



Inspiring Healthcare Leaders  
*Accelerating Change*

## **Evolving Leadership**

*Combining new leader competencies, standard work, and behaviors with a lean management system at Martin's Point Health Care*

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## Introduction

Martin's Point Health Care was an early adopter of lean concepts in healthcare, and its use of lean has progressively matured since 2010. Like many healthcare organizations that have pursued lean practices, Martin's Point began by piloting lean in local areas, successfully transforming a department or functional process one by one. While these improvement projects saw local success, they were not fundamentally changing the organizational culture.

Lean has become an integrated part of the business strategy of Martin's Point, a not-for-profit healthcare system with offices in Portland, ME; healthcare centers in Maine and Portsmouth, NH; and two health insurance plans available in five states. But the more that Martin's Point executives guided the organization toward further lean improvements, the more they realized that some traditional business activities were holding them back. In particular, leadership recognized that a critical component for a culture of continuous improvement — lean leadership behaviors — was missing.

Martin's Point is a member of the peer-to-peer Catalysis Healthcare Value Network (HVN), which consists of 70 healthcare organizations that have been on a lean transformation journey. Dr. David Howes, Martin's Point President and CEO, has admired the achievements of the ThedaCare health system in Wisconsin and the leadership of its former CEO, John Toussaint, the founder of Catalysis. Howes regularly participates in Catalysis CEO Forums, which contributed to his belief that the organization needed lean leadership. Bonnie Baker, VP of the Martin's Point Management System, says, "He knew that we needed better processes, better operations, and to get better processes you need leaders who are encouraging their staff to document and improve their processes."

A group of four lean advisors (comparable to a continuous improvement department) had been created at Martin's Point in 2014, with Baker overseeing the group by 2015; improvement projects at the organization previously had been led by outside consultants. The new lean group began to see the challenges and limitations of the organization's model-area approach, especially when trying to replicate detailed concepts in different healthcare centers with unique goals. It was "hard to copy and paste processes," says Baker. As the Martin's Point "2020 Strategy" was being developed and disseminated in 2015, a lean *management system* began to take root. Rather than continue with individual lean projects, Martin's Point began to develop an ongoing culture of continuous improvement with a vision of "all employees providing ever-increasing value to their customers and community, with ease."

The 2020 Strategy and its deployment were the impetus to develop a lean management system: lean champions were identified for each department, visual management tools were established, and common lean reporting methods, such as huddles, were instituted. The five-year 2020 Strategy has four organizational goals related to finance, quality, customers, and people (employees). To fully achieve the goals, the executive team, lean group, and the human resources

department agreed that leadership, which had already embraced lean operations changes, would itself need to evolve (see *Martin's Point Lean Journey*).

Sally Wilson, Learning Specialist, says that Martin's Point was at a pivotal spot in its lean journey. "It was really trying to influence and transition the ownership of lean deployment to the management team, having leaders within the organization be confident and comfortable with the tools and take more ownership and accountability for lean principles."

The Evolving Leadership effort at Martin's Point was born.

