

# Making Baylor Health Care System special

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The themes for this year's management retreat are "Making Baylor a special place to work" and "Developing systemness for Baylor Health Care System (BHCS)." Mr. Allison will focus particularly on the system issue as will Gene Ruckle this afternoon. I want to focus on the idea of Baylor as a special place to work. Making Baylor a special place to work is not as simple as it might seem at first glance, for a number of reasons.

To begin with, it is difficult at times to recognize *special* when we see it. History is replete with examples. Let me give you just one. In 1932, when Fred Astaire was trying to break into Hollywood, his first audition brought this response from a talent scout: "He can't act. He can't sing. He can dance a little." And then Fred Astaire acted and sang and danced his way into legendary Hollywood success. He was special. The talent scout just didn't see it because sometimes *special* is difficult to recognize.

For another thing, it is difficult at times to measure *special*. Things are not always what they seem. I remember hearing about a young coed who was finishing her first semester at a university a long distance from her home. After 2½ months of not hearing from her, her parents received this letter.

Dear Mom and Dad,

I know you have not heard from me for a long time but my writing material was destroyed the night the dormitory was burned down by the demonstrators. I'm out of the hospital now, and the doctor says my eyesight should return in a month or two. The young man who rescued me from the fire has offered to share his apartment with me, so I have moved in with him. You're always talking about having grandchildren, so the good news is that you will be grandparents soon.

Love,  
Sue

But then she added this PS: "Please excuse the above exercise in English composition. The dormitory did not burn down. I've not been in the hospital. My eyes are fine. I'm not pregnant, and I didn't move in with a young man. In fact, I don't even have a boyfriend. But I did get a D in French and an F in chemistry—and I wanted you to realize how much worse it could have been."

Things are not always as they seem

But perhaps the greatest challenge of our theme—Baylor, a special place to work—is this: it is difficult to maintain special. Some of you remember the 1995 international best seller written by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*. They spent 5 years studying 75 of the top companies in America, and they discovered 8 elements that appeared in all of these growing, dynamic, special places to work. Some of you remember the book. What some of you might not remember is that over time, three quarters of the companies featured in that book failed either relatively or absolutely. *Special* is difficult to maintain.

So if *special* is difficult to recognize and difficult to measure and difficult to maintain, how do we expect to make BHCS a special place to work? That question is at the top of our agenda, not just for today but also on a continuing basis. Let me provide a context for our discussion by offering my suggestions on what it will take to make Baylor special.

## BHCS WILL BE SPECIAL WHEN WE DO THE RIGHT THING

According to a recent survey, only one in 4 employees give work their best effort. Only 25% of the workforce in any organization is committed to doing the right thing (1).

Here is an example of the 25% group. The setting was Massachusetts. The governor of the state at that time was Christian Herter, who later served as speaker of the house. He decided to show up at the annual state legislative barbecue. He'd been campaigning all day and hadn't had time to eat, so when he arrived, at about 5:00, he was famished. He stood in the food line with everybody else, and when he reached the front he said to the serving lady, "Do you mind if I take a second piece of chicken?" "I'm sorry," she said. "It's one to a customer." "But I'm starving," Herter explained. "Sorry, Mister," the lady said. "One to a customer. That's the rule." "Do you know who I am?" he said. "I am the governor of this state." Without blinking an eye, she returned, "And do you know who I am? I'm the lady in charge of the chicken" (2).

That lady was a part of the 25% group, for she was determined to fill the position she occupied. She demonstrates the approach that will make BHCS a special place. To be a special place, we must do the right thing.

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From First Baptist Church, Richardson, Texas.

Presented at the Baylor Health Care System management retreat, October 29, 2001.

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I am not talking about the pathology of perfectionism. Doing the right thing is not the same as striving for perfection. The perfectionist reaches for impossible goals and despairs when failure comes. Forget perfect. I'm talking about people doing the best they can do.

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger asked an assistant to prepare an analysis. The assistant worked day and night. An hour after he gave it to Kissinger, he got it back. A yellow sticky note instructed the worker to redo it. The assistant stayed up all night redoing the report. Again Kissinger asked him to redo it. After redoing the report 3 times, the assistant asked to see Kissinger. He told him, "I've done the best I can do." Kissinger replied, "In that case, I'll read it now." Demanding that each person in our system do his or her best is the pathway toward being special.

But we will have to move around a couple of roadblocks on the road to special.

