

# Closing the Purpose Gap in Healthcare

With Lauren Pasquale Bartlett

Episode 70

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## Lauren (00:00):

... that top-down leadership is vitally important, and then you have to be serious about it. It has to remain a focus in your strategy as well as operations. So did you hire the proper people? Are they properly skilled? Did you devote resources? Did you give it attention? Are you talking about it? Because if you're not authentic in your commitment to the purpose, it becomes pretty clear, especially during tough times when you have to make difficult decisions about where to invest time and money.

## Introduction (00:26):

Welcome to The Healthcare Leadership Experience Podcast, hosted by Lisa Miller and Jim Cagliostro.

Lisa is the founder of VIE Healthcare Consulting and now managing director at SpendMend. Lisa and her team has generated over \$1 billion in financial improvements for VIE's clients since 1999.

Since 2007, Jim has been a registered nurse working in critical care, perioperative services and outpatient settings at nationally recognized medical facilities across three states.

You'll hear conversations on relevant and trending topics in healthcare and much more. Now, here's your hosts, Lisa and Jim.

Jim (01:05):

Hi, this is Jim Cagliostro, and you're listening to The Healthcare Leadership Experience. Today's guest is Lauren Pasquale Bartlett, Chief Marketing Officer at Ingenovis Health, parent company at a seven-category leading healthcare workforce solutions providers. Today we're excited to discuss the need for clear purpose within an organization and how to establish that purpose and activate employees around it. Welcome, Lauren, and thanks for joining us today.

Lauren (01:33):

Hi, Jim. Thank you for having me.

Jim (01:35):

We're excited. Personally, I love this topic, so I think our audience will be benefited from this conversation. So I do like to start often with asking you to tell us a little bit more about your role at Ingenovis Health, and since we're going to discuss purpose, what does Ingenovis Health do? What's their purpose?

Lauren (01:54):

Sure, yes, of course. Well, I'll start with Ingenovis Health because it's kind of new to the market. Ingenovis Health was founded in early 2021 with the merger of four leading healthcare talent providers, and at the time, that was Fastaff and U.S. Nursing, Trustaff Travel Nursing and CardioSolution.

So those four companies came together in the early of 2021, and we've since acquired three more. So now Ingenovis Health is one of the largest healthcare staffing companies in the industry. We're about a \$2 billion company placing around 10,000 doctors, nurses and allied professionals in positions nationwide. They're mostly travel positions, Jim, temporary positions, some permanent, but really, really large reach in who we place in our clients nationwide.

As Chief Marketing Officer, I'm responsible for the marketing, the brand, the communications, and as the first Chief Marketing Officer of Ingenovis Health, I also had the unique opportunity to contribute to the development of the

purpose and the mission for the new organization. So I'm so happy to be talking to you about it today because I like this topic too.

**Jim (03:00):**

That's great. I imagine that would've been challenging, multiple organizations coming together and now trying to say, okay, what's the singular purpose between all of these coming together? So you have a great experience to speak to this. So, maybe back to the basics here, how would you define purpose for an organization? Is it the same as a mission statement or objectives? I know a lot of times we equate mission statement to purpose. Is there a difference?

**Lauren (03:24):**

We put the two of them together. I think different companies do it in different ways. For us, we look at the purpose as the North Star, the guiding light, your vision for what the company stands for today and in the future. And the mission statement for us is how you achieve that grand vision. So in other words, the mission statement is what you're creating along the way to fulfill on your purpose.

**Jim (03:47):**

Great. Great. I like that. So what do we need to keep in mind when considering the purpose of a healthcare organization? Specifically, we work with hospitals and health systems, does it look different depending on what the organization does, specifically healthcare or even depending on the size of an organization?

**Lauren (04:04):**

I think it absolutely comes into play, and for us, we have to just keep the human element at the core of it. And you know better than anybody, when you think about how much the nurses are dealing with from long shifts to understaffed units, lack of PPE during COVID, I think you could easily disassociate yourself from the idea that those are real people with their own lives and families, and they're dedicating so much of their energy and their attention to their patients. So it really is a very human industry, and you have

to, again, keep them at the core of it. One of the things about our nurses, our doctors, our allies, is that they're just experiencing stuff that other people don't experience in their jobs. So they're seeing a lot of death, particularly during COVID. They're experiencing traumatic events along the way, and oftentimes they're called to come back in on days off, even though they haven't really had a sufficient break just because there's not enough help. So you really have to keep thinking of them as you define purpose in anything that impacts the healthcare industry.

