



Knowledge Brief

Press Ganey 2020 Award Winner Best Practices

- In 2020, Press Ganey granted Guardian of Excellence®, Pinnacle of Excellence®, and NDNQI® for Outstanding Nursing Quality awards to more than 500 organizations.
 - A total of 118 award winners from 90 health care organizations responded to a survey that provided insights on attaining and sustaining high levels of performance.
 - Common best-practice themes across patient experience, clinical quality, and caregiver engagement categories include improvement practices related to access to care, Compassionate Connected Care™, data use, high reliability, improvement planning, leadership communication, recognition, safety, and talent management.
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OVERVIEW

Each year, Press Ganey honors top-performing health care organizations whose commitment to delivering reliably safe, compassionate, high-quality care—and creating a culture of excellence to engage and support caregivers—has measurably advanced the industry. These organizations highlighted in this knowledge brief met stringent requirements for superior performance to improve the delivery of patient-centered care and foster exceptional workforce engagement. As the industry faced the immense challenges and demands presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and inequities in health care, these high-performing organizations shared with us the best practices they employ to drive performance.

The awards program includes the following.

- **Guardian of Excellence Award:** This award honors organizations that have achieved the 95th percentile for each reporting period of the award year for patient experience, engagement, or clinical quality performance.
- **Pinnacle of Excellence Award:** This award recognizes top-performing health care organizations for achieving and maintaining consistently high levels of excellence over multiple years in patient experience, employee engagement, physician engagement, or clinical quality performance. This award is given to only four client partners in each category. These organizations represent the leading edge of patient-centered care.
- **NDNQI Award for Outstanding Nursing Quality:** This award is given annually to the best-performing hospital in each of seven demographic categories: Academic Medical Center, Teaching Hospital, Community Hospital, Pediatric Hospital, Rehabilitation Hospital, Psychiatric Hospital, and International.

In 2020, Press Ganey granted 379 Guardian of Excellence Awards, 150 Pinnacle of Excellence Awards, and six NDNQI Awards for Outstanding Nursing Quality. All award winners were asked to complete a survey to indicate the evidence-based practices they employ in three improvement categories—patient experience, clinical quality (which encompasses clinical, nursing, and safety), and workforce engagement—and whether the tactics were effective.

This document provides a summary of findings based on information obtained from 118 respondents.



KEY FINDINGS

Health care organizations across the industry have set goals for delivering safe, effective, efficient, and patient-centered care. According to the best-practices survey responses from Press Ganey award winners, top-performing organizations make it a strategic priority to achieve high levels of safety, workforce engagement, patient experience, and data-driven improvement. Common best-practice themes derived from the survey responses are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. BEST-PRACTICE THEMES

THEME	DEFINITION
Access to Care	Make it easy for patients to access initial care and move efficiently through the care process
Compassionate Connected Care	Develop patient-centric communication practices among physicians and staff
Data Use	Strategically use data and transparency
High Reliability	Operationalize the high reliability organizing (HRO) principles commitment to resilience, deference to expertise, and sensitivity to operations
Improvement Planning	Take actions that facilitate addressing improvement priorities
Leadership Communication	Enhance leadership communication with staff
Recognition	Establish mechanisms for recognizing staff excellence
Safety	Make an organizational commitment to patient and workforce safety
Talent Management	Prepare caregivers and leaders for current roles and advancement

Table 2 identifies the top practices across patient experience, clinical quality, and engagement categories. The practices listed are **used by at least 90%** of survey respondents and are **found to be effective by 100%** of those who report using them.

TABLE 2. HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICES ACROSS DOMAINS

PRACTICE
Conduct annual safety culture surveys
Demonstrate safety as an uncompromisable value, starting with the board and the CEO
Establish performance improvement tactics that integrate safety, quality, and experience
Involve front-line staff in process improvement
Make harm visible throughout the organization—talk about safety events, lessons learned from safety events, and how lessons can be applied
Obtain staff input on how patients may be affected when designing a new process
Train front-line employees about the links between safety, quality, and experience



Transparency, a commitment to safety, and workforce engagement have emerged as critical focus areas for top performers. Additionally, there appears to be a heightened recognition of the positive impact of incorporating high reliability principles into operations. For example, respondents demonstrate the HRO principle of sensitivity to operations by routinely addressing the interdependencies between workforce engagement, the safety environment, and patient experience. They also increasingly show deference to expertise—another key HRO principle—by engaging providers and caregivers in quality and process improvement.

PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Ten practices in the patient experience category are **used by at least 90%** of survey respondents and are **rated as effective by 100%** of those who report using them. These practices are listed in Table 3 along with their associated theme.