One of these roadblocks is traditionalism—the tendency to look backward instead of forward. Someone once suggested that the 7 last words of the church are "we never did it that way before." Those are the 7 last words of every organization. As Dee Hock, the founder and chief executive officer emeritus of Visa, put it: "Every mind is a room filled with archaic furniture" (3). That archaic furniture in the minds of our people will keep BHCS from moving toward special.

A pastor went to a church in a county seat town that was steeped in the traditions of its forefathers. He spent his first 3 weeks studying the situation and preparing his inaugural address to the deacon body. He stood up before that august group and announced, "I am thankful that God has called me to be your pastor, and I am committing myself to lead this church into the 20th century." One of the deacons whispered, "Don't you mean the 21st century?" And the pastor responded, "One century at a time!"

Even if it is just "one century at a time," we must replace the archaic furniture of the past with the furniture of the future.

Another roadblock on the road to special is selfishness—the tendency to look inward instead of outward. A little quip I ran across goes like this:

*I gave a little tea party,  
this afternoon at three,  
Twas very small, three guests in all,  
I, myself, and me.*

That song is sung every day in the workplace. Echoes of the little ditty even reverberate through the hallowed halls of the hospitals in BHCS, a selfish song sung by men and women who are only looking out for themselves.

Like this lady I heard about. A young man in his early 30s was sitting in the window seat of the plane, waiting for takeoff, when an older lady with graying hair took the seat next to him. As soon as the plane was in the air, she whipped out a billfold filled with pictures of her grandchildren. One by one she held them out to her fellow traveler, filling in details about them that the other passenger could not possibly have been interested in. This went on for 30 minutes. Finally, she said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I've been so selfish, dominating your time by telling you what I think of my grandchildren. It's your turn to talk. Tell me, what do *you* think of my grandchildren?"

Individuals who live on the cul-de-sac called "self" and are interested only in their job and their work space and their recognition and their vacation and their retirement are roadblocks in our pathway toward special.

In a world where only one in 4 employees give work their best effort, we have our work cut out for us, to be sure. But we can make our workplace special by equipping and encouraging our people to do the right thing.

## **BHCS WILL BE SPECIAL WHEN WE DO THE RIGHT THING WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE**

Simply doing the right thing is no longer enough. According to futurist Joel Arthur Barker, who popularized the term "paradigm," excellence no longer gives us the competitive edge in the corporate world—and this would also be true of the health care world. Excellence, says Joel Arthur Barker, is the necessary price of entry into the game. We must go beyond excellence. We must provide excellence with an attitude!

I love the story about Wally Westlake, a journeyman ballplayer, who knocked around for 10 years in the majors. During his travels around both leagues, he spent a little time with the Cardinals and so, for a brief time, had the opportunity to play with Stan Musial. One day, Westlake said to the Hall of Fame Musial: "Stan, I gotta tell you. I had a great night's sleep last night—I mean, a perfect night. I woke up this morning and my shower was perfect and the bacon and eggs were perfect. It was a beautiful day and my drive in to the ballpark was just wonderful. I hit 4 home runs in batting practice. I'm in the lineup and I can't wait to walk up to the plate. I feel it in my bones. I'm gonna get 3 hits today. Do you ever feel that way?" And Musial replied, "Every day!" (4). Stan Musial didn't just do the right thing. He did the right thing with the right attitude.

How do we develop that attitude at BHCS? Part of the secret, of course, is to hire the right people in the first place.

A number of years ago, when the Green Bay Packers ruled the National Football League and Vince Lombardi was a coaching legend, someone asked him about the upcoming draft. "How do you know who to pick?" the questioner asked the famous coach. "Here's what we do at the Green Bay Packers," Lombardi responded. "We have the best doctors available in the Midwest. We bring in all the blue-chippers before the draft and examine them from their big toes all the way to the top of their heads to find out whether they can play for the Green Bay Packers. We find out how strong they are and how fast they can run. We know just about everything about them, except one thing." "What's that?" the man asked. "We don't know if they have the heart to play for the Green Bay Packers" (5).

We must not only bring into our organization those who have the competence to do the right thing; we also need to bring in those people who have heart.

