

PARKHURST NUVISION

Define your mission statement, then envelop it in culture.

BY GREGORY D. PARKHURST, MD, FACS

Company culture can make or break your business. But, in every sense of the word, culture is intangible and therefore hard to explicitly define. Ultimately, your company culture will develop organically over time, and it will largely depend on how you interact with your employees and how they interact with each other. But at the outset, crafting your practice's mission statement is the perfect jumping-off point from which to start defining your culture.

When I decided to go into private practice and opened Parkhurst NuVision, we were intentional about defining our mission statement—our reason for existing and our vision of what we would endeavor to be as an organization. We decided to break down our mission statement into three bullet points:

- We do vision correction surgery,
- for important guests,
- of referring optometrists.

Once we had a clear picture what we wanted to do as an organization, we began to interview and hire people for our team whom we thought would be in sync with our vision. Hiring for personality rather than skill set has been a winning strategy for our practice. We can teach

people who are kind and compassionate, who have a good work ethic, and who have good customer service skills how to test visual acuity and how to take a medical history, but it is difficult to teach personality and customer service.

We have also had good luck bringing on new team members based on our current team members' referrals. This is a valuable strategy to build company culture. When team members recommend that a friend or family member apply for a job with us, they are putting their neck on the line that it will be a good match in both directions.

We employ people from diverse professional backgrounds. Some of our employees have worked in the food and beverage industry, others have been teachers and worked in oil fields, and some others have even been past patients. We have gone outside of ophthalmology (and outside of medicine in general) to hire individuals who are kind and who have good customer service backgrounds, and then we teach them the ophthalmology components.

The two biggest elements of Parkhurst NuVision's culture—and really of any organization's culture—are the mission and then, of course, the people.

DAILY REAFFIRMATIONS

We repeat our mission statement daily, so that any time someone on our team is faced with a difficult question, he or she can think about what the answer might be through the lens of who we are as an organization. Often, employees can come to the right conclusion just by remembering who we are as a practice.

The fact that we *do vision correction surgery, for important guests, of referring optometrists* has informed our core values. It is reflected in how we answer the phone, how we greet patients when they come in, how we treat each other, and how we communicate with one another on a daily basis.

INVEST IN YOUR TEAM

There are several other activities that can help to promote the well-being of your culture. Of course it is important to identify and hire the right individuals and to compensate them appropriately, but you must also build the team atmosphere.

The daily huddle. For Parkhurst NuVision, that starts with our daily huddle, which is a practice that I learned from Vance Thompson, MD, FACS, and his team at Vance Thompson Vision,



Figure 1. During team training, members broke into groups and painted pictures with the practice's core values (top left). Team members who walked and ran in a local 5K wore Parkhurst NuVision t-shirts (bottom left).



Figure 2. Parkhurst NuVision team members at a minor league baseball game (top and bottom right).

during a Refractive Surgery Alliance premier practice event. We've chosen 8:37 am as *huddle time*, and that is a sacred time. Every team member, even those who are currently with a patient, will stop what they are doing to attend the 5-minute daily huddle.

When an employee explains to a patient why he or she is walking away for a few minutes ("Mr. Jones, I am going to start your workup now. In a couple of minutes I am going have to step away to attend our daily team huddle. But I'll be right back."), the patient remains at ease and is, in a sense, reassured that he or she is in good hands.

The daily huddle time is sacred because it allows us to be face to face as a whole organization, it enforces our company core values, and it provides us with the space to talk about any interesting things that are happening that day.

Team training. Another way to invest in your team is to dedicate internal and external training resources. For example, we sponsor our executive management team to go to leadership seminars, and we send technical staff who want to gain a new skill set to formal training in clinical research. Once a year, we shut down our clinic operation for 2 days for intensive team training and building. This year, we invited a motivational speaker from out of state, and we broke

into teams to make paintings of our core values (Figure 1, top). The team with the best painting was awarded a prize.

Team-building events. We also host company-sponsored team-building events offsite, which occur about once every 2 months. We have done 5K races (where we wore matching t-shirts; Figure 1, bottom), and we have hosted simpler activities like renting out a meeting room and giving everyone game cards for Dave & Busters. Just recently, we took our employees to a San Antonio Missions minor league baseball game (Figure 2).

Regardless of the activity, we specifically set aside a few minutes at every event to reinforce our company core values and mission. At the baseball game, we rented the party deck, danced with the mascot, and gave each team member a baseball with a sharpie to autograph and write our core values on as a keepsake.

PROUD MOMENTS

I have had many proud moments as the Physician-CEO of Parkhurst NuVision. I think one of the things I am most proud of is that many of our team members have referred someone close to them to work here. This means that we're hitting home and delivering a high-quality culture to our team and to our patients.

Another thing that I am really proud of is that, 2 years in a row, Parkhurst NuVision has been named one of the top three places to work in San Antonio by the *San Antonio Current*. This award is not in the medical category alone: Any business in San Antonio is eligible. The other two winners this past year were the insurance company USAA and Texas' largest grocery chain H-E-B. To be listed as among the top three places to work alongside these amazing Texas companies is humbling. It means that people are excited about Parkhurst NuVision's mission. They're excited about coming to work. They love their team members. And they feel fulfilled in the work that they do. ■



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