Innovation Café

Premise
At Memorial’s Innovation Café you can order up some innovation with a side of new business ventures. Just attend one of their monthly training sessions, held at the Innovation Café, and you’ll learn all about developing new inventive business strategies. Held in a coffee-house style facility, the Innovation Café offers a smorgasbord of options for understanding the theory, principles and practices of bringing innovation to any business. One of the first community hospitals and health systems to develop a board-approved innovation policy (R&D) to create and fund a large flow of creative new programs and services, you’ll see firsthand and learn from experienced executives and leaders who have crafted, implemented and managed many of Memorial’s breakthrough innovations.

Promise
Why invest time exploring the topic of innovation? Memorial’s leadership group at the Innovation Café has spent three years studying how innovation is used and diffused in various industries around the world. They learned early on that the hospital industry had no track record in developing innovation as a core competency for staff members. This lead them to non-health care companies as they continued to explore. After in-depth meetings with experts at companies such as Motorola, 3M, Dupont, Whirlpool, Microsoft and many others, they learned that building a workforce that is inspired by the projects they work on and a workforce that is experienced at developing new ways to solve problems is one of the most powerful ways to be ready for any business challenges that come your way... and ultimately to sustain a vital, successful organization. Although their original focus was on how this topic could impact the health care industry, the principles and tools they’ve identified apply to almost any business.

What they have learned is that there are two key advantages to having an innovative-thinking team. First, is the ability to reduce risk. The development of new programs or products carries a certain amount of time, energy and funding risks. The use of R&D/innovation tools such as rapid prototyping, deep dives, etc., allows opportunity for mistakes to be made early and at less expensive stages. Organizations that pay direct attention to reducing risk will have the ability to manage resources better and improve the chances for new business success. Second, is the ability to differentiate. Most American businesses have been through the quality improvement skill building as well as the service improvement efforts that have had great impact on the ability to meet and exceed customer needs. These are crucial values needed for a successful operation. Quality and Service focus is about continually getting better at what you do.
Memorial believes there is a third equally important value and that is being different with what you do. Commoditization is a danger for many companies and a cure for this is having a workforce that has the ability to identify ways to differentiate one business from others. An organization that values innovation and offers staff the tools to work on innovative projects will be much better prepared to differentiate.

Creating a healthy community in St. Joseph County, Indiana has been a major part of Memorial’s Innovation Everywhere! program. They have committed, or tithed, 10 percent of their net revenues annually to health initiatives throughout the community. Among their goals to help create healthy populations are prevention services, access to high quality, affordable medical care, neighborhood organization health initiatives and educational activities with schools. To that end programs they have funded include a Congregational Nursing Program, where nurses are placed in various places of worship to help educate parishioners in proper health care and well-being. Women In Touch, an African American breast cancer awareness group which provides breast cancer education, free screenings and diagnostic mammograms to African American women in need. In collaboration with the St. Joseph County Health Department, state of the art lead detection equipment has been provided for lead screenings in order to find lead poisoning sources faster and more efficiently.

Another exciting project is HealthWorks! Kids’ Museum. HealthWorks!, located in the Leighton HealthPlex in downtown South Bend, opened its doors to the community in early 2000. The facility includes a theater (The Main Brain), three exhibit floor thematic zones (MindWorks!, BodyWorks! And All About Me!), a resource center, offices and two classrooms. The Healthy Babies Project, led by a committee of over 100 members representing over 60 community organizations, works to prevent unnecessary infant deaths by focusing on prenatal care, public awareness and maternal and child health issues. Memorial Hospital has also created a unique way of recording the learning processes of creating these programs by posting Learning Histories on their website, www.qualityoflife.org. The histories document the development of healthy community programs, warts and all, from beginning to end including interviews with individuals who initiated the concepts, those who developed, formed and managed them as well as those who participated in the programs. By shedding light on both successes and failures through these Learning Histories, Memorial hopes that others wanting to develop programs on their own can gain insight from their experiences. By helping the community tackle important health issues Memorial is standing by its commitment of creating a truly ‘healthy community’.

Working with nationally known ‘leadership guru’ Tom Peters, Memorial has developed WOW! Projects, a program encouraging Memorial’s employees to feel empowered to bring ideas and innovations to the hospital, resulting in a more passionate and engaged work force and an environment that attracts top talent. The training program developed by the Tom Peters Group, has been adapted for health care and is open to all staff at all levels. The program is known as the Memorial WOW! Wizard School, where employees are trained to generate and implement ideas and innovative
solutions. Using myths and personal mythology to invigorate the training, the Wizard School takes what might have been a conventional training course and makes it fun, creative and exciting. Ten hospital managers and administrators were trained by Peters and are considered Gurus at the Wizard School. The Gurus then train others throughout the company to identify, recruit and bring those with innovative WOW! ideas to the school. Participants, encouraged to use their ‘passion’, ‘emotion’ and ‘personality’, spend two or three days at Wizard School learning about WOW! Projects so that in the future if they come up with a project idea the tools are there to effectively produce it. The result is everybody wins when WOW! projects are encouraged; employees feel like they’re a vital part of the Memorial community and the Hospital who, as a result of the projects, are serving their patients and the community at large in a more effective manner. It also draws potential employee candidates who want to be part of an inventive and creative environment.

Another pathway, new business ventures, makes it possible for Memorial to partner with nationally recognized businesses, such as Dupont, Baxter, and Underwriters Laboratories, to both generate revenue for the hospital as well as get the public familiar with Memorial’s name and reputation. Among the successful undertakings are working with Baxter International selling their Pulse drink, with Memorial’s logo, at the Memorial Health & Lifestyles Center and at the hospital’s food services. Memorial has also been selected as an American test-bed facility for Dupont Hospital Safety Venture concentrating on medication errors, patient alarms and safety structure. Memorial also worked with IDEO, a premier design firm based in Chicago, to design and build a $40,000,000 Heart and Vascular Center which provides patients with top quality cardiac care. The 100,000 plus square foot facility opened in early 2005.

Purpose
The Innovation Café is a place to go to learn from those who have been out there walking the talk. Memorial has invested staff time and resources to study and learn from other businesses. And subsequently they’ve designed and implemented a strategy of “Innovation Everywhere” at Memorial. Innovation has become a way of life at this organization, it’s an imperative that has infiltrated the culture from the way facilities and buildings are designed to how programs and projects are implemented.

Rapid prototyping at WOW! Wizard School

“It’s important to have a say in the future. At Memorial, we feel that creating a culture of innovation is the best way to maintain a world class service leadership position, attract and retain the best staff, attract resources and build a financially stable organization and most importantly, provide quality care for our patients and physicians. Unlike some organizations that approach innovation through a designated group of R&D staff, we feel that preparing all of our staff to be innovative will allow us to achieve things we’ve never dreamed of. The three key paths we’ve chosen to travel towards out Innovation Everywhere culture are: Wow Project Training, New Business Ventures and Community Health and Gift Economy.”

— Phil Newbold, President & CEO