



# CRAIG DEAO, MHA

## Speaker press kit

### **Inspiration and innovation from experienced healthcare speakers**

Providing on-site training for your leaders is a fast and economical way to bring your entire team up to speed on the industry's hottest topics and create organizationwide urgency to execute change. Huron's speakers and authors bring up-to-the-minute knowledge from their work in healthcare organizations across the U.S. and beyond.

We are more than a speakers' bureau. Our speakers are results-driven performance experts who are directly involved in crafting solutions to some of your most pressing problems, including financial challenges, workforce, technology, leadership, culture, and more.

Prior to your event, Huron's speakers and support teams work side-by-side with you to develop a fully customized presentation to meet your needs, regardless of the topic, size of your group, or purpose of the training. From physician retreats to Leadership Development Institutes (LDIs) to senior leader meetings and board retreats, Huron speakers deliver the perfect balance of inspiration and education for every audience.



**HURON**



# Craig Deao, MHA (pronounced “Dee-o”)

## MANAGING DIRECTOR

Craig Deao, MHA, managing director at Huron and national speaker, has provided consulting services to healthcare organizations for two decades. He is a trusted advisor to boards and executive teams, with a focus on governance, strategic planning, growth, patient experience, and organizational transformation. His expertise extends to board education, governance restructuring, and the facilitation of strategic and leadership development initiatives.

Craig's work emphasizes the importance of creating high-performing governance structures and leadership teams that drive both cultural and operational success. Over his career, he has guided healthcare boards through complex strategic challenges, helping them clarify vision, improve efficiency, and strengthen accountability frameworks. He is highly sought after for his ability to facilitate effective strategic planning and governance processes, enabling senior leaders and boards to develop actionable, forward-thinking goals. Craig is a frequent speaker at national and international healthcare leadership conferences, including events hosted by the American College of Healthcare Executives, the American Hospital Association, and more than 20 state hospital associations. He has delivered more than 400 presentations across the United States, Canada, and Australia, consistently earning top ratings from participants.

Craig has authored numerous publications, including the book *The E Factor: How Engaged Patients, Clinicians, Leaders, and Employees Will Transform Healthcare*, which has over 20,000 copies in circulation. His insights on governance and leadership have appeared in publications such as *Health Executive*, *Trustee Magazine*, and *Healthcare Philanthropy*.

Before joining Huron, Craig held leadership roles at VHA (now Vizient), where he led large-scale educational initiatives for healthcare executives, achieving significant improvements in organizational performance and satisfaction. His educational background includes a Master of Healthcare Administration from the University of Minnesota and dual undergraduate degrees from Louisiana State University.

## Selected industry speaking engagements

- American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE)
  - Congress on Healthcare Leadership (2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024)
  - Faculty On-Location Events (15 events, 2013-2022)
  - Regional Cluster Workshops (17 events, 2011-2017)
- American Health Care Association (AHCA) | National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) (2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022)
- American Hospital Association
  - Annual Membership Meeting (2016)
  - Executive Management Group Leadership Retreat (2021)
- American Society of Anesthesiologists (2019)
- American Society for Quality (ASQ) World Conference on Quality and Improvement (2011)
- Association of periOperative Registered Nurses Center for Nursing Leadership (2013)
- British Columbia Patient Safety & Quality Council — Quality Forum 2020, Vancouver, BC (2020)
- Canadian College of Health Leaders — Banff, BC (2014, 2017)
- Cerner Health Conference (CHC) (2017, 2018)
- Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) Chapter Meetings — Colorado, Alabama (2018, 2019)

- Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Annual National Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care (2011-2013)
- National Association of Health Services Executives 32nd Annual Educational Conference (2017)
- OR Manager Conference (2018)
- State Hospital Association Executive Forum (2019)
- The Joint Commission Ambulatory Care Conference (2016, 2018)
- The Quest for Excellence® Conference: The Official Conference of the Baldrige Award (2011, 2012, 2014)
- Western Regional Trustee Symposium (2014, 2016)
- What's Right in Health Care® — Sydney, Australia (2018, 2022)