**Jim (05:06):**

That's great. And you mentioned the human aspect of it and about fatigue or dealing with death and things like that. And so often I'm looking back to... I'm no longer on the floor right now, but going back to sometimes you're just in survival mode. It's like, "Hey, I want to provide the best care to my patients, but I'll be honest, there's so many shifts I go, I'm not thinking about the major purpose of the organization. I'm just thinking of, okay, let me give the best care to my patients," which contributes to that purpose, but I know we're going to get into it here. I think having that purpose at the forefront of our minds might help me doing what I do.

**Lauren (05:40):**

Well, I know that you're familiar with this, and I know that your wife was at the bedside, but for the sake of your listeners, I'll give a specific example, and this was something that made it very personal. I understood this from the human element, but during COVID, one of the most traumatic things that the clinicians were dealing with was just that level of death and also the isolation of the patients in those last few moments. So many of our nurses reported having to hold up phones and iPads so that the patients could say goodbye to their family members and loved ones in their final moments because the family members couldn't enter the room. So once you start thinking about what that would really be like, what if that were me? What if that were my mom? It becomes very human. We actually have a longtime nurse for Fastaff. His name is Grover Street, and he's a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan who has said multiple times war did not even compare. So gosh, just imagine that. I'm personally very, very grateful to the clinicians.

Jim (06:39):

Wow. Well, thank you for that word there. And these are some stories that stick with you. And like you said, the human aspect of it, sometimes the stories are what stick in our minds and having that purpose at the forefront sometimes if we have stories to support that or examples to support, okay, what is the reason for why we exist? I think the words you used was creating, what are we creating along the way? I love that.

So how do you go about creating or establishing a clear purpose within an organization? Now, this could apply to any industry, obviously we think healthcare, but how do you go about creating that purpose within an organization?

Lauren (07:14):

Well, for all of the reasons I just said. Our purpose pretty much found us, it was so clear, Jim. When Ingenovis Health was founded in early 2021, it was the height of COVID. It was a year into the pandemic. And so all of the companies that came together, our teams, our companies, they were in very high demand. We were scaling very quickly, and we were proud of ourselves. We were able to make a really massive difference in helping the hospitals keep up with the demand. The patient admissions were spiking, the facilities were finding a hard time filling the gaps with local talent. And so as companies placing travel nurses first in that nursing home outside of Seattle, I think it was Kirkland Washington, Kirkwood Washington, as a company, placing nurses in that very, very first breakout. And then in Northern California in February of 2020, we had nurses, travel nurses who had already been through it and figured out all the ways that you had to treat patients, because as it was well reported, treating patients with COVID was different than treating other viruses. And it took a while.

Lauren (08:16):

There are different ways to intubate them. It was just a different kind of clinical treatment. So at that same time, the stress and the strain of serving in the environment was contributing to burnout and attrition among those clinicians, and there was just an overall need to better serve and care for them. So getting back to your question, how do you develop purpose?

Because of the size and the reach of our company at that time, especially as we were acquiring other companies, our CEO, Bart Valdez recognized the responsibility that comes with that reach, and he wanted to be part of the solution to help stem that tide of attrition in the healthcare industry. So for us as leaders, over a very deliberate course of time, we spent a lot of time thinking about it and talking about it and discussing, and we huddled together and decided we had to create a clinician-focused clinician-first purpose, and that ended up being to “Build a home for healthcare talent”.

Jim (09:14):

I like that. Can you maybe break that down a little bit more, even how you came about establishing that as your statement?

Lauren (09:22):

Yeah. Break it down is the right way to describe it for anyone who's ever been in marketing theory or gone through a process like this, because you very deliberately agree on every word, and it's sort of funny, you also fight over every word. Everybody interprets things differently. But for us, what we agreed upon, the idea of build is that it indicates that we're never done. We're always striving. It's a team effort. Everybody plays a role. We're always trying to get better. So that was where we really settled in on that idea of building. And the idea of home is a place where clinicians can feel safe, protected, cared for, and they can feel like we always have their best interest in mind.

