



You have a demoralized team working in a run-down community hospital. Your goal is to transform them into a world-class health care team, confident in a high-tech, regional facility with numerous new programs. What do you do? If you're Vivian Giglio you show them that they already have the heart, the brain, and the courage to transform themselves. BY JOANNE SEVERN

The Wizard of Org

Dedicated, capable, and caring, Vivian Giglio, RN, was popular with patients and colleagues alike. Her innate leadership skills and enthusiasm led to her promotion to Assistant Head Nurse, then Nurse Manager, and finally to increasingly more senior roles.

Married and with two children at home, in 1996 Giglio settled into the job of Director of Surgery at Surrey Memorial Hospital, where she remained for six years. Never one to say no to a new challenge, in 2002 she agreed to take on the role of Clinical Lead, planning for Abbotsford Regional Hospital (ARH). However, six months later her skills were needed more urgently elsewhere and she signed on as Health Services Administrator for Abbotsford and Mission, a position that later morphed into Executive Director for MSA and Mission Memorial Hospitals.

Giglio's purview was much broader now. In addition to managing the two existing hospitals, she was involved in consultations on the physical design of ARH, the development of new programs, the recruitment of hundreds of new professionals, and the preparation of the existing MSA team for the transition to the new site. In their current state, this last bit was a *major* challenge.

MSA Hospital, 50 years old, overcrowded, understaffed, and basically falling apart, was not a happy place.

"The feeling of despair at MSA overwhelmed me at first," Giglio recalls. "I'm a very hopeful, positive person. I was quite taken aback when I first arrived here. People felt so undervalued. They really didn't think that anyone cared about what they were going through."

“That overall tone of dejection was confusing because it didn’t seem to fit with my perception of how caring these people were. I could see their dedication, and I could see that we had some amazingly talented people here. So I started asking, ‘If you’re not happy, why aren’t you changing things? What’s stopping you from doing what you want to do?’

“I got a lot of different answers, sort of – they didn’t think they could do it themselves, they didn’t think they would ever get permission so they never asked for it, etcetera. It all boiled down to a pervasive lack of feeling empowered.

“My philosophy has always been that if you want to make a change for the better, and if you have the energy and passion

to those who were ready to take them, knowing that they would influence their colleagues, and bring the rest forward.”



With planning for the new hospital as the platform, Giglio reached out to experts, including Helen Lingham, an Organizational Development specialist with Fraser Health, to help make her vision a reality. The plan that unfolded was incremental, experimental, and a bit risky.

Richard and Emily Alexrod are the founders of The Axelrod Group, a consulting firm that pioneered the use of employee involvement to effect large-scale organizational change. Their

“I know I couldn’t do the same thing and expect different results. Leadership is about taking risks, being able to not be popular all the time.” *Vivian Giglio*



to carry it through, you should be able to do it. You can’t blame everything on everybody else. But we all get caught in that trap of seeing the world around us as commanding us, myself included.

“At that time, we also had an incredible amount of work, and an amazing opportunity, before us – getting ready for a new hospital that would have more patients, more programs, more equipment, more technology, and would need more people. I didn’t want anyone giving up that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be a part of the process because they were stuck in what was or what is. I wanted all of them to share their knowledge, their experience, their remarkable talent, and I wanted them to be excited about the great work they were doing. But more than anything else, I wanted them to have the power to create an extraordinary working environment, to be able to go to work every day and really feel they were contributing, to really feel that they were supported and appreciated for the excellent care they provide to patients.

“They were sceptical at first. There was a real lack of trust. I had to be patient. I wish that ‘trust me’ was all that was needed, but it isn’t. You have to walk the talk for a while.

“Some people developed that trust more quickly than others. They wanted to do things differently. I needed to offer opportu-

methodology (bringing together staff from all levels in the organization, as well as customers and suppliers, to contribute to core philosophies and resulting actions) was used at three planning conferences.

The first was a ‘Visioning Conference’, which brought together 100 participants to talk about the kind of organization they wanted to see, and how they wanted to *be* within that organization.

