

LEADERSHIP

Don't Take Your People for Granted

A renewed need for strong leadership is building both in terms of mapping out a successful strategy for the future and exceptional day-to-day management practices that provide people with the direction and support necessary to succeed.

Strong leadership is about rebuilding energy and getting everyone moving in a common direction. Last year, leaders needed to focus on dealing with the pervasive fear and anxiety employees were feeling. This year, leaders are faced with getting people to recommit themselves and give their all again.

This means that leaders have to find a way to rekindle employee work passion and win back people's hearts and minds for what looks like a prolonged, rather than a quick, economic recovery. The challenge will be in building this motivation without a lot of the traditional financial levers that leaders have been able to pull in the past.

When people are treated fairly in terms of compensation and benefits, money will not be a deal breaker. Compensation is only one aspect of what drives employee performance. As long as it is adequate and organizations do a good job meeting all of the other needs of their employees, it is very possible for them to rebuild a strong, cohesive team even within the confines of a limited budget.

Meeting the Needs of Employees

The following is a five-point examination for leaders looking to reconnect with their staff and help their organizations move forward successfully:

Strategic leadership. Do your people know where the organization is heading and what their role is in

helping to get there? Employees want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, and they want to have a meaningful role they can be proud of. Where is your organization heading? What hill will the company climb next? Does everyone know how they will be contributing?

Operational leadership. You might not be able to provide raises and bonuses like you have in the past, but that doesn't mean you can't go all out and provide other elements of a great place to work. Look at what your leaders can do in terms of providing greater autonomy, recognition for a job well done and a collaborative work environment. All of these factors help to restore morale and build a stronger team.

Employee work passion. Examine what your organization can do to provide growth opportunities and to create a connection between co-workers, direct reports and immediate supervisors. All of these factors build a camaraderie that shows everyone is in this together.

Customer devotion. Make sure that your strategic plan and operational practices are geared to serving customers. Don't let a focus on meeting the needs of employees cause you to lose focus on who pays the bills and who everyone in the organization ultimately serves. It will help with the last part of the checkup.

Organizational vitality. This is the final end-stage—a healthy, renewed organization that is growing, profitable and more effectively able to meet the needs of customers, employees and other stakeholders.

Source: Adapted from an article by the Ken Blanchard Companies in Escondido, Calif. Visit www.kenblanchard.com.

“Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”

—Winston Churchill

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MANAGEMENT

Five Steps, Plus One

This Five Step (Plus One) process emphasizes the important role of the day-to-day line manager in owning and spreading each change. Resources, such as interdisciplinary design teams, educators, organization development and process improvement staff provide guidance and assistance, but for changes to be effective and lasting, senior operations leadership and line managers must together own responsibility for sustained execution and spread.

1 Process Design or Redesign

The first step in this five-step process is the design of processes. In some cases it may be a new process and in other cases it may be a redesign of an existing process. The use of interdisciplinary teams and the organization's model for improvement should be followed (e.g., Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA), Lean, Six Sigma). Strive to make the right thing to do the easiest thing to do and keep things as simple as possible. Prioritize and accelerate your efforts.

2 Educate and Train

Once a process has been well designed and pilot tested, an education plan should be developed. Staff will need to be taught and trained on the new process. The key is to incorporate somebody with the experience and expertise in education and training to consult with you on what would be the best way to teach this new

process. Hospital trainers can be a valuable resource to help design the education plan. But the education itself and the steps three

through five that follow should be driven locally by unit directors, managers and supervisors down to each individual staff member.

3 Validate Competency

When the manager has educated staff, the next step is to confirm staff comprehension and proficiency by validating competency. This is a separate step from training and may occur in a test environment prior to rollout or in real time along with rollout. Attendance at an in-service is usually not enough to demonstrate competence. There must be a way to confirm and satisfy you, the manager, that those you just taught can now go out and apply this new knowledge.