Lauren (10:02):

And we'll talk about the idea of these seven companies coming together means that we have a lot of different kinds of opportunities. So you could stay within the Ingenovis Health family of brands and have lots of different experiences, from strike jobs to traditional jobs. And then finally, the idea of healthcare talent is because we provide a wide range of disciplines and specialties, and we continue to expand. So we're not done yet.

Jim (10:25):

That's great. That's good. I know we talked earlier about the overlap between mission statement and purpose. How would you say the mission statement ladders up to that purpose?

Lauren (10:34):

Yeah, so again, I'll speak in our world, this is how we achieve the purpose. So the mission statement for Ingenovis Health is that we create ecosystems where healthcare talent can grow, thrive, and deliver the best patient care. And so as I was mentioning before, another thing that was coming out of COVID was you'd find a nurse or a doctor who had just done 18 months of COVID assignments back-to-back and really needed a break. And so through the merger of our seven different companies, we provide those opportunities that they can choose based on where they are in their careers, their lives, or their psyche. So for example, someone who's really burned out on bedside can come to our company healthcare support and get a mental rest. Maybe take a one year or two-year assignment as a case manager, someone who's working remotely, just not bedside, but still apply their clinical talents.

Lauren (11:27):

On the flip side, you might have a nurse who's trying to quickly grow their experience and accelerate their earning potential, and they can take a one-week strike assignment with U.S. Nursing, working a 60-hour week in a high stress situation where there's really very little orientation and training, and that grows their value and their experience. And we offer the same thing for doctors. Doctors within our locum tenens company, VISTA can take short or longer term assignments around the country and through our brand CardioSolution that places cardiac specialists in underserved communities, rural communities nationwide for one to three year assignments. So there's a lot of variety there. And depending on where you are in your career, we feel you've got the home, you can stay in this ecosystem and still have a lot of different experiences.

Jim (12:14):

That's great. I love that because a lot of times we think of it as, well, there's a need here. Okay, let's plug someone in there. Okay. Onto the next one. Rather than let's stop and think these are actual humans that we're working with, and maybe they do need a break, or maybe just a change of scenery or something, a change of pace to get them recharged for maybe that next assignment that's a little more intense. I love that.

So as we were approaching this topic, the idea of purpose mission statement, I have friends that for their family, they have a mission statement or a purpose. And for our family, I talk to our kids about what's our purpose when we're going somewhere, when we're doing something. Why do you believe purpose is so important? What happens if an organization does not have a clear purpose or that they haven't established a clear purpose throughout the organization? What does that then look like?

Lauren (13:05):

Well, purpose can create passion when you connect it to the work people do, and people are willing to work hard for what they're passionate about. It's what motivates me. It's one of the reasons I absolutely love my job and the people I work with and this company. A recent McKinsey study reported that 82% of respondents say purpose is important, and 72% say it should have more weight than profits. So there's your marketplace telling you how important it needs to be. And I think people are inspired by it. It's funny, I've been in the workforce for almost 30 years, and when I started, you were sort of impressed by the cachet and the prestige of the company that you worked for back then. And now, I think young people and people my age are really more proud to brag about the purpose and what's the good work that we're doing for the world, so it's a good motivator.

Lauren (13:56):

Personally, purpose has always been really important for me. I've always been drawn to companies with a great purpose. Prior to healthcare, I worked for the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee for seven years, and I just see a lot of parallels between the dedication of the athletes, the sacrifice, their singular vision to a goal, their focus. And when I came into healthcare, I saw a



lot of that in the clinicians and how much they can just overcome challenges. And you kind of put the hard stuff behind you, nurses, doctors, allied professionals at the bedside. You just ignore all the obstacles in your way and you do what you need to do. So for me, it's inspiring to see groups of people who do so much and sacrifice so much in pursuit of a goal.

Jim (14:40):

Purpose can create passion. I love when you said that. I wrote it down to keep that in mind. You reminded me, probably I shouldn't be sharing this, but I was a telemarketer in high school to make some money on the side. And I have to say, I went into that job and I didn't really go in and leave with purpose at the front of my mind. For me, that wasn't one of the jobs that was like, "All right, I really love what I'm doing and I'm making a difference." When we get into this topic of purpose in healthcare, obviously there is a great purpose that we can really dig into, and there's a variety of ways we can go with that.