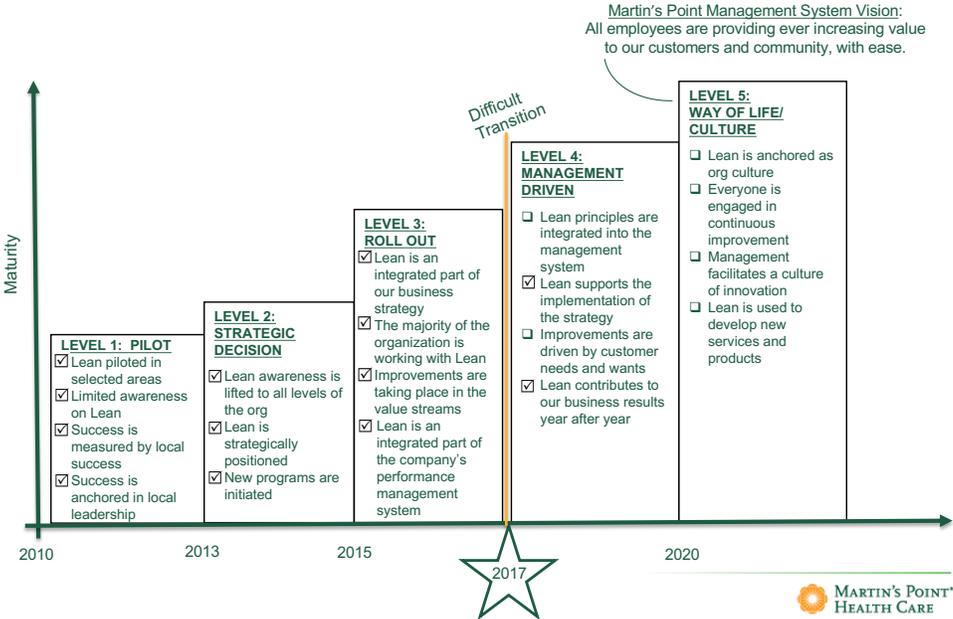
### Lean and HR Alignment for Leadership Development

Evolving Leadership is not a lean improvement project nor is it an HR leadership development program. Evolving Leadership is an effort by Martin's Point to establish a *single, coordinated* model of lean leader behaviors. The lean group at Martin's Point reports to the Chief Human Resources Officer, Teresa Nizza, which Baker says was a benefit in disguise as Evolving Leadership got underway. "If you think about the intent of a management system, it is the operating system of an organization and how we do our work. That involves so many pieces of HR and improvement to be thoroughly connected, in sync, and integrated." The lean group and HR group would need to be thoroughly aligned in how they support and coach leaders in all

### Martin's Point Lean Journey

\*Lean maturity model adapted from a model that Michael Ballé shared at the European Lean Healthcare Transformation Summit in 2017

## Our Progress on Our Lean Journey



Source: Martin's Point Health Care

facets of their roles: day-to-day activities, process improvement, recruiting and training leaders, performance reviews, promotions, etc.

Martin's Point consists of nearly 900 staff, of whom 110 are categorized as "people leaders" (supervisors, managers, directors, VPs, and chiefs). The Evolving Leadership team (the lean group, HR, and engagement specialists/training) began to assess the current state of leadership — skills, competencies, and behaviors — and compared this to the lean leadership characteristics necessary to operate within a highly effective performance management system. "If 2016 was about strategy deployment and rolling out huddles and visual management throughout the organization, then 2017 was really about Evolving Leadership," says Baker.

The leadership assessment included evaluating the organization's existing 26 leader competencies. The team found that many competencies were not aligned for HR purposes, business objectives, and lean behaviors. Many competencies also did not jibe with the Great Place to Work<sup>®1</sup> benchmarks that Martin's Point also was pursuing.

"There were all these different models that were bumping up against each other, and it wasn't working anymore," says Baker. "That's when we said, 'We can't put out something separate from HR because our whole goal is to make this the *Martin's Point Management System*.' It's not just a lean management system, it's how we do business at Martin's Point. We want it to be fully integrated, and that meant we needed to work with HR and understand this together and make this part of the actual *organizational* competencies."

Despite having common goals, the lean team and HR staff still spoke different languages, notes Baker: "We were having some trouble understanding each other." The team reached out to Chris Weisbrod, Catalysis HVN manager, who suggested they attend a Catalysis workshop on Shingo Principles to develop terminology for what Martin's Point was hoping to put in place. The Shingo Model<sup>™2</sup> describes the necessary relationship of guiding principles with management systems, tools, and culture/behavior to achieve a lean transformation.<sup>2</sup> Baker, Wilson, as well as VP of HR, Judy Cote, and Senior Lean Advisors, Janet Spiegel and Cameron Shuck, participated in the offsite Shingo training. "That was the kickoff point of being able to work together," says Baker. "Before, we were kind of speaking at each other about what we wanted."

