

Purpose, Focus, and Culture

An Interview with Justin R. Oppenheimer, Chief Strategy, Growth and Transformation Officer, HSS

EDITORS' NOTE Justin Oppenheimer joined HSS in 2013 and has since held various leadership positions. Today, he helps drive the organization's sustained reputation and profitable growth by leading the development and execution of the organization's strategy and overseeing many aspects of its operations. Prior to joining HSS, Oppenheimer was a management consultant at the Monitor Group (now Monitor Deloitte) where he served as an Engagement Manager for the Strategy practice, consulting to Fortune 500 companies across the healthcare industry. He is a co-founder of EngagedHealth, an annual summit for national healthcare leaders across sectors. He also serves on the Board of Directors for Urban Dove, a New York-based charter school management organization. Oppenheimer holds a BA degree in political economy from Princeton University, and an MBA from Harvard Business School.



Justin R. Oppenheimer

What has been your path to leadership at HSS?

I have been very fortunate to have spent the past decade at HSS working with an amazing team of clinicians, executives, and frontline staff who have all contributed to my own personal path to leadership. Throughout this journey, every single moment is a learning opportunity. In healthcare, daily challenges test leaders' ability to align and motivate people, solve complex problems, inspire accountability, and drive performance. Not to mention the lifelong learning that comes with the industry – from healthcare operations to healthcare finance, law, and medicine.

I have also been very lucky to have mentors who have pushed me and changed my formal responsibilities frequently. HSS is a place where leadership is not defined by title, but a place where everyone is a leader, regardless of their role.

At this stage in my personal leadership journey, it is about empowering others to work to their fullest potential and finding the places where we can have the most impact. The opportunities are endless.

What are the leadership lessons from growth and transformation at HSS in recent years?

Three lessons would be the power of purpose, focus, and culture.

At its core, HSS is a purpose-driven organization. Our purpose is to help people get back to what they need and love to do better than any other place in the world. Starting with and aligning on purpose allows the organization to move forward in a unified way and to attract and retain people who connect with that purpose. Staying true to our purpose means growing deliberately and organically – one clinician, one patient, and one market at a time.

HSS is the epitome of a focus factory. We are solely focused on musculoskeletal health, and continuously work to improve on that one thing every day through our resources, people, systems, and processes. This focus creates an environment that attracts the world's leading musculoskeletal clinicians and caters to musculoskeletal patients. As we have transformed from a single hospital to a musculoskeletal health system with more than 20 locations across four states, this focus has helped us ensure everything, everywhere delivers the same experience for our patients and results for the enterprise.

Driven from the top down, at HSS we believe culture is a strategy that can be outlined, nurtured, and continuously improved. By actively working to attract those who fit with the culture, deliberately empowering and engaging employees in their work, and recognizing those who strive for excellence and live by our core values, HSS has been able to benefit from some of the lowest turnover rates and highest patient satisfaction scores in the industry.

What are some of the key trends unfolding in the musculoskeletal market, and how is HSS strategically addressing these trends?

Two of the greatest trends that have been accelerated by the pandemic are the shift to outpatient care and the acceleration of virtual health.

In orthopedics specifically, procedures like hip and knee replacements have gone from being outpatient procedures 10 percent of the time to the majority in the span of only a few years. Our strategy is multi-faceted, but includes two major pillars. First, we are rapidly building out our ambulatory surgery center (ASC) capabilities. HSS has opened four ASCs in the past five years with a pipeline of several more across its network. ASCs are the present and future of orthopedics, so as the leader in the field, we will continue to be the

leader of providing the best quality, remarkable patient experience, and highest-value orthopedic care as more and more complex surgeries become outpatient procedures. Second, we will continue to transform HSS' main hospital operations to not only take on the most complex patients, but also to provide efficient same-day surgeries. This will ensure that only patients who truly need to stay overnight do so.

Another key trend is the shift from brick-and-mortar care settings to digital models. The investment in new digital technologies and experiences in healthcare is dizzying, but it makes sense. Consumers are demanding convenient, enjoyable, digital experiences. We get them in every other aspect of life – retail, travel, personal finance, social connectivity. At HSS, we believe that in order to continue to be a leader, we need to meet our patients wherever they are. This means offering a digital experience to help improve and maintain their musculoskeletal health. Every step of a patient's journey, from injury prevention to initial diagnosis, seeing a clinical expert to tracking results, from at-home monitoring to virtual physical therapy, should be able to be done from the palm of your hand anywhere in the world. Over the past few years, HSS has made specific investments in multiple digital domains including its health and wellness content, telehealth platform, patient education, and the launch of its first spin-off company offering virtual physical therapy and musculoskeletal triage. These are all targeted at making the experience for patients better and more convenient.

What role does HSS' core mission and purpose play in informing its strategy?

HSS' core mission is the center of its strategy. Maintaining our leadership in musculoskeletal health means that our strategy will forever rest on a set of unwavering strategic pillars: education, research, high-quality musculoskeletal care, and culture. No matter what we do or where we go, those four will remain.

What advice do you have for aspiring leaders in healthcare?

Enjoy the ride and soak up every minute of it. Every day is an opportunity to learn and help someone or something improve. Focus on the patient and what little or big part of your role can be spent to ultimately help a person. Serve your clinician partners. If you are not treating patients yourself, everything you do should be in service of helping those who do. ●