

Today @ Walgreens

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800 believers in our cultural beliefs

By **James Warda**, manager of internal communications



You can hear many voices in Las Vegas: Comics. Singers. Magicians. And more than a few Elvis and Sinatra impersonators.

But now you can add more than 800 Walgreens field leaders to that list. Because on Jan. 30, something amazing happened. More than 800 voices joined together to recite our [purpose](#) and [cultural beliefs](#) at the second annual Operations Leadership Forum being held in Vegas from Jan. 30 to Feb. 1. The purpose of the meeting is to allow field leaders to hear from our executive team, learn about our culture movement and receive an update on our field transformation. For a look at who attended the meeting, please see the Answers section of the [Jan. 31 issue of This Week @ Walgreens](#).

“The cultural beliefs give us touchstones on how we can work together, says David Kornhauser, director of HR business strategy and solutions in Supply Chain & Logistics. “It’s important to understand that leaders have a terrific opportunity here – because leaders cast a long shadow. But, it’s just as important to remember that, collectively, culture is everyone’s responsibility. When I heard those 800 voices all reciting the cultural beliefs together, that was a powerful moment.”

“It was great to see alignment across the company in this meeting, that the stores, Supply Chain and other areas all heard the same message at the same time,” says **Frank Rivera** (right), operations manager at the Houston (Texas) regional full case warehouse, pictured here with **Milton Solorzano**, operations manager at the Jupiter (Fla.) distribution center. “That way, we know that as we all go off and share the message with our teams, it will be done consistently. It’s also important to remember that the way we train our teams will be the way they train theirs.”

Culture: Our CEO's No. 1 priority

To kick off the event, president and CEO Greg Wasson explained why he sees our cultural evolution as his No. 1 priority. In doing so, he shared experiences of leading the opening of the Vegas market in the mid-90s and helping to shape its culture. He further explained how, looking back, he can see that his team was behaving according to many of the culture beliefs even then, and that those behaviors were key to the growth and success of the market.

In addressing any hint that the culture evolution means forgetting our past, Wasson told the group, "I don't want you to think for a minute that we're throwing out the culture that this company has had for years. I've got 33 years with Walgreens, and I'm as proud of this company as anyone. We have a lot of things we don't want to lose, like looking out for each other, our desire to win, our innovative mindset and, of course, the pride we have in our company."

Wasson also shared how the culture evolution will drive our three new growth objectives: delivering the Well Experience, transforming the role of community pharmacy and creating an efficient global platform. The objectives similarly evolved – in this case, from our previous five key strategies.

Wasson ended his segment by reinforcing the gathered leaders' importance to the success of the evolution. "Everyone in this room needs to lead this," he said. "You have to help us spread the message. This is as exciting a kickoff for me as anything I've ever kicked off in my career, and this will become part of the legacy of this company. If we get the culture right, everything else will fall into place."

"I'm already thinking about how I'll incorporate this into my store visits, like pointing out behaviors that demonstrate the cultural beliefs," says **Mellani Hess** (left), Buffalo district manager, pictured here with **Nick Barsan**, Ohio market pharmacy director. "Of course, when I talk about the beliefs with others, I'll have to walk the talk myself."

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Following Wasson, Mark Wagner, president of Operations and Community Management, told participants how amazed he was when, one day in his office, he placed the [Walgreen Creed](#) and our [new cultural beliefs](#) side-by-side. "As I compared them," Wagner said, "I realized how perfectly they matched up – from the founder of our company and the [belief system](#) he wrote about more than 80 years ago to today and our new beliefs. When you take a look at the past and what was successful, it perfectly dovetails into what we're looking to accomplish now."

Next, Warren Lindley, divisional vice president of Organizational Design & Effectiveness, introduced an extensive culture training session for the participants. During this training, which included panel discussions and team activities, the group learned that the intent of the evolution and the new beliefs is to establish a culture where people take accountability for thinking and acting in the manner necessary to achieve desired results.