## Education and certifications

- MHA, University of Minnesota
- B.A., Mass Communication, Louisiana State University
- B.S., Animal, Dairy, and Poultry Science, Louisiana State University
- Trainer, Crew Resource Management
- Certified, Lean for Healthcare

## Professional associations

- Member, American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE)

## Publications

- *The E-Factor: How Engaged Patients, Clinicians, Leaders, and Employees Will Transform Healthcare* Firestarter Publishing, 2017
- "Moving to Patient Engagement," Healthcare Executive Magazine (Publication of the American College of Healthcare Executives), Jan/Feb 2020
- "Patient Engagement," book chapter with a peer-reviewed medical textbook, Primary Care: Clinics in Office Practice, 2019
- "The 3 Whys of Compelling Communication," Healthcare Executive Magazine (Publication of the American College of Healthcare Executives), March/April 2015
- "Performance-Driven Giving," Trustee Magazine (Publication of the American Hospital Association), July 2012
- "The Data Is In: Service Excellence Cultivates Giving," Healthcare Philanthropy (Publication of the Association of Healthcare Philanthropy), Spring 2011| Healthcare Philanthropy Journal Award, 2011
- "The Knowing-Doing Gap in Healthcare," Huron, March 2012
- "Two Ways to Build Better Engagement," Huron, May 2014

## Professional experience

- Delivered more than 400 speaking events across the United States, Canada, and Australia
- Facilitated strategic planning and governance retreats
- Trusted adviser to senior leadership teams at dozens of healthcare delivery organizations
- Faculty for the American College of Healthcare Executives since 2011
- Co-led Studer Group's efforts to become recognized as a 2010 recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the nation's highest presidential honor for sustainable excellence through visionary leadership, organizational alignment, systemic improvement, and innovation
- Recipient of the Flame Award, Studer Group's highest recognition for employees

# Popular topics include:

## FUTURE, STRATEGY, AND GOVERNANCE

### Playing the long game: moving beyond cost-cutting

The past several months have been historically challenging for hospital financials. Virtually every organization has been compelled to engage in significant cost-cutting measures — but that isn't enough. This session will outline how organizations can shift their focus beyond cost-cutting towards a balanced strategy that incorporates performance improvement and growth to create a more substantial and lasting positive effect on your bottom line.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Identify the limitations of solely relying on cost-cutting measures for long-term value creation in healthcare.
- Articulate the various pathways through which growth can enhance value within healthcare systems, including revenue expansion and margin optimization.
- Develop strategies for integrating performance improvement and growth initiatives into their organization's long-term strategic planning.

### Revitalize, innovate, and flourish: Embracing a growth mindset in healthcare

In the wake of the pandemic, the healthcare landscape has been drastically altered, prompting a critical need for healthcare organizations to reassess their strategies for sustainability and growth. From unlocking revenue-generating opportunities beyond conventional practices to fostering a growth mindset essential for resilience and expansion, attendees will discover how innovation can be infused into healthcare management, from the boardroom to front-line staff. This session will also explore the cultural nuances inherent in healthcare, advocating for a transformative shift towards a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Identify innovative strategies to diversify revenue streams and navigate beyond the limitations of existing healthcare paradigms.
- Instill a growth mindset mentality within healthcare professionals, equipping them with the resilience and agility needed to thrive in an ever-evolving landscape.
- Highlight the importance of cultural transformation within healthcare organizations, advocating for a shift towards a culture of learning.

### Own your future, or be disrupted by it: Mastering the key trends reshaping healthcare delivery

The healthcare landscape is rapidly evolving, creating challenges as well as opportunities. This session explores five key trends – cost, quality, technology, workforce dynamics, and changing consumer expectations – that will significantly impact hospital operations in the coming years. We'll delve into the potential disruptions posed by non-traditional competitors like retailers and equip you with insights to adapt your leadership approach.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Discuss how five key trends – cost, quality, technology and AI, workforce, and consumer expectations – will affect their hospital's future.
- Identify potential disruptions from non-traditional competitors and develop strategies to address them.
- Adapt their leadership approach to proactively shape the future of their hospital and navigate coming disruptions.