TABLE 3. HIGHLY USED, HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PATIENT EXPERIENCE PRACTICES

THEME	PRACTICE
Access to Care	Patient flow strategy
Access to Care	Strategies to improve patient access to health care services
Compassionate Connected Care	Formal behavior/service standards
Compassionate Connected Care	Previsit confirmation phone calls
Compassionate Connected Care	Proactively communicate with patients about delays
Compassionate Connected Care	Shared decision-making
Data Use	Connect patient experience and employee engagement
Data Use	Share patient experience survey results with nonphysician staff
Safety	Discharge planning upon admission
Safety	Retrospective case reviews



Several practices fell short of the “90% Report Using/100% Report Effective” threshold but are worth noting as award winners found them to be highly effective (Table 4).

TABLE 4. ADDITIONAL HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PATIENT EXPERIENCE PRACTICES

PRACTICE	% REPORT IN USE	% REPORT EFFECTIVE
Bedside shift report	76%	99%
Formal patient experience training/education for all staff	86%	99%
Formal service recovery program	88%	98%
Leader rounds on staff	89%	100%
Nurse leader rounds on patients	82%	99%
Post-discharge/post-visit phone calls	94%	99%
Purposeful hourly rounds	79%	99%
SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) communication	89%	98%
Share patient experience survey results with physicians	99%	97%
Teach-back	87%	100%
Whiteboards/communication boards	95%	99%

Of special note are four practices from the above list with robust industry research support: bedside shift report, leader rounds on staff, nurse leader rounds on patients, and purposeful hourly rounds. Press Ganey data analyses reveal that organizations that adopt all of these practices as a nursing communication bundle outperform organizations that do none of these practices or that implement only one or two of them.

In previous award winner surveys, a significantly higher percentage of respondents reported using the nursing communication bundle practices. The 2020 survey was administered during the COVID-19 pandemic. We surmise that the reported usage decrease may be attributed to organizations adapting the traditional execution of these practices. For example, due to the need to limit exposure to COVID-19 and preserve personal protective equipment (PPE) resources, nurses at many organizations have reduced the frequency of hourly rounds, especially for COVID-19 patients.



CLINICAL QUALITY

In the clinical quality category—encompassing clinical outcomes, nursing, and safety—nine practices are **used by at least 80%** of survey respondents and are **rated effective by at least 98%** of those who report using them (Table 5). Top performers have communicated a strong focus on talent management that better prepares nurses for bedside care delivery, leadership roles, and ownership of quality.

TABLE 5. HIGHLY USED, HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CLINICAL QUALITY PRACTICES

THEME	PRACTICE
Data Use	Survey to measure RN perceptions of practice environment
Improvement Planning	Formalize a process for engaging RNs in evidence-based practice identification and implementation, including training
Safety	Personalize fall prevention strategies for individual patients
Safety	Use checklists to guide care delivery for high-risk procedures (e.g., in the OR and ICU)
Talent Management	Implement targeted nurse retention strategies considering generational and cultural priorities and influences
Talent Management	Offer simulation training opportunities
Talent Management	Provide leadership training for new nurse managers
Talent Management	Provide peer mentoring during new-nurse orientation
Talent Management	Support national certification, continuing education, and lifelong learning for nurses

Not all highly effective practices met the “80% Report Using” threshold to be considered widely used among top performers. However, the following practices are considered highly effective by 100% of the respondents who use them (Table 6).

TABLE 6. ADDITIONAL HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CLINICAL PRACTICES

PRACTICE	% REPORT IN USE	% REPORT EFFECTIVE
Collect nursing-sensitive quality data in addition to their engagement and job satisfaction surveys	67%	100%
Concurrent chart reviews to ensure care protocols are reliably followed	78%	100%
Participate in the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Magnet Recognition® or Pathway to Excellence Program®	37%	100%
Skin assessments during bedside shift report	78%	100%

ENGAGEMENT

Twelve practices in the caregiver engagement category are **used by at least 90%** of survey respondents and are **rated as effective by 100%** of those who report using them (Table 7). Like patient experience and clinical quality, the practices listed relate to several of the previously identified themes.

TABLE 7. HIGHLY USED, HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

THEME	PRACTICE
Data Use	Integrate patient experience and engagement data for area/unit view
Data Use	Transparent sharing of engagement data/goals/actions with board
Improvement Planning	Apply project management principles to implement improvement plan
Improvement Planning	Involve employees in creating solutions to improve patient care
Improvement Planning	Use improvement planning or goal-setting for engagement surveys
Leadership Communication	Leader communication methods to connect with employees
Recognition	Offer a mechanism for peer-to-peer recognition
Recognition	Post patient comments in units
Recognition	Publicly recognize employees based on patient comments
Talent Management	Conduct a structured onboarding program
Talent Management	Connect talent to the mission, vision, and values of the organization
Talent Management	Offer structured new-hire check-ins (e.g., at 30, 60, 90 days)

Several practices did not meet the “90% Report Using/100% Report Effective” threshold but are considered highly effective by those who report using them (Table 8).