Wilson and Spiegel worked closely to incorporate lean behaviors into the descriptions of the new competencies. "Janet and I created a very collaborative partnership between the two functions — the lean team and the HR department," says Wilson. "That type of cross-organizational partnership, specifically for defining the competencies for employee and leader development, was new. It really impacted the organization in many positive ways."

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<sup>1</sup> Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute.

<sup>2</sup> The Shingo Institute, Utah State University

As HR Chief Nizza puts it, “There had been a healthy competition between HR disciplines (training, coaching, recruitment, etc.) and the lean team.” For example, as the lean team was established and grew, the lean advisors and HR staff would occasionally work on similar issues with leaders and “bump into each other.” As each group came to appreciate and understand the other’s capabilities, the two parties began to sort through their roles and see opportunities for alignment within the developing management system. To improve the cohesiveness, Martin’s Point paired HR and lean staff to collaboratively and consistently coach leaders. “It’s remarkable when you add to the lens of improvement more of an organizational development HR experience,” adds Nizza. The coaching teams were eventually expanded to also include a finance role.

**New Leader Competencies and Standard Work**

Baker says the work of revising competencies was a form of gap analysis — evaluating the current leadership actions, skills, and behaviors and comparing them to what would be needed to achieve the 2020 Strategy. The Evolving Leadership team whittled the list of competencies to 10 that are fully integrated with lean concepts, of which six are applicable to all employees and four to people leaders (see *Martin’s Point Competencies*). “The competencies and the way they are described now all reflect lean thinking without using lean lingo,” Baker says.

“We’ve gotten more focused on the competencies that we know our leaders need to have to support the execution and success of our strategic plan,” says Nizza.

The competencies are defined for different leadership levels, allowing each level to embrace them in the context of their day-to-day work rather than a rigid description that does not reflect any single leadership role. For example, what does customer focus look like for an individual contributor, a supervisor, manager, director, VP, or senior executive? There are some similarities among the levels, but each role has its own set of expectations around customer focus as well as the other competencies.

**Martin’s Point Competencies**

<b>All Employees</b>	<p><b>Customer Focus</b>  <b>Business Acumen</b>  <b>Learning on the Fly</b>  <b>Process Improvement</b>  <b>Drive for Results</b>  <b>Dealing with Ambiguity</b></p>
<b>All Leaders</b>	<p><b>Create Vision</b>  <b>Strategic Agility</b>  <b>Managerial Courage</b>  <b>Developing High-Performing Teams</b></p>

As the Evolving Leadership team rolled out and trained leaders on the competencies, they also recognized this as an opportunity to examine and improve leader standard work — i.e., define standard work necessary for each leadership role to fully display the competencies. The Evolving Leadership team engaged the organization’s leaders to establish their own standard work relative

to the different leader roles and levels. For example, all practice administrators should have comparable standard work, and so they worked as a group to define that work.

The leaders went through two days (12 hours) of training. For the first day, leaders were introduced to leader standard work and its value. They were asked to document all their activities on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannual, and annual basis — capturing the current state of their standard work. The next week they were brought back to discuss their findings, assess how their current routines align with the new competencies, and consider what they could do better (new standard work). For example, leaders were asked how their work supported the lean deployment, how often they participated in huddles, the frequency of problem-solving efforts, how they use A3 tools, etc.

In developing new standard work, leaders combined some activities currently done, eliminated some routines, and added new competency-centric routines. After the training, leaders played catchball up with their supervisors and down with their direct reports to get input on the new standard work they had developed. For example, they sought to determine if activities and their frequency adequately supported the needs of supervisors and direct reports. The leader training started with the executive team and moved toward frontline leadership, giving the Evolving Leadership team opportunities to evaluate and improve the training process after each leader group.