The second conference dealt with teamwork. Groups who had been working on various aspects of planning for the new hospital shared the results of their work with the others, and answered the question ‘What do we need to do to ensure our work is integrated and that we work as one organization rather than a bunch of silos?’

Tracy Irwin, director of the planning team and one of four directors handpicked by Giglio to “craft a culture” for success, describes the third conference. “The ‘Transition Conference’ had about 150 participants talking about what needed to be done to ensure a smooth transition to the new hospital,” she says. “That conference was amazing! By the end of it, there were 11 task groups taking responsibility to action the ideas that were brought forward.”

Conferences alone, though, were not going to give Giglio the results she wanted. “I wanted a strong team, but people are first and foremost individuals, individuals that had to come to terms with who they were, what they wanted, and what they were capable of as individuals, before they could come together as a team.”

Landmark Education Enterprises had a program for business (now called Vanto) that promised “to design and implement organizational initiatives that produce sustainable change.” The gist of the Landmark philosophy seems to be that we are our own worst enemies and that intense self-examination (spurred on by the seminar leader and group mates) will reveal that since we have created our own barriers to success, we can also remove them. Call it the self-fulfilling prophecy or the power of positive thinking, and add rocket fuel.

Perhaps more akin to group therapy than traditional team-building, as well as a considerable expense, making the program available to all staff was a controversial decision.

“It was a huge risk,” Giglio acknowledges. “Really nerve-racking at first, not knowing if it would be successful,” she recounts. “But I’ve been in health care for a lot of years and we’ve used the same seminars year after year. They’re good – to a point. But you get back to the old environment and the old habits are soon back too, because you’re still looking at the world in the same way. I knew I couldn’t do the same thing and expect different results. Leadership is about taking risks, being able to not be popular all the time.

“It turned out to be a very positive experience for the 500 people who attended those seminars. It created an energy that wasn’t there before,” Giglio says, going on to explain that people got excited. They had more confidence and were more willing to get involved. They came up with ideas and took responsibility for putting them into action. “That made a significant difference to our organization. Those people became totally aware of their capabilities as individuals, and those individuals are part of our team.”



In addition to what they learned as individuals, one group also came away from Landmark with four themes they felt were pivotal to their success and wanted to do more work

Giglio’s strategy

1. Provide tools and opportunities for staff to willingly take part in the change process.
2. Create a shared vision and hold on to it resolutely.
3. Recognize that people are first and foremost individuals, who need to come to terms with who they are, what they want and what they can contribute.
4. Care for, appreciate and support staff. Doing so will reap huge benefits in recruitment, retention, productivity and patient care.
5. Foster team and shared responsibilities.
6. Accept that people will move forward at their own pace, but don’t let idlers slow down the enthusiasts.

Giglio’s how-to’s

1. Recognize that teams are made up of individuals.
2. Provide opportunities for individuals to learn to be the best they can be.
3. Provide a variety of forums to engage people in organizational change, give information and get feedback and new ideas.
4. Give individuals tools, skills, and *permission* to be agents of change.
5. Provide forums for individuals to recognize their importance, and the importance of others, in the team.
6. Allow people to lead or follow at their own pace.

on: recruitment and retention; physician engagement; waste reduction; and customer service. The four working groups called themselves “Extraordinary NOW!”

“There were a lot of different things going on here at the same time,” says Director Judith Hockney. “Vivian knew all along that it was about the people, about individuals and giving them the tools and the power to contribute. She also knew that different individuals have different ways of learning and growing. She gave us free rein to try things that we’d never tried before, to experiment, so we did.

“Here’s an example,” Hockney continues. “The Customer Service group comes to me one day and says, ‘We’ve done some research and the Marriot Hotel in Vancouver has a reputation

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for providing amazing customer service. Can we go and talk to them?”