Jim (15:09):

If you're just tuning in, you're listening to The Healthcare Leadership Experience, and I'm your host, Jim Cagliostro. This show was sponsored by VIE Healthcare Consulting, a SpendMend company, which provides leading-edge financial and operational consulting for hospitals, healthcare institutions, and other providers of patient care.

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You can learn more about VIE Healthcare Consulting at [viehealthcare.com](http://viehealthcare.com).

So Lauren, I'm really enjoying this. I do want to ask, how do you go about activating employees around a specific purpose? I imagine it has much to do with who's involved and how it's communicated, but obviously the higher ups can say, "Okay, this is our purpose," but then how do we get buy-in from everyone else?

Lauren (15:58):

Yeah, I think that that's a really important question because I'm sure all of us, especially when you've been in the workforce for a while, have seen it crash and burn. Or you see a lot of attrition among employees, and maybe it's because they're not activating and feeling connected for the purpose. So for us at Ingenovis Health, once we established that purpose, we had two groups that we needed to engage with to activate, and that was our internal employees, because we had just brought over two years, we brought seven different companies together from seven different cities across the country and you really have to make a connection. And then of course, our clinicians, because they are dropping out of the industry in droves, and you know it, you've reported on it in this podcast and any healthcare podcast is reporting on it, like three out of every 10 nurses are considering leaving the bedside according to the McKinsey research. So we just really wanted to connect to those two groups.

Lauren (16:53):

So from a practical standpoint, what you have to do is make sure that you have executive and top level buy-in. So not only did our board of directors fully commit behind this idea, but our CEO, Bart Valdez was the driving force of it. And so it's very natural for him to constantly refer to it, remind people about the purpose, he'll talk about it in town halls, he'll talk about it in meetings. It's not the kind of thing that the PR person has to poke him and remind him, "Hey, don't forget to say this." He's motivated by it himself. So I think when it starts at the top down, it really makes it come to life. And then again, from a practical standpoint, consistent communications as the head of marketing, we talk about it all the time, and we look for opportunities in the marketing and communications that we're creating to plug it in an organic, authentic way. And I will say that my team, I'm very proud of them. They take that responsibility of instilling purpose very seriously.

Lauren (17:51):

So I feel like we have all the right pieces into place to bring it to life and also communicate it at the same time.

And then finally, I mentioned how important it is to educate the clinicians and connect with them and let them know that this is where they can come to build a home for healthcare talent. So in order to manifest the purpose statement, we created what we call the ACT program, which stands for Advocacy, Careers, Tools. And what that is, is a collective of tools and resources. It's just a commitment to improving the careers and the wellbeing of our clinicians. So that was us bringing the purpose statement to life, and it's a program that we're investing in. We've hired resources, we have people doing this, we talk about it a lot. We spend time on it, and it's part of our strategic operations. So it's real.

**Jim (18:41):**

I love that, and I love that you brought up this consistent communication and the fact that... Who is it that you said doesn't need to be poked? It's the CEO or the founder?

**Lauren (18:49):**

Yeah, our CEO, Bart Valdez really drove the vision for it. So you don't have to remind him. He's the one who's talking about it on his own.

**Jim (18:57):**

And so employees, I'm sure, recognize, okay, this is something that he truly believes and he's committed to it. It's not like you said, I think, forced. Because people recognize if something is forced, but if someone really believes and holds onto something, that purpose is going to make its way organically into the conversation. So I love that. I think that's something that is effective.

So what are some of the most common challenges that you see with creating buy-in? I imagine leaders from any industry expect to experience maybe some pushback or resistance, especially if you're coming from a different organization or we see this in mergers or with hospitals and health organizations. How do you get people to buy into this new mission statement or this new purpose? What would be a challenge you see?

