

# Danbury Health Systems Uses MBTI® Assessment to Develop More Effective Leaders



## CASE STUDY AT A GLANCE

### BUSINESS OVERVIEW

A not-for-profit regional medical center and teaching hospital that is part of Danbury Health Systems (Danbury), a network of seven healthcare affiliates with more than 3,700 employees, based in Danbury, Connecticut.

### CHALLENGE

Help this fast-growing regional medical center and its field offices develop its managers and supervisors by improving their leadership competencies: Driving Results and Managing and Motivating People. Opportunities for bottom-line results included increasing employee retention, boosting employee engagement, improving employee performance, and reducing stress in their fast-paced healthcare environment.

### SOLUTION

Created a two-level People Management curriculum based on the MBTI tool that is focused on the needs of Danbury's managers and supervisors. It included taking the online assessment through SkillsOne.com and attending "Using Type to Leverage Your Management Style"—with CPP consultant Dr. Sarita Bhakuni. Other CPP resources, *Introduction to Type®*, *Introduction to Type® and Teams*, *Introduction to Type® and Conflict*, and *In the Grip*, were used to enrich the program and reinforce the learning after training.

### RESULTS

After a very successful pilot, subsequent Plus-Level People Management sessions have been filled to capacity. Almost 100 managers and supervisors have completed the program since its launch (95 percent satisfaction ratings) and another 50 will complete it in the current fiscal year. What's most significantly improved or changed among managers as a result of our decision to use the MBTI instrument? Managers say they are looking at themselves and their staff with a fresh set of eyes—how they relate to their staff, how they go about engaging and getting things done through their staff, what their expectations of staff are, and their confidence in their ability to move their staff forward to achieve unit and department performance objectives.

What is the number one challenge of U.S. organizations and HR managers? Building a leadership pipeline, according to a study by Bersin & Associates published in 2007 titled "High-Impact Talent Management," the first comprehensive analysis of the talent management market. In addition, over 80% of respondents believe that developing leaders is the process that not only defines talent management but the one that also requires the most improvement. Danbury Health Systems ("Danbury") has taken a proactive approach to this tough organizational challenge. To build leadership bench strength within the organization and take leadership competencies to the next level, Danbury leverages the world's most trusted personality assessment: the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®* (MBTI®) instrument. Danbury managers learn how to become more effective leaders and further develop those leadership traits and behaviors that drive results as well as motivate their people.

Learning Center Consultants at Danbury believed in the MBTI instrument and knew they needed to go beyond "nice to know" information and into actionable resources that would help their managers achieve desired outcomes within their own departments while improving employee retention and job satisfaction. Danbury's Value in People (VIP) Program helps to on-board new employees, and a program called Targeting Outstanding Performance Success (TOPS) provides recognition and rewards for employee performance. Danbury recognizes that its leaders shape its teams and those teams shape the organization. MBTI types help teams speak a common language and understand one another better at every level of the organization. Caring for patients is Danbury's business, and developing its people is what keeps Danbury at the top of its class.

Since its founding in 1885, Danbury Hospital has grown from a 22-bed community hospital to a 371-bed not-for-profit medical center and teaching hospital. Today it is part of Danbury Health Systems, which comprises seven healthcare affiliates and employs more than 3,700 people. For three years in a row—starting in 2004—Danbury Hospital has been named a Top 100 Hospital for Quality in the United States by Solucient, LLC, an organization that identifies top-performing hospitals based on quality outcomes and financial performance rankings.

The largest employer in the city of Danbury, Connecticut, Danbury faces tough competition for the highly qualified healthcare workers it needs for optimal performance and patient care delivery each day. Accordingly, a strategic focus at Danbury is on attracting and retaining what it calls "right-fit hires" and being recognized as a "Workplace of Choice." The company's human resources group is tasked

with ensuring that Danbury has a skilled and motivated workforce that believes Danbury is *the* “Best Place to Be.”

