

CASE STUDY

How Culture Builds a Competitive Advantage

Executive Summary

To compete with nearby hospitals offering higher salaries and faster career growth, Stewart Memorial Community Hospital needed more than modest fixes. With HUB's support, the hospital implemented a bold people strategy that redefined its culture, elevated its benefits and positioned it as an employer of choice in rural healthcare.

Stewart Memorial Hospital**INDUSTRY: Healthcare****LOCATION: Lake City, Iowa****COMMUNITY HOSPITAL: 25 Beds, 220 Employees****CHALLENGE**

Faced with growing competition for talent and a wave of retirements, Stewart Memorial needed to enhance its employee experience to attract new hires and retain high performers. Leadership understood that culture — not just compensation — would be the key differentiator.

SOLUTION

Through employee focus groups, HUB helped uncover what mattered most to staff and used those insights to guide a full-scale transformation.

The hospital overhauled its Total Rewards program, making healthcare more affordable and contributing to Health Savings Accounts. It added paid short- and long-term disability coverage and introduced more flexible time-off options.

Additional enhancements included expanded voluntary benefits, tuition assistance and professional development, as well as lifestyle perks like cafeteria and pharmacy discounts, wellness offerings and annual employee events. A compelling Employee Value Proposition (EVP) tied these elements together, clearly articulating the hospital's commitment to valuing its people.

RESULTS

Within two years, the strategy delivered measurable impact. Retention rose to 90%, exceeding goals, while engagement reached 85%, outperforming rural hospital peers by six points.

The cultural shift also brought back former employees — those who had left for more pay but returned for a stronger, more supportive workplace. With multiple "Top Place to Work" recognitions, Stewart Memorial now stands as a model for how rural hospitals can compete — and win — by investing in their people.

"We realized it was no longer OK to just be OK. With HUB's help, we've created a revitalized culture that appeals to everyone for the way we care about and take care of our people."

Holly Espenhover*Chief People Officer,
Stewart Memorial
Hospital*