## Lead from the Future: How to Use Future-back Thinking to Lead and Innovate in Times of Change

Over the past year, only a few aspects of our operating environment have gone unchanged. Has your strategic plan kept up? Different times require a different approach, an approach this session will describe in depth. We all know visionary leaders when we see them. They are bold and prophetic and, at the same time, pragmatic. They do not just promote change but drive it while inspiring and mobilizing others to do the same. Transformational business visionaries like Steve Jobs and Jeff Bezos, or political figures like Mandela and FDR, possess a range of innate qualities that make them extraordinary, but what truly sets them apart is their ability to turn vision into action. “Lead from the Future” introduces a new way of thinking and managing called “future-back,” frankly addressing the many barriers to change in established organizations through a systematic approach to overcoming them.

### Learning Objectives:

- Look beyond a typical short-term planning horizon and grasp the challenges and opportunities that will define the future.
- Develop a compelling, narrative vision about your post-COVID future.
- Translate your vision into a strategic plan that your team can align around and commit to.

## Navigating a shifting landscape: Essential governance strategies for today's healthcare boards

The healthcare landscape is undergoing rapid changes, presenting both challenges and opportunities for hospital boards. This session will equip board members to address critical contemporary issues facing member trustees, including assessing organizational independence, ensuring effective succession planning, and understanding the ever-evolving healthcare landscape, such as financial pressures and the rapidly shifting competitive environment. Board members will elevate their personal skills and knowledge so that they can help their organizations own their future rather than being disrupted by it.

### Learning Objectives:

- Evaluate their organization's readiness to maintain independence amidst industry consolidation and mounting financial pressures.
- Discuss the evolving payment and competitive landscape in healthcare and develop strategies to ensure the organization remains financially viable and competitive.
- Articulate the board's role in effective succession planning to ensure a smooth leadership transition and continued organizational stability.

## The transformation journey: The immovable object meets the unstoppable force

Healthcare organizations are highly complex, rigid systems trying to optimize quality, safety, and growth. Yet the environment in which we operate is highly dynamic and changing. This is the challenge of today's healthcare leader: to galvanize their people to align, commit, and implement a bold future vision in the face of a volatile world and rigid organizational systems. To do this effectively, leaders must navigate a multitude of barriers throughout the transformation journey. This session shares the latest evidence on what it takes to lead a transformation journey, the six key elements every organization must have to be a high-performing leader in their industry, and how to hard-wire success for the long term.

### Learning Objectives:

- Describe the transformation journey, including how to overcome the known barriers.

- Discuss the six key elements of a high-performing organization and assess how your organization is performing on each dimension.
- Identify the two immutable organizational characteristics associated with sustained high performance.

## Shaping healthcare's future: balancing today's fires with tomorrow's vision

In a rapidly changing healthcare landscape, leaders must balance immediate priorities with future transformations. This session explores key forces shaping health care—AI, demographic changes, shifting consumer preferences, and the need to rebuild trust in science and institutions. Participants will learn to align long-term trends with actionable strategies, using visioning to redefine their organization's path. By focusing on both "what game we want to play" and "how to win," leaders will be equipped to position their organizations for growth and resilience in the coming decade.

### Learning Objectives:

- Understand emerging forces.
- Navigate trust challenges.
- Bridge trends and strategy.
- Master visioning.
- Develop actionable insights.

## Beyond recovery: thriving as a health system into the 2030s and beyond (56x)

Not-for-profit health systems across the country are struggling to return to pre-pandemic operating performance as significant drug, supply, and wage cost inflation, labor shortages, and increased competition are challenging the return to normalcy and contributing to deteriorating financial performance. While nearly all systems implemented traditional cost and performance improvement levers to optimize their performance and achieve financial turnaround, the usual playbook has proven insufficient to adequately address the scale of the challenge. Leading health systems that seek to not only survive on minimal operating margins but also to continue to grow and expand their impact can employ a broader suite of tools to enable them to navigate ongoing challenges. The headwinds of an aging population, deteriorating payer mix, accelerated cost inflation from high-cost drugs such as biologics, and no end in sight to clinical workforce shortages have breached the traditional cost-subsidization wall that has been the historical lifeblood of hospital system operating performance. As the traditional model crumbles, forward-thinking systems can not only survive but also emerge into the future stronger and more agile, as well as deepen their community impact through a process of redesigning their system to overcome the challenges and accelerate the opportunities presented by the rest of this decade. This interactive session will equip leaders to chart a sustainable future for their organization based on contemporary examples of successful transformations, leading-edge strategic and financial planning approaches, and peer-to-peer sharing with other senior leaders on the same journey.

### Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the impact of traditional performance improvement levers and their (in)sufficiency to bridge the gap between forecasted performance and sustainable operating margins.
- Identify the broader portfolio of levers that a system should consider and employ to redesign its system to thrive in 2030 and beyond.

## **WORKFORCE AND ENGAGEMENT**

### **The E-Factor: How engaged patients, clinicians, leaders, and employees will transform healthcare**

Leaders in healthcare have a competitive advantage — we have the most talented, passionate people in any industry. Yet, despite decades of focus on performance improvement, our results lag our ambitions. In this session, hear Huron's latest thinking on engaging people as a core competency necessary to achieve your mission.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Describe the latest trends in patient, physician, and employee engagement.
- Shift your leadership philosophy from satisfaction to engagement.
- Implement evidence-based strategies to empower your team's human capital.

### **In their own words, why employees stay**

This session presents new research to uncover the driving forces of workforce retention with leaders and staff. From escalating wage wars to severe talent shortages, organizations are feeling the effects of the workforce crisis plaguing the industry. Leaders across the industry recognize change is needed to address the long-term threats these challenges pose to their organizations. Craig will share the findings that detail the drivers of retention and where leaders should focus.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Recall the key workplace attributes most important to employees
- Implement two specific tactics that will help identify and improve the key drivers of engagement
- Describe recent innovations peer organizations are using to improve workforce retention and engagement

### **Nobody fights their own ideas: Innovation as a source of engagement**

Organizations need fresh ideas and new approaches — the kinds of ideas that can only come from front-line employees who are most knowledgeable about how processes work, where they are flawed, and how they compare with what your customers need. Engaged employees fuel innovation. Luckily, innovation also fuels engagement. In this session, learn more about the virtuous cycle of engagement and innovation.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Discuss the connection between engagement and innovation.
- Develop a heightened culture of innovation among front-line employees.
- Leverage innovation as a catalyst for engagement.

### **A new leader for a new era: Moving from compliance to commitment**

Healthcare leaders face a dilemma. Results aren't where they should be, but the people tasked with doing more are burned out. How can you push for ever-higher performance without further eroding the engagement and loyalty of our teams? The good news? It doesn't require leaders to come up with many new ideas because they're already waiting for you to find them. This session describes a contemporary approach to leadership that offers practical advice to get innovation flowing up the org chart, restores a sense of agency and control to workers, and creates durable performance improvement.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Get their performance improvement results back on track
- Evolve their leadership style to restore a sense of agency and control to their teams



## Investing in our people: How to re-recruit, develop, and coach

Today's leaders benefit from 80 years of management science, showing us the evidence-based methods that engage and develop our teams. Yet, too often, we rely on informal mentoring and life experiences to shape our organizational cultures. There is a better way. In this session, we'll explore proven practices that both support full engagement and maximize the human potential within our organizations. One of the essential actions we can take is to clearly communicate how each person is performing. Most of us have a default style we prefer to use with our employees. Some of us are great cheerleaders, never missing an opportunity to express appreciation. Others are excellent coaches, spending time mentoring people as they face new situations and gain mastery. Still, others have learned the art of constructive criticism and never miss the opportunity to deliver feedback in the moment when results or actions could be better. The reality is that you'll have people who exhibit patterns of behavior that fall into each of these categories, so we need to master all three.

### Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the essential factors to evaluate individuals on your team.
- Implement practices to recognize high performers, mentor solid performers, and address low performers.

## Employee engagement: It starts at the top

You can't engage anyone. But you can create an environment for others that helps them engage themselves. Leaders start the cascade of engagement, flowing from themselves onto clinicians and employees and, ultimately, to patients. Learn the specific role those senior leaders and supervisors play in fostering engagement.

