



Celebrating Nursing Leadership: A Conversation with Engagement Expert Vicki Hess

Posted by Joe Fournier



Vicki Hess, RN, MS, CSP, a nationally recognized speaker and acclaimed author, guides healthcare professionals who want to create an environment where employees are engaged, customers are happy, and goals are achieved. Vicki works with organizations and associations to positively impact employee engagement through virtual and in-person workshops, retreats, keynote presentations and coaching sessions. Her unique views on employee engagement are evidence based, relatable and real world.



IP: *What inspired you to want to be a nurse?*

VH: When I was in high school, my mother had breast cancer. Looking back, I am sure I wanted to become a nurse to help her. I went to a vocational school in the afternoons to get my Nursing

Assistant certification. Everyone kept telling me I was doing a great job--so it was an easy choice to pick a university where I could get my nursing degree.

IP: *Why are you passionate about nursing engagement?*

VH: I love nurses and nursing. Although bedside nursing is not my superpower, I have great respect for those who are in the arena getting dirt on their face (metaphorically speaking – haha). I want nurses (and all healthcare employees) to love their job. I want everyone to feel empowered to find and create their own Professional Paradise™ so that they thrive and serve with compassion. I love it when I see faces light up when nurses learn new tools to become the Chief Paradise Officer™ of their job.

IP: *What are your unique views on nursing engagement?*

VH: There are three key concepts that I share with healthcare leaders and teams that are counter intuitive.

First, we need to go from talking about employee engagement for the organization and move to talking about creating Professional Paradise for the individual. Engagement starts with internal motivation—and tapping into that is an important first step.

Second, I believe that organizations must change the focus on engagement from a “Flavor of the Month” to an everyday activity. It needs to be part of their strategic plans, meeting agendas and one on one meetings. I call this going from “Engagement Dread” to the “Engagement Thread”.

Third, many organizations and associates mistakenly think that engagement is the responsibility of the organization and leaders. The missing element here is the individual. It takes all three to create and sustain engagement. To continue to see improvement, leaders must create shared responsibility and hold employees accountable for their role. This step is all about empowerment!

IP: *Why is nursing engagement critical to an organization's success? How does it impact safety, quality, and patient satisfaction?*





VH: To put it simply, if you google “benefits of employee engagement in healthcare”, 78 million results show up. Every metric that organizations measure is positively impacted by employee engagement. The data is clear and unwavering in the connection.

IP: *With COVID-19, has your thinking on nursing engagement evolved? What will organizations need to do differently to keep their nurses and teams engaged?*

VH: This pandemic has created an environment that is new to everyone. All generations, levels of experience and areas of nursing are figuring it out as we go along. The great news is that at its core, managing this virus requires skills that most of our nursing teams possess already. In the future, nursing will be

changed forever. This is not the first time we have experienced major changes. Nurses are strong and adapt well. Moving forward, successful organizations will stick to the basics of what drives engagement. Many nurses (and nursing leaders) will suffer from severe stress. Organizations who continue to support their nursing teams at all levels of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs will continue to see positive outcomes.

IP: *Thank you Vicki for your leadership and passion for nursing engagement. Happy Nurses Week!*

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