The other crucial ingredient is to create an environment at BHCS that generates this passion in the hearts of our workforce. The system board is trying to create that kind of environment by paying attention to compensation. Venita McCellon-Allen and her staff are helping to shape that kind of environment by developing the benefits package to its maximum and by providing the proper incentives for doing the right thing with the right

attitude. With their focus on quality and safety, David Ballard, Barb Spreadbury, John Anderson, and the Best Care Committee are creating an environment conducive to a passion for working at BHCS.

Being a special place not only demands competence; it also demands passion. Let me give you a picture of the kind of passion we need.

Several years ago, Marriott Hotels provided its annual award for best sports salesperson to Albert “Smitty” Smith, the room service captain at the Atlanta Marriott. When he accepted his award he told the audience:

You’ve probably guessed that I’m not a salesperson like all of you. I don’t have an office or a fancy title. But what I do have is a relationship with all the sports teams. When a team comes to town, I work 24 hours a day to take care of their every wish. I know what every player, every coach, and every manager likes as their special order. Sometimes they even call me before they get to town and request special snacks and treats.

Last year, a competing hotel offered rooms to teams for \$4 less than we were charging. Half of the teams went to that hotel, including the Dodgers. But whenever a team that wasn’t staying at the Marriott came to town, I took the day off. I’d call my friends at the other hotel to find out what time the team was scheduled to arrive. Then I’d go over in full uniform and wait for the team in the lobby of the other hotel. One time, the Dodgers came to town. Tommy Lasorda came in and saw me standing there. He shook his hand and said with a smile, “Smitty, what are you doing here? Are you with this hotel now? This is great. So are we.” “No,” I answered, “I’m still at the Marriott.” “What are you doing here, then?” “Well, I just wanted to welcome you to town, wish you good luck against the Braves, and tell you that I’m bringing over your special order from the Marriott after the game tonight.” Lasorda asked why I would do such a thing. I answered, “First of all, because this hotel’s room service closes at 11:00 PM, and if the game goes into extra innings, you’ll miss your late night snack.” But more important, I added, “I just wanted you to know that even though you can’t afford to stay with us anymore, we still love you” (6).

That’s doing the right thing, with the right attitude.

### **BHCS WILL BE SPECIAL WHEN WE DO THE RIGHT THING WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR THE RIGHT REASON**

But we must take it a step further. We must not only do the right thing with the right attitude. We must also do what we do for the right reason. Why do we do what we do? What is our motivation? *Why* we do something is as important as *what* we do and *how* we do it. People can be motivated by different incentives.

One man was on a camping trip, sitting in front of his tent, when a family drove up nearby. The family—husband, wife, and 4 children ranging in age from 10 to 16—scrambled out of their SUV, pulled out the tent, spread it on the ground, and began to nail in the stakes. Then they lifted the tent with the post and secured the tent to the stakes. And as soon as the tent was up,

everyone scattered. It was a sight to behold. It was the most highly motivated tent-raising he had ever seen. He commended the father and said, “That is amazing. How do you motivate your family to help put up the tent with such speed?” The father explained, “It is a rule in our family. No one goes to the bathroom until the tent is set up!”

What motivates those who work in your hospitals? Those who are in your area? What motivates you to do the right thing with the right attitude? Let me tell you a story I heard years ago from Owen Cooper of Yazoo City, Mississippi.

Owen told the story of 2 young men in medical school who were great friends and great rivals, all the way through medical school and in the residency programs that followed. After they had completed their initial training, they went separate ways, one to a highly rated hospital in Chicago, the other to Africa as a medical missionary. Years passed, and finally the doctor who had settled in Chicago planned an African safari. He scheduled his itinerary so that he could stop by and see his classmate. It was a great reunion as they reminisced about the old days. The missionary doctor was interrupted by a nurse who reminded him that he had to perform surgery at 3:00. After the surgery, he returned to his friend, and they picked up the conversation again. The doctor from the States shook his head and said to his friend, “Do you know how much money you would have made on that surgery if you had done it back in the States?” He announced the standard cost for that operation and asked the missionary doctor, “And what did you get?” The missionary doctor answered, “A few pennies and the smile of God.”

I know our doctors receive more than a few pennies, and well they should. And I know that all of you are compensated well for what you do, and that is as it should be. But what I am suggesting is this—if all you receive from your work is money, if you are not inspired by a higher motivation than financial compensation, if you are not doing what you are doing to make a difference in society and to receive the smile of God, then you are working for too little. The smile of God on your life—now that is a payoff worth working for.

Doing the right thing, with the right attitude, for the right reason—that’s what special looks like to me.

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