership, and the partnership with Pinstripe.

In a highly competitive era when healthcare organizations are under pressure to expand their services and facilities need to reach a greater number of patients, many organizations are seeking outside expertise to aid in those efforts. Rather than siphon off existing capabilities and employee hours, these progressive healthcare organizations have found it helpful to create partnerships that augment the hospital’s expertise and allow it to concentrate on its mission of patient care and growth.

When these partnerships are successful, as was the case with The Reading Hospital and Medical Center and others around the United States, they create a win-win situation for patients, physicians, staff members and the community.

###