## PROGRAM GOALS AND CHALLENGES

While Danbury was proud of what it had achieved, it knew it could do even better when it came to managing its people. According to Cynthia Sefton, a Senior Learning Center Consultant with Danbury, the company wanted to elevate the performance of its managers and thought the Myers-Briggs® assessment from publisher CPP, Inc., could help. Already familiar with the assessment, Sefton knew it was considered by many to be the world’s most valid and reliable personality assessment. She also believed that any people management curriculum could be enhanced by its inclusion.

With the MBTI assessment as a core component of its People Management program, Danbury felt it could better meet its strategic goal of attracting and retaining its valuable employees. It just needed to design the right management development program. And that’s where Sefton and CPP consultant Dr. Sarita Bhakuni came in.

Since joining Danbury in 2001 under the leadership of Phyllis Zappala, Senior HR VP, Sefton had helped launch such major initiatives as Targeting Outstanding Performance Success (TOPS), Danbury’s recognition and rewards program, and Value in People (VIP), its best-practice on-boarding program geared toward retaining first-year employees. Another Danbury tool is aimed at performance management, the Performance Expectations Program (PEP). Besides performance goals, PEP identifies five behavioral competencies called Traits for Success. Two of these Traits are leadership competencies—Driving Results and Managing and Motivating People. Danbury wanted managers to demonstrate improved performance against their PEP objectives and leadership traits. Sefton says there was also impetus to use the MBTI tool with the organization’s existing people management tools, not only to improve employee performance and business results but also to increase employee engagement and job satisfaction. In the employee development field, it is well known that employees join companies but “quit” their managers. Danbury felt that the MBTI instrument and other CPP tools would help its managers build better relationships with all members of its staff.

The bottom line, says Sefton, is that “satisfied employees deliver better quality and patient care and both enhance loyalty to Danbury.”

## CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

Sefton wanted to work collaboratively with an exceedingly competent consultant who could create a world-class management development program for its healthcare environment. That consultant would have to learn Danbury tools quickly enough to integrate them into a highly customized program. Further, Danbury felt the program would be a success if it

- Helped managers increase their self-awareness and develop the necessary skills and abilities to demonstrate a more effective leadership style

- Engaged managers in a variety of self-reflective assessments and interactive exercises that enabled them to learn from one another as well as the facilitators
- Could be applied to managers’ day-to-day roles—better use of Danbury’s people management tools (PEP, TOPS, and VIP) through type awareness
- Received high ratings from program participants and immediate feedback on how the learning could be uniquely applied to each participant and their daily roles as managers

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Sefton was intimately involved in the development of the People Management curriculum, first researching vendors and screening referrals, then setting up interviews with selected consultants. One of those consultants was John Maketa, a Divisional Director of Sales at CPP, Inc. After several discussions with Sefton about Danbury’s needs, Maketa introduced Danbury to Bhakuni, a senior organizational development consultant with CPP. Sefton felt that Bhakuni could play a major role in working with her on program design and development, not just delivery and training.

One of the most important requirements, according to Sefton, was that the program link to what managers do every day in working with their employees. It could not be just an academic exercise. Explained Sefton, “We’re not here to supply nice information or because the MBTI assessment is a fascinating interpersonal journey. That isn’t why Sarita was here. It was to give our managers and supervisors awareness of and insight into type so they could be more effective leaders. In order to do this they needed to recognize their own blind spots and hot buttons, understand their natural strengths and preferred communication style, know how they reacted to stress and the impact this had on employees and patients, deal with conflict more effectively, as well as foster teamwork and collaboration among co-workers. A tall order!”

While Danbury uses other assessment tools (critical thinking tests, etc.), Sefton was already familiar with and certified to use the MBTI instrument, as was her Senior Vice President, Phyllis Zappala, who heads up Human Resources at Danbury. Sefton and Zappala agreed that the MBTI assessment would work well at the core of Danbury’s People Management curriculum.

## THE GOLD STANDARD ASSESSMENT

The Myers-Briggs assessment is a personality inventory designed to give people information about their psychological preferences. It was originally developed in the early 1940s by Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Cook Briggs to make Carl Jung's theory of human personality understandable and useful in everyday life. Today, the MBTI tool is the most widely used personality assessment in the world, recognized by many as the gold standard.