“I said, ‘Absolutely!’ So they went. They talked to staff and management, and what they came away with was that every single person who worked there felt valued. From the doorman to the housekeeping supervisor to the banquet manager, they all felt appreciated, they all felt that their role was vitally important to a positive customer experience. The bottom line was, if staff feel cared for, they’ll care for the customer. That was a huge learning for all of us.”

The Extraordinary NOW! groups took on various projects, working with each other and with different departments in the hospital. The Recruitment and Retention group made the busy and understaffed Emergency department their first priority and the results were impressive:

- ▶ the vacancy rate declined from 65% to 0%
- ▶ a nurse relocated from Bellingham because she heard about the change of culture in the MSA ED
- ▶ three casual RNs applied for full-time positions in the ED, commenting that it was because of how valued they felt
- ▶ complaints decreased and compliments increased

With the educational component another huge gap to fill in preparation for the move to the high tech ARH, three ‘Learning Fairs’ were held. The goal for the first one was to have 100 attend over the two-day event. By noon on the first day 250 had shown up. Those who attended were provided with brightly coloured goodie bags, which when seen on the units, prompted others to stop in. At the two subsequent fairs 700 to 800 employees, physicians and volunteers turned out for each.

Giglio also realized that at least some of the apathy she had seen early on was due to the disconnectedness between people in different roles. “The records clerks, as an example, don’t have any contact with patients, so it was hard for them to see that they were making any contribution to patient care; and a doc-

tor would ask for a chart to review a patient’s history, which is very important, but not likely give a second thought to how that chart came to be, or how it became available so quickly when they needed it.

“We created a lot of opportunities for people at all levels to dialogue, and that really helped all of us to understand that everybody has a part to play and none of us can do it alone. Our patients need every single one of us.”



Is everyone enthused? No. There were, and still are, struggles. But they have reached critical mass. While Giglio is quick to credit others, including the four directors who worked tirelessly on both the planning and culture change, they say it was Giglio’s leadership that created the yellow brick road.

“Vivian was the visionary. She knew that we needed to give staff the tools to recognize their own capabilities and power,” says Director Brenda Booy.

Director Rhonda Veldhoen says Giglio was resolute in her commitment to the desired outcome and gave a concrete example of her leader’s firm belief that staff already had the power within to succeed. “Three days before ARH was to receive patients, the new medication dispensing system would simply not work. The team had tried everything they could think of and saw no choice but to scrap the new technology and adopt the old process until a solution could be found. Vivian said no. She told them that going backward was not an option, that she had faith in them that they would make it work. They did.”

Unlike Frank Baum’s fairytale, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, these protagonists have no desire to return from whence they came. They are feeling quite at home in their new surroundings. ARH opened on August 24th, but staff now know that the physical move from MSA had little to do with a far more significant journey that they hope will never end.

A Double Whammy

How Denny is winning his battle against crystal meth and HIV BY ELLEN BARAGON

“I guarantee that from the very first hit of crystal meth, all those morals that you think you have, will go,” says Denny, a 29-year-old recovering addict.

From his first hit when barely 21, his life spiraled downward. Once a volunteer firefighter and certified paramedic, Denny turned his back on everything to get high by whatever means necessary, including crime.

In 2007, a high-speed car chase landed Denny in jail and gave him a reason to steer clear of drugs. But he was soon

shocked to learn he was HIV positive. He was told to contact anyone with whom he had shared a needle or sex in the previous year. “Phoning those people I had emotional ties to was hard, he says.

Once released, Denny was referred to Fraser Health’s HIV/AIDS Program where he met Bonnie Sydora, one of a team of nurses that provides a range of education and outreach support services to HIV or AIDS victims, especially those in prison. “Bonnie was always there for

me when I needed to talk,” says Denny. “We’ve learned from each other.”

Denny regularly attends Narcotics Anonymous meetings and volunteers at Resurrection House, a residential program for recovering addicts.

His addiction under control, he is afraid of the HIV. But he’s determined to stay clean. “I am walking the walk and I’m really starting to enjoy it,” he says, “and that’s because of the strength of the [recovery] house, the feeling of unity, and Bonnie, who has been a really big help to me.”