Lauren (19:40):

What I've seen is that you do need the support of the CEO or your executive leadership or your managing director, whoever it is, or people don't take it seriously. And not everybody is always going to be the optimistic, hopeful champion of your purpose that you are envisioning. But those folks can get on board if they see it in the leadership above them, and they can at least believe, well, this is where he thinks we should be going, where she thinks we should be going. So again, that top-down leadership is vitally important, and then you have to be serious about it. It has to remain a focus in your strategy as well as operations. So did you hire the proper people? Are they properly skilled? Did you devote resources? Did you give it attention? Are you talking about it? Because if you're not authentic in your commitment to the purpose, it becomes pretty clear, especially during tough times when you have to make difficult decisions about where to invest time and money.

Jim (20:33):

Yes, I'll be the first to admit, nurses, we can be a tough group. We do resist change. And I know personally, as I'm getting older, I see someone young, a young manager comes in, what do they know? I've been doing this for years. What do they know? And it can be tough to get that buy-in, but for all the reasons you just mentioned, it's important and it is possible. So I love that. Thank you, Lauren.

So I'm thinking on to the next step, how do you bring that purpose to life? How do you take the next step? Maybe you could share some examples, maybe some programs or initiatives. I think you mentioned that the ACT, Advocacy, Career or Tools, some things that you've been a part of that have proven to be the most effective in terms of bringing a purpose to life.

Lauren (21:13):

So first of all, you have to lead by example. So again, I'm fortunate to be the first chief marketing officer in my role as a member of the executive committee, I have a remit of folks that I'm responsible for and I have to lead by example. So they have to hear me talking about it. They have to know I believe in it. I think that's the first thing for the leadership team is to pay attention to how you are presenting it to the folks in your sphere of influence.

And then you do need to invest in programs. Like you said, the ACT program is our big manifestation of the purpose statement. But before we created the ACT program, we actually went through some pretty in-depth nurse data and research studies, and we hosted — and have since hosted — multiple Voice of the Clinician panels. What we have done multiple times is we'll gather a handful of nurses together or doctors or allies and ask them what is it really like? Tell us the good stuff and the bad stuff.

Lauren (22:08):

And Jim, I have to tell you, over the last two years, there are times where it was tough to listen to some of those panels. And I found myself tearing up listening to some of the nurses describe their experience during COVID. So it's like in marketing, it says, "Know your customer." And for us, we really had to take a hard look and understand the challenges they're facing and why so many of them are dropping out. Then you asked for some examples. Some of the things we do, in addition to trying to understand the voice of the clinician, we also make sure that we take time to recognize the opportunities to reward them, recognize them, like Nurses Week, Doctor's Day, Mental Wellness Week, these are the things that we try not to miss, and we try to say, you're thinking about it, we're thinking about it. Let's make a big splash with the resources we have.

Lauren (22:57):

We've also had a very successful PR campaign over the last few years where we've been able to secure placements for our nurses and our doctors on really large media outlets, including the Today Show multiple times. Good Morning America, CNBC, Fox News, really, really big news outlets who are giving our nurses and doctors a voice and a chance to be heard. And that's an authentic way for us to bring the purpose to life because going back to that research we did before developing the ACT program, how can you develop a program if you don't know what people are seeking, what they're dying for? One of the things we heard is that the nurses felt like they weren't listened to and they didn't feel like they were part of the conversation, and they got a lot of hero accolades in the beginning of COVID, and then it really died down and got quiet. But it's not because they stopped doing exactly the same thing. It's just our attention moved on to other things.

Lauren (23:51):

So giving the PR campaigns that let the nurses talk about what they're facing and what they love about it, what the challenges are, has been a way that we bring that to life. One other way, and this is the last example I'll give, but we feel like this is a market differentiator. We do feel like building a home for healthcare talent, putting the clinician first, putting our money where our mouth is like dedicating the resources is something that differentiates us from a really, really crowded market of other travel healthcare providing companies. So something that we're committed to through various channels.

Jim (24:28):

That's great. Your passion for what you do, not just your role within the organization, but the organization as a whole really comes through as you're speaking, and your experience really comes through, so I appreciate that. I always like to end our conversations because this is The Healthcare Leadership Experience, we like to ask any leadership wisdom that you would like to leave our audience with. Anything that has stuck with you or that you have learned throughout your career in terms of leadership in healthcare that has really helped guide your work?

Lauren (24:56):

Yes, and overall, like anything in marketing, just be thinking about your customer. And for me, again, I made such a big shift. I was working in sports for a long time. I made this shift into healthcare, and I've just learned so much and grown to respect and value the contributions of everyone in this industry. It's complicated and it's often challenging. There's many opinions about who's the villain and there isn't one. It's just a really complex market with financial pressures and these shortages that are happening. So just always be thinking about your customer.

