

# Virtua Health

## STAR initiative: Bringing Voice of the Customer (VOC) to healthcare.

*Virtua Health, a comprehensive healthcare system with headquarters in Marlton, NJ, is recognized as one of the best-performing hospital systems in the nation, winning numerous awards for the excellence of its clinical services and patient care.*

Central to that high level of performance is Virtua's STAR initiative — an organizing principle that aligns all hospital strategies, management systems and operating structures around the goal of providing an outstanding patient experience. The "five points" of STAR that support this objective are:

- Hiring, developing and retaining the best people
- Providing a supportive, caring culture
- Serving all customers (internal and external) the way they desire
- Delivering the highest levels of clinical quality and safety possible
- Ensuring superior resource stewardship

"Our goal is to make every patient's experience world-class," explains Richard P. Miller, president and CEO, Virtua Health. "We strive to deliver the most advanced care in a manner that understands the patient's personal needs, as well as those of the patient's family."

One of the keys to success at Virtua is a lesson learned from industry: namely, that an organization has to listen carefully to the Voice of the Customer (VOC) — whether that customer is a patient, a provider or a regulatory agency — and then channel and optimize all resources into meeting and exceeding those expectations.

Guided by Miller's vision, Virtua was one of the first healthcare organizations in the nation to adopt business models used to guide process transformation and performance improvement to meet VOC expectations. Through a partnership with GE Healthcare that started in 2000, Virtua has been able to bring industry best practices around process improvement, operational excellence and leadership development into the healthcare setting. Leveraging this knowledge as well as advanced technologies and key process improvement tools — including Six Sigma®, Design for Six Sigma (DFSS), Lean, Work-Out and, most important, Change Acceleration (CAP) — Virtua has been able to transform the organization's culture and achieve its goal of providing excellent service within a caring environment.



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**Richard P. Miller**  
President and CEO  
Virtua Health  
Marlton, NJ

*Perform at  
the Next Level through  
Culture-driven  
Performance.*



## Results.

Currently in the seventh year of project activity, Virtua uses the internal resources of black belts, green belts, management engineers and clinical informaticists to improve, streamline and standardize processes. Among the results:

- **Statistically significant and sustained improvements in CMS core measures** for cardiac medication administration, pneumonia, surgical infection prevention and normothermia.
- Implementation of a **surgical registration and scheduling system** based on the Voice of the Customer (VOC) — the result of coordinating DFSS and Lean processes with information services.
- A **breast care navigation model** to support patients diagnosed with breast cancer through the continuum of care. In the pilot phase alone, the lag time from abnormal mammogram to surgeon consult dropped from 30 days to 12 days, and the retention rate for surgical referrals increased from 50 percent to 96 percent.
- An **electronic medical record (EMR) system** in the emergency departments and home health services. An EMR in the acute care setting is in the planning stages, moving Virtua closer to its goal of having a paperless environment.
- **Improved accuracy of home health coding process** by clinical staff, resulting in an increase of \$615,000 in Medicare revenues within just six months.
- **Higher insurance reimbursement** for surgically implanted devices, resulting in more than \$2 million in additional revenue.
- **Significant market share growth in key programs of excellence**, including orthopedics, women's health, cardiovascular care and neurosciences.

Overall, the hospital's integrated approach to cultural transformation — led by the STAR initiative and powered by Six Sigma process improvement tools and carefully considered application of new technologies — has helped Virtua Health increase revenue by more than \$25 million within seven years.

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