“Our outcome was that we wanted people to be able to perform to these new competencies and understand what they were, but also really examine their own leadership [routines], some of them for the first time,” says Baker. “Is that the most effective way that I could be leading, or is there a different routine or a change in my routine that would be even better? We wanted the competencies to come alive. We wanted leaders to consider how their routines might evolve now that the competencies had changed.”

Initially, many leaders thought the detailed tracking of activities was tedious and merely copying their electronic calendars. But as they began to examine the gap between what they were doing compared to what they could or should be doing to demonstrate competencies, most recognized ways they could improve their work and the work of those around them. Some went into the exercise also expecting standard work to be defined for them. “It was really about doing your own improvement thinking about your own work and what works best for you, your team, and your customers,” notes Baker.

“It was a hard sell, and we did have some responses of, ‘This is busy work, why are you asking me to write down everything I do?’” says Wilson. “But I think organizationally we are moving at such a rapid pace with the work that we’re doing, that we very infrequently provide the opportunity for leaders to stop and reflect on what they’re doing. Some leaders were very appreciative and comfortable with it.”

After the Evolving Leadership team rolled out the development process to reset leader standard work, they have continued to help leaders continuously improve their standard work. “For example,” says Nizza, “leaders scrutinize the meetings they attend, including the time preparing and in meetings, and the actual necessity of their attendance at specific meetings.”

The lean team also is developing visual management boards related to standard work. Some leaders have posted their standard work outside their offices, so that those who interact with them have a better understanding of their role and what Martin’s Point expects of them. To further improve their performance, leaders also connect their standard work with their individual development plan, which defines the goals and actions that they plan to take to better perform to the competencies.

“We’ve put a lot of time and effort into both identifying what it takes to be a successful leader in our organization, and how we can best support leader development,” adds Nizza. The collaboration between the lean team and the HR team also began to look at leader roles in executing a more effective strategic deployment process, metrics to evaluate deployment, and how to coach and support leaders with deployment. And since business leadership is never static, the team also works at how to best assimilate new leaders into the Martin’s Point culture and organization and acquaint them with leader competencies and standard work.

One critical component for onboarding new leaders has been gemba walks. Nizza says, “Going out to gemba and spending that time in the organization is the best way to learn about the organization — what people do, what they’re most excited about, where they feel the most sense of accomplishment, and also where they feel there’s more work to be done and where the challenges and obstacles are.”

Gemba walks also are fundamental in helping existing leadership engage and coach staff. “As a senior leadership team, we spend a minimum of four hours a week out in the organization doing gemba walks, job shadowing, and simply walking through the organization,” says Nizza. “We find that the more we know about what people do, their standard work, and observing their huddles and understanding what their work is, the better able we are to ask appropriate questions to help them problem solve and help us make better decisions.” She added that, in the past, leadership tended to be too prescriptive and provide solutions rather than to listen and provide space for employees to respond and think on their own.

“I know when I go out to gemba and I see what other people have been using and what their standard work is, it inspires and motivates me and gives me a level of appreciation for what’s happening in the organization,” says Nizza. “It also helps us understand why we’re having such great results.”

## Management System to Align Competencies and Standard Work

In 2018, the lean team is defining the Martin’s Point Management System (MPMS). Baker, Nizza, Wilson, and others recognize that the management system represents the thinking of how leaders do their work and, as such, must incorporate and align facets of both HR and lean practices and procedures (see *MPMS Components*). The management system is a single structure that supports the organization and requires certain leader knowledge, skills, behaviors, and actions to be successful. The lean team is working to provide one-on-one coaching to leaders to make them feel more confident in operating within the management system.

“Leaders understand the need for continuous improvement and that the management system is a means to ensure that,” says Baker. But to get everyone “improving in the same direction,” the team will need to continue to articulate and define the components of the management system. That is occurring, in part, because leaders have been open and asking what is expected of them. For example, given various leader levels, how frequently should they conduct huddles and what should they do when in the huddle. The team is treating this as a learning exercise: “It’s good practice for them to go out and not have it be perfect or have it be told to them,” says Baker. “They can actually figure out what works best for their department and their customers.”

