

Influencer Training Helps Spectrum Health Achieve an Unprecedented 98% Hand Hygiene Compliance



INDUSTRY: HEALTHCARE

Spectrum Health is a not-for-profit healthcare system located in Grand Rapids, Michigan that provides high quality, high value care to millions of individuals across the state. The system is composed of 18,000 employees and 1,500 physicians who share a common mission to improve the health of the communities they serve.

THE CHALLENGE

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in the U.S., two million people suffer each year from hospital-acquired infections (HAIs). Of these patients, 90,000 die annually. Leading researchers and industry regulators have long established that one of the most effective safeguards against HAIs is proper hand hygiene. However, getting staff, nurses, and physicians to perform consistent hand hygiene has proven to be a complex behavior challenge. Despite implementing a wide variety of interventions, health systems across the nation remained stalled below 60 percent in hand hygiene compliance rates.

Over the years, leaders at Spectrum Health, the largest not-for-profit healthcare system in West Michigan, also implemented a variety of hand hygiene initiatives—each one producing small gains but falling short of expectations. The system's compliance rates remained stalled at just slightly higher than the national average. As a result, Spectrum Health executives undertook a robust behavior change initiative to increase hand hygiene compliance and reduce HAIs.

THE INFLUENCER PLAN

In 2008, infection control and prevention leaders at Spectrum Health partnered with VitalSmarts to improve systemwide hand hygiene compliance using the Influencer model from Influencer Training.

Influencer Training teaches that successful change occurs by targeting a handful of vital behaviors and using six sources of influence to change those behaviors.

To uncover the vital behaviors that would lead to improved hand hygiene, leaders from the infection control and prevention team conducted positive deviant studies by examining successful outliers among other healthcare facilities and in their own system. They uncovered three vital behaviors:

- **WIWO.** Wash in and wash out every time staff enters and exits a patient's room.
- **Hold one another accountable.** Each staff member is 100 percent accountable for both his or her own hand hygiene behavior *and* the behavior of his or her coworkers.
- **Say "Thank You."** When reminded to wash their hands, staff members are to say "thank you for reminding me" and wash again without getting



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defensive. Staff members should make it safe and easy to remind others.

After identifying the vital behaviors, leaders used the six sources of influence to both motivate and enable people to change through personal, social, and structural forces. The prevention team identified the following strategies:

Personal Motivation. To ignite everyone's passion for hand hygiene and to help them see the vital behaviors as “the right thing to do,” the prevention team used the power of personal experience. They invited staff, physicians, and former patients who had suffered from an HAI or knew someone who had suffered to share their personal experiences in writing or to speak at staff meetings. The staff also signed commitment boards promising to uphold the three vital behaviors.

Personal Ability. To ensure that people had the skills to perform the vital behaviors, employees were trained in Relationship-Based Care and Crucial Conversations. The training taught them skills to respectfully hold others accountable. The prevention team also created sample scripts and conducted role-plays to coach staff on how to remind others to wash, how to respond to a reminder, and how to push back if met with resistance from a colleague.

Social Motivation and Ability. The prevention team recruited the support of senior leaders, managers, and physicians. For example, the hospital president spoke out about and wrote memos supporting the initiative, each unit was assigned a physician champion to demonstrate the new behaviors, and opinion leaders spoke with skeptics and gained their support. These strategies communicated to staff that their leaders supported the vital behaviors and would reward those who lived them.

Structural Motivation. The prevention team recognized behavior change with small rewards such as stickers, gift certificates, verbal “thank yous,” and parties for units with high compli-

ance. They also celebrated milestones by placing a big “Thank you” card in the cafeteria. Ultimately, the vital behaviors were added to each staff member's performance report, and some departments incorporated physician-specific hand hygiene compliance into their professional practice evaluation metrics.

Structural Ability. To make hand hygiene more convenient and easier to remember, the prevention team changed the physical environment. They placed hand sanitizer dispensers inside and outside every patient room, meeting room, and manager's office. They distributed pocket cards that reminded staff of the vital behaviors. They also placed friendly reminder signs and posters in every unit as well as installed screensaver reminders on most computers.

RESULTS

As units applied the Influencer model, Spectrum Health realized rapid and sustained improvements. Within the first two months, they tracked at 90 percent hand hygiene compliance—a 30 percent increase over their benchmark.

Matt Van Vranken, former executive vice president of Spectrum Health and president of Spectrum Health Hospital Group, said of their success, “Since we've used the Influencer model we've seen dramatic results in hand hygiene compliance. Prior, we were getting the kind of results that most of the hospitals across the country get—less than 50 percent. Since we've driven this cultural change, we've seen over 90 percent compliance three quarters in a row and we're driving very, very vigorously to 100 percent compliance.”

In 2009, Spectrum Health System reported an unprecedented 98 percent compliance rate.

But the value of this initiative goes much further. Resounding evidence of behavior change is visible in the way staff members confront and have the right conversations with one another—even

when speaking to a physician who is perceived as intimidating or powerful.

Kristine White, vice president of innovation and patient affairs, shared a telling experience about an executive who was participating in rounds and entered a patient's room without washing his hands. While the executive was unlikely to touch anything, he was violating the wash in wash out policy. A staff nurse who observed the violation spoke up and reminded the executive to wash his hands—all of this in front of patients.

Van Vranken also expounded on the broad cultural implications.

“As people learned to hold each other accountable for something as simple as hand hygiene, they learned the skills to hold each other accountable for other expected outcomes like patient safety, quality, and efficiency,” Van Vranken said. “This initiative has really provided us with a cultural framework to drive high performance broadly across the organization.”

RESULTS AT A GLANCE:

- Improved hand hygiene compliance from 60 to 90% in 2 months
- Unprecedented 98% hand-hygiene compliance one year after Influencer initiative
- Marked behavior change in the way staff members confront and speak up to one another
- Staff now hold others accountable for outcomes like patient safety, quality, and efficiency

About Influencer Training™—Influencer Training is a two-day leadership course that teaches proven strategies to drive rapid and sustainable behavior change for teams and organizations. By learning how to discover and counteract the complex web of forces underlying resistant organizational problems, you'll be able to make change inevitable.

This training infuses classroom time with original videoclips of modern-day change agents who have solved some of the world's most complex business and societal problems. The Influencer course delivers an award-winning, proven model for changing behavior by applying six sources of influence to solve your most persistent problems.

About VitalSmarts®—VitalSmarts is an innovator in corporate training and organizational performance. The company is home to the award-winning Influencer Training and *New York Times* bestselling book of the same title, *Influencer: The Power to Change Anything*. VitalSmarts has been ranked six times by *Inc.* magazine as one of the fastest growing companies in America and has trained more than 750,000 people worldwide. www.vitalsmarts.com