



## CASE STUDY

# Virtua Health's culture of belonging transcends work locations and backgrounds

Armed with insights from Press Ganey surveys, research, and best practices, the South Jersey health system navigated integration with another system amid the pandemic, turned remote work into a fundamental strategy, and boosted levels of employee engagement.

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# The challenge

Do you feel connected to your organization? Do you feel valued even if you're working from home?

These two questions were front and center for Virtua Health as it navigated new employee engagement challenges. Virtua had acquired Lourdes Health System in 2019 and, the following year, shifted to remote work for nonclinical employees in response to COVID-19. Boosting employee engagement and [well-being](#) was mission critical during times of change and turmoil.

Snowballing national conversations around racial disparity added to these challenges in 2020, highlighting the need for a strengthened commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Virtua turned to Press Ganey to tap into our deep reservoir of research and best practices to accelerate its own progress toward improving [employee engagement](#) for everyone—whether they joined during the merger or were new to at-home work.

## FACTS & FIGURES FOR VIRTUA HEALTH

5

hospitals

7

emergency departments

7

urgent care centers

350+

care locations

14,000+

employees

# The solution

In fall 2019, Virtua Health acquired Lourdes Health System, a two-site system based in New Jersey. With this acquisition, Virtua sought to create a “Culture of We”—an initiative designed to ensure a sense of belonging for colleagues from both Virtua and Lourdes. However, the advances the organization was beginning to make were obstructed by the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Finally, in fall 2020, Virtua was able to issue its first employee culture survey with Press Ganey.

The 2020 survey revealed Virtua’s top driver of engagement—the most influential factor in determining whether employees were likely to stay with the organization as well as to recommend their hospital as a place to work and receive care—to be “I feel like I belong in this organization.”

This revelation guided the human resources team’s two-pronged approach to fostering a strong sense of belonging among employees.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

FOR VIRTUA HEALTH

In its first-ever employee engagement survey with Press Ganey, Virtua Health outperformed Press Ganey’s national average for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

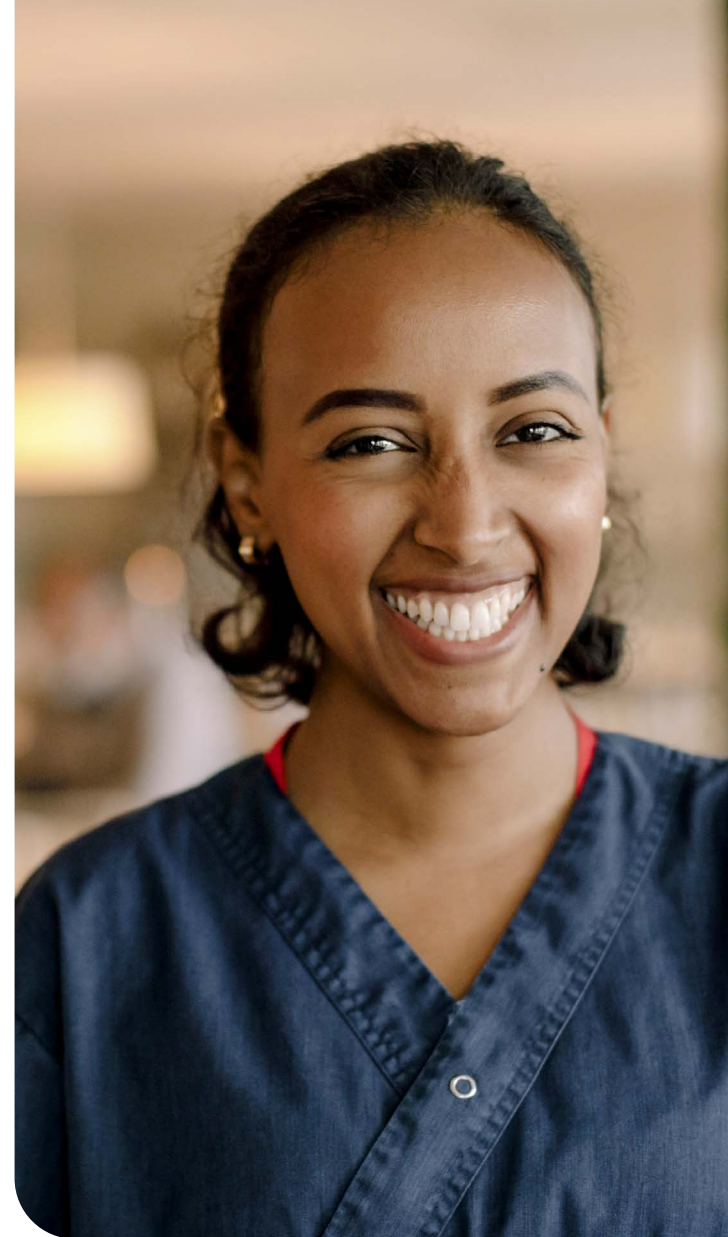
88% of Virtua’s employees “feel like a part of this organization even while working from home,” which outperformed Press Ganey’s national average for remote work. Positive response to “this organization values employees from different backgrounds” increased by 0.04 from the previous year. Overall diversity module outperformed the Press Ganey national average by 0.09, putting Virtua in the 67th percentile.

**“The reason we chose to partner with Press Ganey is the research and the best practices they bring to the discussion. I love the community in which we can share best practices.”**

**RHONDA JORDAN**, Virtua Health’s Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer

**Remote work:** Cultivate a sense of community among colleagues who were no longer working together in person or had never done so. Instead of viewing remote work as a temporary response to COVID-19, Virtua implemented it as an intentional, ongoing strategy—one that would transform its hiring and training practices.

**Inclusion, diversity, and equity for all (IDEA):** Ensure that all colleagues feel included. These efforts included expanding from one Employee Resource Group—or Colleague Communities, as Virtua calls them—to four, increasing recognition of often overlooked groups such as radiologic technologists (or rad techs), and sharing more information and education around cultural differences and holidays like Juneteenth—and celebrating them.



# The results

Like most healthcare organizations, Virtua Health saw an overall decline in employee engagement on its fall 2021 survey—a reflection of a challenging time frame. But encouragingly, Virtua improved its performance on about a quarter of Press Ganey’s survey items. Two items in particular performed highly among employees:

- “I feel like a part of this organization even while working from home.”
- “This organization values employees from different backgrounds.”

Employees’ responses to these questions demonstrated the value of Virtua’s intentional strategy of creating a structure for remote work as well as its heightened commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The remote strategy has led to company-wide virtual onboarding, as well as other virtual trainings, including leader training.



**“With our first pulse survey, Press Ganey enabled us to target the areas that we wanted to target. We were able to then give those leaders the support and additional education that they need.”**

**JENNY ZANETICH**, Virtua Health’s Assistant Vice President, Talent and Organizational Effectiveness



It also has allowed Virtua to look beyond the immediate area as it builds talented teams of nonclinical employees who can effectively do their work anywhere. Meanwhile, some buildings and nonclinical areas have been revamped to allow for greater in-person collaboration when teams are in the office.

The transparency and accessibility of Press Ganey survey data, along with the ability to target chosen areas for improvement and the encouragement of Press Ganey team members, have helped Virtua make great strides in staffing, retention, engagement, and belonging—wherever its employees come from or work.

**“The benchmarks allow us to compare ourselves against Magnet hospitals, top-decile hospitals, and the Press Ganey team has shared best practices with us. That enhancement from a process standpoint and how we work has been valuable.”**

**RHONDA JORDAN**, Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Virtua Health



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