TABLE 8. ADDITIONAL HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

PRACTICE	% REPORT IN USE	% REPORT EFFECTIVE
Conduct workforce experience surveys at least once per year	85%	100%
Department-level mentor relationships	83%	100%
Employ a systematic approach for employee leadership development	87%	100%
HR leaders coordinate with leaders of quality, safety, and experience	87%	100%
Include peer interviewing of potential new employees	85%	100%
Involve process/change management experts in improvement work	83%	100%
Leaders and managers routinely conduct coaching conversations	87%	100%
Transparent sharing of engagement data, goals, and actions with staff	97%	96%



COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a unique opportunity to examine award winner best practices through the lens of crisis management. This year, 12 practices adopted by top performers to address COVID-19–related threats are considered highly effective (Table 9). They are **used by at least 80%** of survey respondents and are **rated effective by 100%** of those who report using them. Not surprisingly, these top practices focus on compassion and safety.

TABLE 9. HIGHLY USED, HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PRACTICES
Adequate PPE for nurses (little to no reuse)
Conduct revised leader and nurse rounding practices
COVID-19 testing protocols in place for nursing staff
Decontamination program to “clean” single-use PPE
Display empathy for the added stress and anxiety on patients/families due to COVID-19
Expanded telehealth offerings
Flexible staffing arrangements
Introduced various workforce collaboration tools
Pre-encounter education and communication
Public reporting of the sufficiency of PPE
Routinely shared positive patient comments with staff
Workplace transmission/exposure monitoring protocols

Not all highly effective practices met the “80% Report Using/100% Effective” threshold. However, there are additional practices considered highly effective by those who report using them (Table 10).

TABLE 10. ADDITIONAL HIGHLY EFFECTIVE COVID-19 PRACTICES

PRACTICE	% REPORT IN USE	% REPORT EFFECTIVE
Operationalize incident command teams	91%	98%
Public reporting of caregiver transmission rates	74%	100%
Publish video examples of the organization’s cleaning processes	42%	100%
Repurpose real estate to provide COVID and non-COVID care areas	72%	100%
Share the organization’s COVID-related data with patients and families	76%	100%
Virtual visits	81%	98%



One notable theme is transparency. Organizations that shared COVID-related data broadly—including patient and family feedback, cleaning practices, and transmission rates—found these practices 100% effective for advancing organizational goals.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

In 2020, award winners were also asked about their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices. The DEI practices in Table 11 are **used by at least 50%** of the award-winner survey respondents and are **rated as effective by 100%** of those who report using them.

TABLE 11. HIGHLY USED, HIGHLY EFFECTIVE DEI PRACTICES

PRACTICES
Have an internal infrastructure to support health equity effort
Include “health equity” in the organization’s strategic plan
Partner with the community to improve health equity
Segment data to identify patient needs and variation in care by age
Segment data to identify patient needs and variation in care by condition

By implementing these and other practices, Press Ganey award-winner organizations are leading the way in addressing health care disparities and reducing the impact of inequity on patients and caregivers.

CONCLUSION

Health care is an industry of continuous improvement and learning, including learning from each other. We do not have to look back very far to appreciate the progress made because of the dedication of health care professionals to improving quality, safety, and the patient and workforce experiences.

When Press Ganey conducted the Award Winner Best Practices survey in 2014, industry leaders were promoting practices that demonstrated patient-centricity, including expanding patient and family advisory councils, establishing patient portals, and creating new positions for patient experience leaders. Those efforts ensure that patients and families have a more prominent voice in their care and greater access to providers and information. In 2020, survey findings provide evidence that this movement from concept to action has fueled and advanced efforts to engage the workforce in learning and improvement and incorporate the principles of high reliability into health care operations.

Top-performing organizations are overcoming a siloed approach and demonstrating a more holistic, transformational approach to improvement. An appreciation for high reliability science is particularly evident among high performers working to improve their understanding of the interrelatedness of engagement, safety, clinical, and patient experience verticals; develop more integrated data strategies aligned with safety and patient experience goals; and more deliberately engage physicians, nurses, staff, and patients and their families in learning systems and process improvement.

Press Ganey is proud to work with our partner organizations to implement these data-driven, evidence-based practices to reduce patient and family suffering, improve the work environment, and ensure the delivery of safe and equitable care.