

HR **P**ulse

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HR and Education

Operating in sync, Not Silos

By Rebecca Sell

"Working together on the front-end can only strengthen the results and move the organization to realize its vision and goals more effectively and efficiently."

When Brenda Compton accepted a position in housekeeping at St. John's Health System (SJHS) in Springfield, Missouri, five years ago, she was convinced that her prospects for career advancement were slim. Compton lacked the training and skills needed to apply for a higher level position, and with her children approaching college, she felt that it was too late to consider returning to school herself.

Compton's supervisor thought differently and convinced her to take advantage of an eight-month program offered by the hospital, School at Work (SAW). SAW prepares entry-level workers for better paying positions within healthcare by acting as a bridge to college enrollment. The instruction combines coach-based mentoring and teaching, as well as computer training with Internet and DVD technology to allow co-workers to attend classes during the workday. There are two components: education and career development. Students receive an introduction to relevant subjects such as anatomy and physiology and medical terminology, while brushing up on basic skills like computer literacy and communications. At that same time, students create an individualized career and learning plan and build a network of advisors and mentors to shepherd growth.

After her graduation, Compton enrolled in the nursing program at



Ozark Technical Community College and successfully applied for a position as a nurse aide. She says that participating in School at Work "made me realize that I can learn new things and compete with the younger generation." Encouraged and motivated, Compton's ultimate goal is to become a registered nurse at St. John's.

Programs like School at Work address the growing need for frontline development. In today's tight labor market, organizations like SJHS are seeking creative ways to foster professional growth and stave off workforce shortages. When SJHS's parent system, Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy), announced a system-wide implementation of School

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