### Learning Objectives:

- Understand the flow of engagement.
- Articulate the specific role those senior leaders and supervisors play in fostering engagement.

## Don't hire Peter Gibbons

In the movie *Office Space*, Peter Gibbons hates his job at Initech so much that he asks a hypnotherapist, "Is there any way that you could just sock me out, so there's no way that I'll know I'm at work? Can I just come home and think I've been fishing all day or something?" While his office environment and boss no doubt contribute mightily to his disengagement, to some extent, engagement is biologically predicted. Some people will choose to engage even in difficult circumstances, and some won't. So, it's critical to discern the difference during the selection process.

### Learning Objectives:

- Discuss why some people will engage and others won't in the same situation.
- Implement three evidence-based hiring practices that help select for engagement.
- Write behavioral-based questions that elicit examples of engagement in previous work experiences.

## PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT, QUALITY, SAFETY, EXPERIENCE

### That's just the way we've always done it

It's the phrase that sounds like nails on a chalkboard to the leaders striving to improve healthcare. Why is it that our organizations are chocked full of practices that aren't producing their targeted results, yet they are persistent anyway? This presentation aims to delve into the cultural attributes contributing to the persistence of outdated practices in healthcare organizations. Join us as we explore the reasons behind this phenomenon and, more importantly, discover actionable insights from engagement and innovation. By understanding the cultural nuances and applying practical strategies, healthcare leaders can initiate a transformative journey towards breaking free from the shackles of tradition and achieving breakthrough results.



## Learning Objectives:

- Describe healthcare's predominant cultural styles that often perpetuate outdated practices
- Implement two or three practical actions that will get your team unstuck.

## Introduction to Evidence-Based Leadership<sup>SM</sup>

Take a deep dive into Evidence-Based Leadership<sup>SM</sup> (EBL) methodology and learn how it can help your organization achieve and sustain results. This session provides an overview of Huron's methodology to help create better places to work, practice medicine, and receive care. The content includes the latest evidence regarding aligning goals, behaviors, and processes to create cultures of accountability and reliability.

### Learning Objectives:

- Describe the Evidence-Based Leadership<sup>SM</sup> (EBL) Model.
- Articulate why and how the EBL model works.
- Implement one evidence-based practice to create a better place to work, practice medicine, and receive care.

## Closing the knowing-doing gap in healthcare

This session will describe and share evidence-based practices for closing the “knowing-doing gap” in healthcare. Six frogs are sitting on a lily pad, and one decides to jump. How many frogs are left on the lily pad? You may assume the answer is five. Actually, it's six. Why? Because deciding to jump and jumping are two completely different things. Back in 2000, Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton published a book called *The Knowing-Doing Gap*. It pinpoints a challenge faced by organizations in all industries, including healthcare. We work hard to figure out what we need to do yet fail to implement what we learned in the process.

In 2001, the Institute of Medicine published a report called “Crossing the Quality Chasm.” This report pointed out that it takes an average of 17 years to translate new (scientifically generated) knowledge into practice. That's a long time between knowing and doing; we can no longer afford to wait for 17 years. Most healthcare organizations really want to leap off that lily pad, especially with value-based purchasing, making it even more critical that we drastically improve clinical quality (and keep improving it). So why don't we follow through? Why are so many organizations acting like frogs with good intentions? The gap between knowing what we need to do and actually doing it is almost always a foundational issue.

### Learning Objectives:

- Describe the “knowing-doing gap” in healthcare.
- Implement three evidence-based strategic objectives in your healthcare organization.

## Optionality doesn't work here anymore

In this session, we will describe how leading organizations have successfully improved both Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) and process of care measures under value-based purchasing by focusing not just on process improvement but also on the human behavioral sciences to create buy-in, enthusiasm, and commitment to implementing best practice.

### Learning Objectives:

- Describe how leading organizations have successfully improved both HCAHPS and processes of care measures under value-based purchasing.
- Implement three evidence-based practices proven to increase results on both HCAHPS and process of care measures.

