



3 Connections that Spread the Cure for UVT

Us-Versus-Them (UVT) is a condition that can be found in almost any organization. Combating this phenomenon requires managers to be vigilant and engage in direct conversations when the need arises. Just as UVT is spread by employees sharing the negative condition, it can be combated through sharing some positive organizational connections. Spread the cure for UVT with the following tactics.

1. Share a Common Foundation

When you hear employees (or yourself) begin to use UVT language, such as “They won’t let me do this,” or “They cut our funding for that,” it’s time to step back and figure out what you have in common with “them.”

They/them are usually those in senior leadership positions, and, in the eyes of many employees, they are too far removed from the day-to-day work to have a good handle on how the organization functions.

When you hear UVT starting to spread, take a step back and remind yourself and your employees that you share a common foundation with “them;” you all chose a healthcare vocation and share a desire to help customers. Senior leadership can also assist in breaking down UVT by authentically sharing their passion for the organizational mission with employees. If it seems forced, employees will respond with more UVT. Creating a genuine connection through storytelling and shared experiences will help reinforce to employees that there isn’t “us” or “them”—it’s a team of “we.”

2. Share a Common Vision

It’s hard to talk in terms of “us” versus “them” when everyone is solidly committed to the same vision. Just as employees share a common foundation and vocation with senior leadership, it’s important for employees and senior leadership to share the same vision for the future of the organization. This might be harder for employees to understand, especially

when policies and procedures seem to be roadblocks. Ask employees what they want for their customers and patients, and then show them how senior leadership is working toward the same goals. It might surprise employees to see that they actually have a personal vision for their work and that this vision is the same as that of senior leadership.

3. Share the Glory

Another way to break down UVT is to share the rewards of your work. If employees only see senior leadership being rewarded (with award dinners, public honors, or similar rewards), UVT will flourish. If senior leadership *shares* the rewards with employees and takes the time to publicly recognize the teamwork needed for shared success, a common bond is strengthened, and the potential for UVT decreases.

When the organization reaches a significant goal, make a point to have senior leadership share in the rewards by serving meals or ice cream to employees, granting all employees an extra hour of PTO, or personally walking through every department to thank employees. Make sure that senior leadership is seen throughout the organization on all shifts; UVT has the potential to spread more rapidly in the middle of the night, when employees feel most removed from daytime operations.