One of the goals of the MBTI tool is to creatively leverage differences in the pursuit of leadership excellence—a key requirement for Danbury's managers. It is not meant to label people or to assign good and bad characteristics. Individuals taking the assessment self-select their four-letter MBTI type by indicating their preference for Extraversion or Introversion, Sensing or Intuition, Thinking or Feeling, and Judging or Perceiving. Though many factors combine to influence an individual's behaviors, values, and attitudes, MBTI type descriptions summarize underlying patterns common to most people of that type.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND LAUNCH

To kick off the program at Danbury, senior leaders were asked to nominate managers and supervisors to be inaugural participants. In preparation for the training, these participants took a battery of assessments for development purposes. They took the MBTI assessment through SkillsOne.com—CPP's online assessment system—which transforms many of the training functions into Web-based activities. Each program participant received his or her assessment results, including the MBTI® Step II™ Interpretive Report and a one-hour feedback session with a Danbury Learning Center consultant. This was a prerequisite to Basic-Level People Management.

## RAVE REVIEWS SAY IT ALL

Managers who completed the Basic-Level Program went on to the Plus-Level People Management Program (each program currently runs 2–3 times per year). Since the program's Plus-Level launch in 2006, about 100 Danbury managers and supervisors have completed one and a half days of Plus-Level training. The program has received rave reviews, with the average participant satisfaction rating above 95%. Said one participant: "This has been the best session in our entire people management curriculum. Everything I learned is going to help me better manage and motivate my staff."

According to Bhakuni, "We knew the knowledge had to be transferable; it had to make an impact outside of that classroom. The MBTI assessment and other CPP tools related to type also helped feed the managers' development plans and transfer the learning from the classroom to the daily work environment."

Participants leave the classroom with the beginnings of a real-life leadership development action plan. In a wrap-up class activity, program participants name at least one leadership strategy they are going to start doing and the one thing they will stop doing as a result of completing the course.

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Bhakuni says, "Most of the 'aha!' moments came when we were talking about type under stress and in the grip. We had an exercise that identified how people's grip function plays out during stressful situations, and then managers learned what they can do about it. People were saying, 'Wow, so this is what is happening, my order of preferences is changing, and that's why my behavior is changing.' The second biggest 'aha!' came after people reflected upon and then recorded their vulnerabilities and assets. Seeing them in writing seemed to make a dramatic impact."

According to Sefton, "Word has spread very quickly about the program because it has received such high ratings. Managers have talked about it to other managers." As a result, managers who have participated in the program say they have more confidence in their coaching abilities because they have learned practical solutions to enhance dialogue and interactions with employees. One participant said, "I gained a greater awareness of my own style, tendencies, and blind spots that impact my staff." Another cited an increased ability to build and lead more dynamic, cohesive teams.

At Danbury, as in all organizations, managers must routinely work with people of many different personality types. According to People Management participants, the MBTI training gave them a much better understanding of their staff's motivations and actions and how to help them be more productive.

Managers repeatedly commented on how helpful they found the segment on handling stress using the CPP publication *In the Grip*. "I learned meaningful techniques for handling stress and knowledge of the associated trigger points for my type," said one. Another observed, "I felt reenergized as a manager and learned techniques to continually refuel in our fast-paced, stressful healthcare environment."

Danbury managers and supervisors enjoyed working with Bhakuni, expressing their appreciation for her comfortable teaching/consulting style and positive presence that encourages interaction and honest, open communication. Impressed with the results of the leadership program, Sefton created an opportunity for Danbury's Human Resources Partners to meet with Sarita to learn more about their unique dynamics as a recruiting team and how individually they could benefit from a deeper understanding of their own type preferences.

"Everything we are doing is meant to help managers build their leadership competencies, ensuring employees are more motivated, productive, and satisfied," explains Sefton.

## About CPP, Inc.

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