At the same time, they saw that, to drive this accountability, our behaviors must reflect our beliefs. That's why the cultural beliefs all begin with an "I" statement – as we must look at ourselves first and ask, "Am I living the beliefs that are at the core of our heritage?"

“I see our leaders understanding how to be deliberate around their own culture and how to drive that culture on their teams,” Lindley said after the meeting. “The beliefs are quickly being embraced across the country. [One store even created bracelets about our new culture](#). That tells me the beliefs are resonating with our people.”

“The cultural beliefs will provide focus across the company, said Shannon Wedekind, Orlando North pharmacy supervisor. “Of course, change can be difficult, and people may struggle with changing their behaviors. But the way we can help them do that, as leaders, is to be consistent – to consistently explain the reasoning behind what we’re doing and why it’s so important for our team members, and for the company.”

[Read more reactions from leaders at the 2013 Leadership Forum](#) on Today @ Walgreens.

Reactions to the 2013 Leadership Forum

What will you take away from the culture portion of the 2013 Operations Leadership Forum?

“On a personal note, I see this as a real opportunity for personal growth in learning the beliefs, and then modeling them for others. What’s really exciting is that this is already spreading. In the Jupiter, Fla., distribution center, for example, they’re already recognizing each other’s contributions and accomplishments according to the cultural beliefs. So that seed is already there.” - **Milton Solorzano**, operations manager, Jupiter (Fla.) distribution center

“It was great to see alignment across the company in this meeting, to see the stores, supply chain and other areas all hearing the same message at the same time. That way, we know that as we all go off and share the message with our teams, it will be done consistently. It’s also important to remember that the way we train our teams will be the way they train theirs.” – **Frank Rivera**, operations manager, Houston regional full case warehouse

“I had seen the cultural belief information before, but it was powerful to share it here with everyone. Most important, the culture evolution needs to live with everyone, at every level in the company. And, in order to teach this to others, I’ll need to make sure I do it first.” - **Nick Barsan**, Ohio market pharmacy director

“I’m already thinking about how I’ll incorporate this into my store visits, like pointing out behaviors that demonstrate the cultural beliefs. Of course, when I talk about the beliefs with others, I’ll have to walk the talk myself.” – **Mellani Hess**, Buffalo district manager

“Since I started in my new role two days ago, I’m just learning about the beliefs. So I’ll be able to put myself in the shoes of the people I’m cascading this to.” – **David Potts**, Louisville South pharmacy supervisor

“It’s quite exciting! What really stands out for me is that David Potts – who, like me, just recently started in his role – and I just met for the first time last week. So, we’ll be able to demonstrate ‘Be

One' by working closely together – and helping each other out.” – **Paulette Caron-Turner**, Louisville North pharmacy supervisor

“The cultural beliefs give us touchstones on how we can work together. It’s important to understand that leaders have a terrific opportunity here – because leaders cast a long shadow. But, it’s just as important to remember that, collectively, culture is everyone’s responsibility. When I heard those 800 voices all reciting the cultural beliefs together, that was a powerful moment.”
- **David Kornhauser**, director of HR business strategy & solutions in Supply Chain & Logistics

“The cultural beliefs will provide focus across the company. Now, of course, change can be difficult, and people may struggle with changing their behaviors. But the way we can help them do that, as leaders, is to be consistent. To consistently explain the reasoning behind what we’re doing and why it’s so important for our team members – and the company.” - **Shannon Wedekind**, Orlando North pharmacy supervisor

“The real heavy lifting is going to come when we cascade the culture beliefs to our front-line team members. Along the way, we’ll have to do some new, challenging things, like giving and receiving candid feedback. But, the beautiful simplicity of the approach will help us do that because we can more easily model the behaviors. Then, as our store managers and pharmacy managers see and hear us doing that, they’ll be much more likely to do it themselves.” - **Douglas Healy**, Melbourne pharmacy supervisor