

"Communication Key to Blending Hospital Cultures"

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Eight months ago, Baptist Hospital and St. Mary's Medical Center in Knoxville, Tenn., merged to form Mercy Health Partners. Since then, Cheryl Dalton-Norman, Mercy's vice president of cultural integration and learning, has been working with executives from the hospitals to understand the culture of each organization. Dalton-Norman underscores the importance of maintaining open communication with employees, which is why Mercy has held more than 150 employee-engagement meetings and offers monthly open forums. Mercy plans to create keepsake books for employees, and last month, employees and former patients formed a united front and walked the more than three miles from the former Baptist Hospital to St. Mary's Medical Center. According to Dalton-Norman, "Our goal is for everyone to be happy, but we are also realistic enough to know that may not be possible. You can want people to trust you, but **trust is something you really earn and so we are consistently working at it.**"