## The perfect patient experience: Bringing high reliability to the bedside

Over the past 20 years, healthcare has confronted the fact that patient care is neither as safe nor as high as it could be. However, our actions to close these gaps have been incremental, siloed, and insufficient. Many leaders are wisely looking to adopt the characteristics of high-reliability organizations to accelerate their performance. Yet, too often, these efforts also focus too narrowly on the tactical issues rather than the systematic root causes. Effective transformation requires culture change, especially to identify and reinforce the standard leader work that helps not only implement but truly sustain better quality as experienced by our patients.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Discuss how to improve both quality and patient experience using the same scientific principles.
- Identify the reasons why culture change fails to sustain in most circumstances.
- Improve the likelihood of engaging team members in evidence-based practices.

### **Patient safety, quality, and satisfaction: High-leverage tactics that improve all three**

It's time to close the gap between patients and healthcare insiders regarding how we talk about and improve care. Healthcare providers focus on technical measures of quality and safety; patients assume (for better or worse) that quality is a given and differentiate based on humanistic experiences such as being listened to and communicated with effectively. The divide carries into the way we structure and implement improvement strategies, with siloes separating quality from patient experience in many organizations. Fortunately, 20 years of field experience demonstrated that several practices can improve how patients perceive the quality of their experiences while also improving the technical measures of quality and safety.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Discuss the correlations between quality, safety, and patient experience.
- Implement three practices that improve quality, safety, and patient experience at the same time.

### **What we permit, we promote**

When people don't do the things that evidence suggests they ought to do, the reason is either a barrier or an excuse. Senior leaders must not accept excuses but rather help identify and remove barriers. What "accidental values" within your team are being permitted and, in effect, promoted? And what barriers and excuses are being used to justify the status quo?

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Identify common challenges to ensuring senior leaders' expectations are met.
- Develop action plans to make sure organizational objectives are achieved.

# Authored Resources

## *The E-Factor: How Engaged Patients, Clinicians, Leaders, and Employees Will Transform Healthcare*

Leaders in healthcare have a competitive advantage — we have the most talented, passionate people in any industry. Yet, despite decades of focus on performance improvement, our results lag behind our ambitions. In this book, read Huron's latest thinking on engaging people as a core competency necessary to achieve your mission.



# What Organizations Are Saying

*"Craig was not only informative, he was engaging and inspiring. He went out of his way to meet with us the evening before to gain additional insight into our objectives and current state and then capitalized on what he heard from us and how we could leverage and elevate our current state based on his expertise and background with evidence-based practices and hands-on coaching."*

**~ Regional Health System**

*"It was an excellent day. Craig was superb! His presentation was both informative and engaging on THE topic we need to address to improve our care delivery. Your organization models the values and tactics you espouse. Craig engaged our leaders throughout the entire presentation. I have heard nothing but positive comments from all leaders regarding his presentation, content, and delivery."*

**~ Regional Health System**

*"Craig is authentic and engaging. His presentation is based on years of experience and proven results. He shares the information using actual stories that are compelling. Craig's presentation on leadership consistency was exactly what Cheshire needed, as we are at the tipping point. Craig received very strong evaluations for his presentation. It hit home with our leaders!"*

**~ Non-Profit Medical Center**

*"Craig has a unique way of engaging the audience. My staff has gotten a lot out of his presentations. Mr. Deao shared data and stories that emphasized the importance of engaging leaders, physicians, employees, and patients in the journey to high reliability. Finally, he demonstrated how leadership's commitment, a culture of safety, and effective performance improvement are critical factors to the journey to high reliability."*

**~ Healthcare Accreditation Organization**

*"Staff very engaged and took away many ideas from presentation. Craig took the time to get to know our organization before coming out to speak and really connected with our leadership team during his time with us. Fantastic. Excellent speaker, delivering relevant and practical content to engage the audience. Our leaders were inspired!"*

**~ Medical Center**

*"Craig was very engaging with the audience, on point with the content, and the feedback from the audience was that he was "inspiring" in his message and delivery. Highly engaging, relatable, practical guidance."*

**~ Independent Healthcare Network**

*"Craig was engaging, prepared, and prompt!"*

**~Regional Hospital Association**



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