

THE Art OF Health Promotion

ideas for improving health outcomes

EDITOR'S DESK: EXPLORING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES: LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH POLICIES

What does it take to fully embed principles like quality improvement, employee safety, or continuous learning into an organizational culture? And considering each of these concepts are commonly accepted as vital for organizational success, why are some organizations recognized as icons of these principles while so many other organizations come up short or fail to make them a serious part of their culture altogether? The answers to these questions are what fill the curricula of MBA programs nationwide. The complexity of measuring, defining, and influencing culture is why case studies are such a staple of business schools and why the cases spotlight both success and failure in advancing these principles.

Will the principle that a culture of health is as vital to organizational success as, say, continuous quality improvement ever become a mainstream idea? While health promotion advocates have offered a striking level of lip service to the importance of a culture of health in the past several years, compelling case studies are still hard to find. That's why I have become an avid student of Cleveland Clinic's wellness program and am a follower of Toby Cosgrove, the clinic's CEO, and Michael Roizen, their chief wellness officer. As you'll learn in this issue's interview of Dr. Roizen, their trifecta bet on a culture bent toward health, omnipresent wellness programming, and compelling financial incentives has produced unheard-of results in reducing the incidence of chronic conditions and curbing health care cost trends.



It was an inspiring keynote address by Dr. Roizen that led to the exploration of Cleveland Clinic's wellness program in this issue. And it was after a conference where I listened to a keynote from Dr. Cosgrove that I had occasion to thank him for his leadership in setting such a high bar for organizational policies that support health. "It's not very sophisticated leadership." He said. "Meaning it's simple? I suppose." I replied, "But, it's far from easy. Getting it done is the hard work of leadership."

Any review of what it takes to build or change a culture includes a discussion of organizational leaders. As a renowned thoracic surgeon with over 20,000 operations to his credit, Cosgrove commands respect among fellow clinicians. With his commitment to measuring and improving the patient experience, his policy views play to the esprit de corps of caregivers who share his commitment to service. But I think it his authenticity as a leader who has devoted most of his career to repairing the ruined hearts of smokers that has made Cosgrove one of the most remarkable wellness leaders since C. Everett Koop.

As you'll see in my interview with his chief wellness champion, Dr. Roizen is quick to credit his boss Cosgrove as quarterback, but Roizen's capacity for explaining their game plan is that of a fullback who never met a tackler he couldn't juke. Equal parts accomplished scientist, media darling, and tactical business thinker, Roizen was as impassioned talking wellness with me one on one as he gets in front of an audience of hundreds. Even considering health improvement is at the core Cleveland Clinic's mission, these leaders have still weathered intense pushback, including from within their own ranks. To better understand the challenges and opportunities inherent in leadership in testing the boundaries of employee health policies, this issue also features an expert panel representing employer, academic, and health care consultant views.

When I asked Cosgrove what leadership lessons he's learned from pushing boundaries, he offered that communication is key, that it takes bravery from human resources, and that he "worked very hard and explained that these changes aren't meant to be mean but to be an example of a healthy organization." Cosgrove had both a sigh and a smirk when he said, "Thankfully I'm not running for office." I took this to be astute shorthand meaning that if popularity is your goal, you probably ought to avoid his thin-aided level of leadership. So true. Still, he and Roizen have earned my votes as well as my enthusiastic endorsement. ☺

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In This Issue

Editor's Desk: Exploring Cultural Boundaries: Leadership and Organizational Health Policies by Paul E. Terry, PhD	1
An Interview with Dr. Michael Roizen, Chief Wellness Officer at Cleveland Clinic by Paul E. Terry, PhD	2
Expert Panel: A Discussion About Environmental Supports and Employee Policies Intended to Support Health and How Lessons From Tobacco Access Reforms Can Inform Food Access by Simone A. French, PhD; Shelly Wolff, MBA; and Archelle Georgiou, MD	8
Case Study: How Can This Organization's Culture Support Employee Health? by Paul E. Terry, PhD	11