



Maximizing a Team's Potential

BY TERRI ARMSTRONG WELCH

With so much at risk, one healthcare organization creates a team building playbook that defies the odds to save lives and dollars.

An architect by training and a collaborator by instinct, Brad Pollitt was handed the challenge of his career: In four years or less, bring together 150 independent contractors—bricklayers to mechanical engineers—to build a \$400 million state-of-the-art hospital for UF Health Shands, a private nonprofit providing clinical care and teaching facilities for University of Florida Health. As vice president of facilities and development, Pollitt knew if he was going to bring this behemoth project in on time and on budget his first priority had to be on building a high-performing team—one that trusted one another, shared risk, communicated effectively, and had a solid commitment to collaborate.

Blue collar, white collar, and everything in between

Pollitt also knew he wasn't building a team in the usual sense. This was a collection of individuals from various companies—total strangers who had never met, yet who needed to hit the ground running on a massive project that required them to work together more effectively than most teams in organizations actually do.

Given how much was at stake—in dollars and patients' lives—Pollitt needed to make sure mistakes didn't happen, and that critical issues were identified and resolved immediately. For that he needed an industry-proven tool that would help the team get to the heart of things immediately, and he found what he was looking for in Wiley's Everything DiSC solutions.

"We essentially formed a small company," Pollitt recalls. "And just like anyone would do in that situation, we were intentional in hiring quality people with technical skills, but also people with interpersonal skills and the ability to work with others to achieve a common goal. Once I had the people, I had to build a team, keep it together, and reinforce the bonds of friendship and collaboration I hoped would develop."

For expertise and guidance, Pollitt turned to Debbie Mason, president of Strategists Inc. and an authorized partner and certified trainer of Everything DiSC, who helped develop the team building framework for UF Health Shands. She introduced the team to Everything DiSC Workplace, a tool that, according to Pollitt, "allowed us to assess who we are individually, who we are collectively, and helped us assume the characteristics and behaviors of a high-performing team in a very, very short period of time. Everything DiSC has been absolutely essential in bringing the group together in this pressure-cooker situation."

THE COMPANY: UF Health Shands

www.UFHealth.org/Shands-University-Florida



THE SUPPLIER: Wiley | Everything DiSC

www.everythingdisc.com

The playbook

Everyone—designers, project managers, and contractors—completes the Everything DiSC Workplace assessment, receives their personalized report, and participates in subsequent sessions that include individual coaching and a review of team culture reports. In addition, each session held throughout the life of the project includes an activity designed to re-energize the team, improve communication and collaboration, or provide an opportunity to dive deeper into an analysis of everyone's assessment results. Along with special recognition of major milestones and project updates, these sessions provide a safe environment to discuss problems and brainstorm creative solutions.

According to Pollitt, “Excavators and pipe fitters aren't exactly who you'd expect to engage in this kind of training. After all, some of these folks are typically out in the field yelling at subcontractors to get the work done. This was an entirely new experience for them. And yet, when they bring a problem to the table and are able to talk it through—especially when they've just refreshed their knowledge of others' styles through our Everything DiSC group review—it helps them solve problems more effectively.”

“It's actually amazing to watch,” adds Mason. “In the first sessions, several people were there because the client asked them to attend, not because they wanted to or thought it would ever be useful. But by the end, they were asking to bring Everything DiSC into their own company. They realized how directly applicable it was to what they do for a living.”

Pollitt and Mason attribute the team's success in part to the many people who completed the initial Everything DiSC training; they were

extremely enthusiastic about the results they were achieving. Others saw their sincerity, and several returned as senior coaches to participants brought on later in the project.

Another key component of the team's success is no doubt a result of something altogether out-of-the-box for a group of drywall contractors and electricians: fun activities that get everyone out of classroom theory and into the world of practice. A “Top Chef” competition, for example, judged on taste, timing, and presentation, of course, but also on the team's ability to explain how each member's DiSC style influenced how they ultimately achieved their results and how they collectively used each style to its advantage.

Maximizing each player's strengths while minimizing risk

Summing up his experience, Pollitt sees it this way: “Since I can't test-drive a team, I was really hiring and investing in the tools to maximize its potential. But I also needed to manage risk, and that takes trust—of the team and each other. Without trust, mistakes get buried, projects are delayed, quality declines, and costs go up.”

Pollitt believes that he now has a high-performing team that is going to make it possible to accomplish in four years what it takes others six years or more to do. “Costs to run this job are about \$7 million a year, so two years of savings really add up—not to mention the added revenue when we bring the project in early,” he explains. “We are beating industry standards by 20 percent in time to completion and currently 5 percent under budget.”

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