The foundation for connecting the management system to the daily work of each department is the organization’s strategy deployment process, which aligns the work of each area to the 2020 Strategy using a balanced scorecard of the four annual goals (finance, quality, customers, and people). The strategy deployment processes, which have been in place and improving since 2015, have been so successful that the organization formalized and created the role of Strategy Deployment Director (currently held by the lean advisor who designed the deployment system for the organization, Michelle Gallitto). The Martin’s Point executive management team (EMT) and the Martin’s Point Board of Directors set level-one targets for the four goals, and vice presidents identify level-two targets that directly drive each of the four (unlike in some organizations where there is not a clear ask that each level of measures be the primary performance driver of the level above). Level-three goals are set by directors at sites/departments, and level-four goals are established by supervisors and managers working with their frontline staff.



Source: Martin's Point Health Care

The goals set by EMT and VPs are outcome measures, as are some site/department goals, and are likely to be targets measured on a monthly basis. Front-line measures are tracked at the process level on a daily or weekly basis, and are measures that typically *lead* to the higher outcomes. “So daily or weekly we huddle around [those measures] and look at reasons why we’re green or red, meeting the target or not, and problem solve,” notes Baker.

Huddles occur in every department, with regular problem solving around the metrics specific to their level. Although information has yet to fully cascade up and down the level of huddles, there are channels established to escalate issues that arise at one level to another. “If there were problems [with a frontline] measurement it would show up in the next level up because it would be the reason why we’re not hitting the target at the higher levels,” says Baker. “Our system is designed to try to make problems more visible.”

All Martin’s Point roles are part of the management system, including physicians. They are responsible for continuous improvement at the front line, and there are physician leaders with whom the lean, HR, and finance business partners work. Martin’s Point has a physician practice medical director at every healthcare center as well as those involved with its health plans. “So any physician who has direct reports was brought into this training for the full days and did their leader standard work development, as well,” adds Baker.

The competencies have become “the linchpin” to embedding the management system within the organization, says Baker, and they also guide Martin’s Point recruiting, hiring, training, and managing. A leader’s ability to perform to the competencies has a direct bearing on effectiveness of the management system, improvement of the organization, as well as determining merit salary increases and potential to advance.

“Performing to competencies and managing within the management system is an expectation of leaders,” says Nizza, “and leaders know they are assessed on it. Some approach this cautiously, and others grasp it and love it.” As the management system takes root and its components — such as visual management, huddles, and increasing use of Kata (see *Leadership Kata* on next page) — become more widespread, leaders recognize the support the organization offers and are less likely to perceive Evolving Leadership as the flavor of the month.

Nizza says the lean team and HR have effectively established Evolving Leadership as a foundation to optimize standard work, drive desired management behaviors, set individual development plans (IDPs), conduct performance ratings, and connect to achievement plan goals (organization-wide annual incentive). “How can we best communicate organizationally and help tie these things together for our employees in such a way that they know this is something that is really part of how we do our work? We’re building a narrative and helping people understand how this all connects.”

Nizza recalls that three years ago the biggest issue in the organization, which was identified in employee surveys, was that individuals could not connect their work to the Martin's Point strategy. "Since we implemented standard work and since we've had a more definitive strategy deployment process and a list of priorities, 86 percent of our employees now say they understand how their work connects to the company's strategic initiatives and goals." Staff focus has shifted to their employee development and how they can better achieve what's needed to support the organization. "What is it going to take for me — competency-wise, performance-wise — to succeed in my current role or in a future role? What is my development plan?"