Lauren (25:27):

The other thing I would say is lead by example, because it's just amazing how much other people will mirror your attitude and your actions, and you want to be a force for good in your organization. That I think the last thing I'll say

just based on our topic today is lean into purpose as part of driving clarity and focus for your teams. So you're not only creating alignment, but you're also inspiring passion for what you do and why you're doing it, and giving them a sense of pride in the mission. So that consistency in action and messaging is really important.

**Jim (26:00):**

That's great. Creating alignment and inspiring passion. I think you hit the nail on the head there. Again, this is something that you're really getting right to me here. Well, thank you, Lauren. Thank you for being on the show today, and thank you to our listeners who spent time with us today. If you have any questions about VIE Healthcare Consulting, a SpendMend company, or if you want to reach out to me or Lisa Miller, you can find us on LinkedIn. Lauren is also on LinkedIn. You can find her there.

We at VIE love helping hospitals save money and enhance the patient experience, and we're hoping that the episode today gave you some new insights or ideas to consider and use in your career and your healthcare organization. Lauren, once again, thank you for being on the show with us today.

**Lauren (26:39):**

Thanks, Jim. It was great talking to you.

**Jim (26:42):**

My pleasure.

**Speaker (26:43):**

Thanks for listening to The Healthcare Leadership Experience Podcast. We hope you've enjoyed this episode. If you're interested in learning new strategies, best practices and ideas to utilize in your career and healthcare organization, check out our website at [thehealthcareleadershipexperience.com](http://thehealthcareleadershipexperience.com). And oh yeah, don't forget to rate and review us and be sure to join Lisa and Jim next time on The Healthcare Leadership Experience Podcast. Thanks again for listening.



## MEET LISA MILLER

*"It's important for hospitals to have a clearly defined cost savings strategy with purchased services as a component to that strategy. We provide our clients with a focused roadmap to achieve those savings through our expertise since 1999."*

Lisa Miller launched VIE Healthcare Consulting in 1999 to provide leading-edge financial and operational consulting for hospitals, healthcare institutions, and all providers of patient care.

She has become a recognized leader in healthcare operational performance improvement, and with her team has generated more than \$720 million in

financial improvements for VIE Healthcare's clients.

Lisa is a trusted advisor to hospital leaders on operational strategies within margin improvement, process improvements, technology/ telehealth, the patient experience, and growth opportunities.

Her innovative projects include VIE Healthcare's EXCITE! Program, a performance improvement workshop that captures employee ideas and translates them into profit improvement initiatives, and Patient Journey Mapping®, an effective qualitative approach for visualizing patient experience to achieve clinical, operating, and financial improvements.

Lisa has developed patented technology for healthcare financial improvement within purchased services; in addition to a technology that increases patient satisfaction through frontline insights.

Lisa received a BS degree in Business Administration from Eastern University in Pennsylvania and a Masters in Healthcare Administration from Seton Hall University in New Jersey.

She is a member of the National Honor Society for Healthcare Administration – Upsilon Phi Delta. Her book *The Entrepreneurial Hospital* is being published by Taylor Francis.





## MEET JIM CAGLIOSTRO

Jim joined VIE Healthcare Consulting in 2018 and brings to the role over a decade of critical care nursing experience at highly regarded medical facilities across three states.

During that time, he observed both the 'good and bad' of hospital operations in a number of regions, giving him a unique insight and understanding which he brings to VIE Healthcare Consulting's clients.



## MEET LAUREN PASQUALE BARTLETT

Chief Marketing Officer at Ingenovis Health

Jenny serves as the first and current Chief Marketing Officer for Ingenovis Health, a top-seven healthcare workforce solutions provider committed to the purpose of building a home for healthcare talent.

Amid a compounding provider shortage, Ingenovis Health and its portfolio brands are actively building ecosystems where providers can grow, thrive, and deliver the best patient care. Brands in the portfolio are: Truststaff, Fastaff, HealthCare Support, U.S. Nursing, VISTA Staffing Solutions, Springboard Healthcare and CardioSolution.

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