Wheeling Hospital

Hospital Staffing Efficiencies Create Millions in Savings

About Our Client

Wheeling Hospital

Headquarters: Wheeling, West Virginia

Scope and Services: Founded in 1850, Wheeling Hospital is the longest-operating hospital in West Virginia, with 276 beds, and 275 primary care and specialty physicians on staff.

In addition to the hospital, the complex includes continuous care, renal care, and wellness centers, as well as several medical office buildings and a recently opened, state-of-the-art facility that features an emergency/trauma center, pediatrics center, and intensive care unit.

Wheeling Hospital offers a full range of medical care, including cardiac catheterization, laser surgery, kidney dialysis, cancer treatment, sports medicine, and corporate health and wellness programs.

Truven Health Solution Used: ActionOI®

If physicians' offices are closed on Fridays, then why are the labs staffed like it's a Tuesday? These were the types of questions Wheeling Hospital leadership was asking as they started to examine staffing problems. Like many hospitals across the country, Wheeling was looking at lower admissions, decreased volumes, reduced Medicare reimbursements, and a growing disconnect between staffing and actual needs. They had to make a change, align their goals, and streamline their processes, but they didn't want to lay off employees, freeze hiring, or eliminate well-deserved merit increases. Armed with Truven Health ActionOI benchmarks, they were able to do just that. To the tune of two million dollars in savings.

Course of Action

Hospital leaders developed a productivity system that would give managers a tool to adjust daily staffing levels in revenue-producing departments. The productivity standards are based on ActionOI benchmarks, which are reviewed quarterly and updated in the system on a regular basis.

Because management began the process with confidence in the productivity system and the ActionOI data, they were able to promote it as a tool that would help departments simplify their day-to-day operations. In a no-pressure kick-off , all they asked for was daily participation, and department managers responded well. Without twisting arms or forcing metrics, the Wheeling leadership team educated their department managers about how to use the productivity system, the ActionOI benchmarks and what the numbers meant to them. They stressed the importance of productivity standards and how they are important to the business as a whole. Just two months after initial launch, the system was implemented and up and running.

Each morning, department managers enter their projected volumes and staffing schedules into the tool. The system then calculates required staffing against actual numbers for the day. Empowered to flex their daily staff, department managers started hitting productivity targets. As they worked to streamline their numbers, daily reports showed trends and opportunities, helping each manager evaluate his or her overall staffing needs and work within those limits.

Wheeling implemented the system in the medical departments first. Through what is sometimes called the "positive peer pressure" associated with the improvements, other departments started to take notice. Pretty soon there were staffing efficiencies being realized in ancillary patient support areas like housekeeping and the cafeteria, too. Managers were proud of the numbers they were producing and it was spreading throughout the entire organization.

Results

In just nine months of using ActionOI benchmarks to develop productivity standards and using the system to adjust daily staffing, Wheeling Hospital saved over $2 million and realized a reduction in 287 full-time equivalents (FTEs) without any layoffs and without compromising patient care. In addition to the black and white numbers, there were other noticeable changes:

- Department managers were updating their staffing every day, which meant that payroll was getting numbers every day. Payroll deadlines used to mean that everyone was rushing to gather numbers and get them turned in at the last minute, all at once. Now the end-of-the-month rush is a thing of the past.
- Billing errors and coding errors were now more easily recognized, simply as a result of everyone being more organized.
- Morale was up because there was a team effort to meet a goal, and because everyone had a better understanding of business needs. They were all in it together, and it was improving each day.

Efficiency in a hospital is important to make things run within a budget and to ensure that patients get great care. Wheeling Hospital found their efficiencies, made them a reality, and streamlined staffing, all while improving teamwork and productivity. Truven Health was proud to help them do it.

"Though we started ActionOI in our medical departments, other departments took notice, too, and we started to see improvements across the facility. Managers started to understand each other's needs and everyone worked together to make it happen."

Megan Yetter
Director, Decision Support
Wheeling Hospital

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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