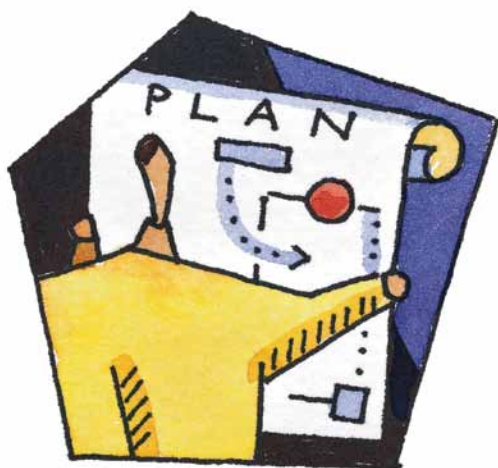
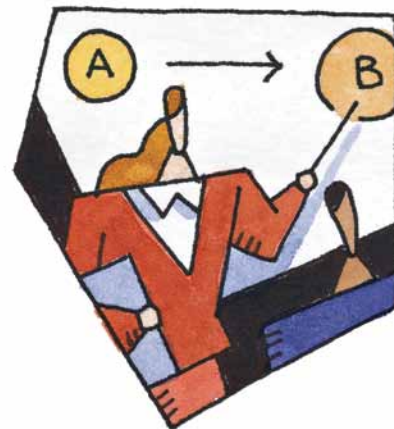
Different ways exist to do this. Paper and pencil tests, skill labs and verbal recitation of the policy are all possible methods. An educator or another resource may help choose the method to best validate competency for a given subject matter.

Once competency has been validated, it should also be documented in an employee's competency folder.

Make sure you affirm those who are doing the process right while coaching and counseling those who are doing it incorrectly. Give opportunities to improve and make interventions when needed, always revalidating the competency until staff members can demonstrate they understand the new process or policy.

4 Measure Conformance

After you have completed the validation and implementation, the next step is to evaluate or measure conformance. Measurement of conformance should be precise and measure against the specifications required by the design. You should not allow staff to work around the





process that was designed or make up their own version. Only by measuring to precise specifications will process variation be sufficiently narrowed to ensure ongoing process stability and sustainability.

How are you going to measure that conformance? A conformance measurement plan should be designed with the

assistance of performance improvement staff or other resources in the organization that possess expertise in data collection, proper sample sizes, display of data, etc. The data itself should be collected at the unit level, individual by individual.

The goal is to measure conformance in order to ensure staff is habitually and reliably following the design. Conventional wisdom has been to sample 30 charts or some other number to measure conformance in a random and statistically significant manner. What is proving to be more effective is to instead look at one or two cases from each person in your respective area, study their performance individually and give them personal feedback. This allows a very discrete and impressive means to either affirm desired behavior or change undesired behavior outside of the performance appraisal process and outside of all the tension that comes from the boss-employee or superior-subordinate relationship. This merely becomes a coaching exercise. This has been shown to have a huge impact on staff and instills pride and ownership. It's deliberate, it's

discreet, it's one-on-one and it's powerful in narrowing variation around what was designed.

5 Intervention

The fifth step, an intervention plan, happens when the data show there is widespread failure to perform a new policy or process correctly after implementation. The question at this time should be where do we need to step back and look again? It could be that a big part of the process was missed during the design step, re-education of the process needs to occur, a different teaching method needs to be used to validate competency or perhaps the measurement technique was flawed.

The answers can be found by going back to one of the previous four steps. Line management's goal is to uncover why the process is failing and backfill to repair it. Sometimes it's as simple as affirming what people are doing and saying thank you. Other times it's just a matter of holding people accountable or requiring a return to the design table/drawing board.

The "Plus One" Step: Narrowing Variation in Implementing Steps Two Through Five

Many of the processes or policies that are designed by a team will be implemented by seven, eight, 10 or even 12 different departments. As much as possible, narrow variation around how individuals charged with the process understand it. Twelve different managers teaching, validating competency or measuring conformance 12 different ways will result in too much variation. The key is to define up front the best way to accomplish each of steps two through five prior to rollout of the process.

Source: From an article by John R. Rosing, FACHE, vice president and principal, Patton Healthcare Consulting, Glendale, Ariz. Visit www.pattonhc.com.

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