### Leadership Kata

As Martin's Point presented new competencies to its leaders and helped them define their standard work, the organization also began to incorporate Improvement Kata and Coaching Kata as new leadership behaviors. Kata — a practiced routine of scientific thinking — can help leaders bring an awareness of strategic objectives into day-to-day reporting and improvement activities. And, as a practice routine that is intended to become an unconscious habit, it meshes with Martin Point's other facets of leader standard work and helps to reinforce leader behaviors in middle management.

Leaders are Kata coaches and carry cards that help them guide staff (Kata learners) through problem-solving of issues connected to the Martin's Point strategic objectives:

1. What is the *Target Condition*?
2. What is the *Current Condition*?
3. What *Barriers* do you think are preventing you from reaching the Target Condition? Which one are you addressing now?
4. What is your *Next Step or Idea*? What do you expect to happen?
5. How quickly can we *Go and See* what we have learned from taking that step?

Some Kata coaching has been occurring one-on-one through learner/coach conversations within Martin's Point, which is traditional, but the Kata sequence has more likely occurred within groups, such as in frontline huddles with many staff participating. According to Wilson, a survey of leadership after the competency training (taken by 78 percent of leaders) revealed that 52 percent were using the Coaching Kata.

Increasingly, Baker sees and hears elements of the Kata routine in how individuals approach problems, such as trying to identify a target condition and noting barriers that get in the way of achieving it. "I don't think [Kata is] fully integrated yet, but I think it is a concept that people understand," she says.

Martin's Point also worked with Margie Hagene, Catalysis faculty member, on customized coaching for improvement. "She really provided a different window into coaching for our employees," says Nizza. "The more that we go out and take a look at other organizations...the more we continue to learn and observe how people are coaching to their metrics, to their standard work, to their strategy deployment. [Kata is] asking different kinds of questions, getting more specific in the kinds of questions that we ask, and a lot more listening as opposed to providing an answer to someone, being prescriptive, and going out and solving their problems. It helps us tease out the answers from learners, and, in the process, get a better understanding of an individual's work and problem-solving approach."

## Evolving Leadership Delivers Results

With the 2015 formal rollout of strategy deployment to pursue the 2020 Strategy — and the start of Evolving Leadership to support it — Martin’s Point took a clear, organization-wide turn toward leadership-led continuous improvement. “In 2016 and 2017, we saw a lot of success, and our highest-level measures are all moving in the right direction,” says Baker. “We had our most profitable year [in 2017] since 2009... A lot of that success is attributable to the whole organization improving together in a focused direction.”

Baker won’t attribute successes to just Evolving Leadership, but she sees positive evidence of changed leader and manager behaviors. For example, the organization’s scores for the Trust Index<sup>®</sup> Survey, which is administered by The Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute, jumped by four percentage points in the past year — at best, a two-point increase was expected. (Eighty-seven percent of employees participated in the survey.) This improvement in employee engagement scores led to Martin’s Point being named one of the “Best Workplaces<sup>™</sup> in Health Care and Biopharma in 2018” by the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute<sup>3</sup> and *Fortune* magazine.<sup>4</sup>

She says that Martin’s Point has increased the frequency of surveying employees, which helps gauge employee satisfaction, from yearly to bi-monthly, and consequently has provided more frequent information to leaders. “Leaders, as part of their routines, take that information, talk to their staff, and try to understand what they really could do differently. And a lot of that feedback results in changes to routines and examination of our own leadership. So, our culture is measurably improving.”

Staff turnover within Martin’s Point also decreased in 2017, especially among those employed under two years. Evolving Leadership contributed to the decrease as well as the problem solving to identify and address the root causes of turnover. “We constantly look at how we’re performing and then how we should change routines based on what we’re seeing,” adds Baker.

Nizza notes that Martin’s Point also hit the maximum measurements for three of its four strategic goals (finance, quality, and people); the fourth goal (customer) achieved the target. The four goals are tied to achievement plan bonuses, meaning that three of the four paid out at the maximum level to employees. For example, one of the achievement plan’s people goals was to ensure that all 900 employees had an individual development plan (IDP). By the end of December 2017, everyone had a documented IDP that included the competencies and specific actions that people need to address with their standard work. In 2018, the goal related to IDPs is to gauge effectiveness, adds Nizza: “Are they meeting the expectations of the individuals, their leaders, and the organization as they are tied to organizational results? I don’t think any of that would have been possible without first developing standard work.”

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<sup>3</sup> “Best Workplaces<sup>™</sup> in Health Care and Biopharma in 2018,” Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> “The Best Companies to Work for in Health Care and Biopharma in 2018,” *Fortune*, April 10, 2018.

Nizza also reported that, in 2017, Martin's Point also had 800 opportunities for improvement (OFIs) — the equivalent of employee ideas — that were implemented. The OFI numbers started “with a lot of humility” on the part of leaders, who shifted their behaviors, understood that they may not have all the answers or the best answer, and listened to those around them. “How do you enter into those conversations in a more humble way, in a more appreciative way? We spent a lot of time trying to be in that space differently.”

Nizza also attributes the huddles and visual management that is occurring from the frontline up through senior leadership for helping to drive the stellar results. “They have really helped us get more focused, a better sense of priority about where we are in our work, in assessing it, removing any obstacles, and saying, ‘Does this work really support our overall goals in the organization?’ We found that some of the work was really cool work. It was fun work that we were doing, but it didn't necessarily move the needle on some of our growth and quality targets, and some of our people and culture initiatives.”

## Next Steps for Evolving Leadership

“It's easy for an organization to lose track of the progress it's made... and to not truly appreciate the good work that gets done, especially when there is so much more that everyone wants to get done,” says Nizza. The work of the lean team and HR going forward will be to help ensure the lean progress to date remains visible — e.g., through conference presentations on the Evolving leadership experiences and achievements — and to continue to work collaboratively to embed lean and HR learnings, principles, and strategy into the management system. “It's thinking about incorporating, weaving together, and embedding our management system in a way that is not so siloed from HR or [lean].”

The Evolving Leadership team also will review the effectiveness of what leaders have documented as their standard work, similarly to what will be done with evaluating IDPs, adds Nizza: “Is it really good enough? How can we assess the effectiveness of the standard work that we've put in place? How does that affect our bottom line? How does that affect our achievement plan goals? How does that affect employees' experiences and people and culture work? How does that affect our quality work, our work with patients and members? Can we effectively assess the work that we've done to show how it ties to our performance as an organization? We are going to do a lot more work to measure, assess, and tie it back to all of our goals.”

To support the organizational connectivity, the team will roll out more visual management around the management system and its ties to the five-year plan and 2020 Strategy. Nizza says the team also will focus more in 2018 on ideas and opportunities for improvement. “We'd like to get to a point where... there is an expectation that people present ideas.”

It will be important for HR and lean to continue to work closely together, says Baker, as that collaboration was instrumental in the gains achieved thus far by Evolving Leadership. The joint

effort started with learning together and then “really working together. We were drafting things in meetings together, not like you take your piece, I take my piece, we’ll come back together for a second meeting,” says Baker. “We actually worked together.” The alignment anchored the Martin’s Point strategy in integrated lean/HR competencies of the organization. “It created a platform.”

A platform provides stability, but Evolving Leadership will continue to foster change. “It makes some people uncomfortable when you say ‘evolving’ because they don’t like the idea that it’s open,” says Nizza. “But we deliberately selected that [name] because improvement work is ever-evolving. You’re always learning something different and new to then make it better. I love what we’ve done with it, how we’re speaking to it in the organization, and the fact that it is evolving. It also helps to take the burden off people knowing that when you’re learning something it is evolving, and it’s not perfect. So even though you hold people to high expectations, at the same time it’s OK to have a mistake, or a failure, or a weakness. Leadership is always evolving. You’re always going to get better, and part of that is, frankly, making some mistakes so then you’ll learn from them. How do you take that and then make that part of the improvement or make the work better?”

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