

SOLUTION: Engaging Physicians on your Journey to Excellence

- *Note the word physician and provider are used interchangeably for the purpose of this Solution. The Solution is meant to assist leaders in engaging providers, physicians, CRNA's, NP, and PA's!*

We are asked often how leaders can engage physicians on their journey to excellence. We believe that part of the problem and confusion surrounding physicians on a journey is simply that their buy-in and importance to a transformational change makes perfect sense. Yet, most leaders do not know what to tell physicians/providers their role should be. They struggle with the primary definition of what providers and physicians are to them in the first place, much less what their definition is on the Journey.

ARE PHYSICIANS OUR PARTNERS OR ARE THEY OUR CUSTOMERS?

The answer is BOTH. Neither Sue nor I find that even remotely confusing, and we hope that you do not either. Everyone we work with on a daily basis is both our partner and our customer: our employees, our patients, our communities, and our physicians.

Now that we have the provider and physician role out of the way; what are some great tactics to engage them on your culture and organizational transformation, and how can you explain their role to them?

Physicians really do not do a lot of heavy lifting on your journey yet reap the benefits in their professional lives. Imagine a place where they never hear another patient complaint about the hospital. They experience a well-oiled machine with transparent communication, and great results they can be proud of. All you need as a leader is their support, and ongoing positive collaboration! Providers can be as involved as they would like to be. Their involvement is welcomed and appreciated.



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In our experience, just like your employee group, we noticed that there were highly engaged physicians at the beginning of our Journey that were as excited as we were that there was great change coming in a positive way for our organization. Finally! We had a plan! There was a team with highly engaged leaders and employees on it, and the train was leaving the station with some physicians on it as well. Some decided to ignore anything was happening, just as some employees and leaders decided they would ignore the fact we were on a Journey. Some of our physicians had a “wait and see” sort of attitude. Physicians can be late adopters just like everyone else!

Their biggest concern is “What’s in this for me?” There is a lot in it for them! Be very patient with your physicians. We recommend you put specific Solutions in place to engage physicians just as you do everyone else. As your journey progresses, the docs will also recognize the benefit of a transparent organization that is working toward a strategy that includes them!

SOME KEY TACTICS FOR YOU AND YOUR STEERING TEAM TO CONSIDER

Hire and Recruit Well

The very same principles of Hire Tough to Manage Easy apply to providers and physicians. Add some behavioral based interview questions to your physician interview panel questions that are based on teamwork, and collaboration. Tell the interviewing physician about the Journey and listen to their response. If they worked for an organization that was also attempting to transform their culture, what was their attitude about it? Some comments that warn you of potential red flags “All of that crap is nonsense. Everyone just wants you to drink the Kool-Aid”. Tell interviewing physicians and providers the organizational goals for your current goal year. Let them know you have high standards for service and quality excellence. Make sure the physicians who are interviewing sign the behavioral standards in the application process. This will set the tone for “this is how we behave around here”.



Celebrate Physicians

They are people too! Behaviors and displays of skill that we want repeated need to be celebrated and recognized and physicians are no different than any other employee in this regard. Place an employee team in charge of Doctor's Day! It will mean so much more coming from a team of employees than a new messenger bag with the hospital logo on it. Set the standards for leaders to write at least one thank you note to a physician each month. Set aside one QLT annually to write thank you notes to physicians from every leader in the room! Celebrate your provider and physician special life events and birthdays.

Transparent Communication

Transparency breeds trust. Place the journey on medical staff meeting agendas. Your perception is that they feel it is soft or does not affect them. On the contrary, they are keenly aware of a work environment that celebrates achievement and people. They desire to work in a place where there is exceptionally high quality and safe care being given. They are intelligent people and know that kind of care does not happen overnight. Explain the activities going on to get there. Placing the Journey on their agenda will lend credence to its importance.

Physician Rounding

Just as employees leave you because they feel unappreciated and unheard- your physicians and providers can have the same thoughts and feelings. Physician Rounding is a great way to stay connected to what is going on with each physician and provider at a personal level, as well as leading very pro-actively with their input into the work of the Journey that you will attain from rounding. We do advocate that Senior Leaders carefully strategize a plan for physician rounding and gathering great feedback on the journey and all that is happening in your organization from your physicians. Our best resource on this important Solution is in our book- "The Employee Experience; A Capstone Guide to Peak Performance".

Train Physicians/Providers specifically in the Positive Communication Standards of Listening, Managing up, and Service Recovery

Incomplete and optional training equals incomplete and optional results. Leaving the physicians off the training list for these important and vital tactics is a mistake. Many of your physicians will want to know the specific actions they can take to assist in the Journey. Give them the tools and equipment they need to do their jobs!



Include physicians in your training of what great service looks like

In our experience, physicians are competitive, and you can use that to your advantage. Again, this is a tools and equipment issue. They may not believe you when you show them their patient satisfaction survey results. They may also not believe their quality results. That is okay, the results will eventually sink in- never give up telling them. Coach them on best practices and techniques to improve all of their results and make it personal for them. Be Supportive!

Remember the magic rule when it comes to implementing tactics. You cannot change your world and transform a culture in a day. Very wise leadership teams and CEO's know that you focus on the providers and physicians that want you to succeed and want to be a part of the Journey FIRST. Then, you have those champion physicians assist you in leading the others to greatness.

PHYSICIAN ROUNDING QUESTIONS

The Basics of Physician Rounding

Physician Rounding is very similar to employee rounding. Many of the questions may be the same. Often, however, it is difficult to round with physicians without having a scheduled time. It is suggested the nursing leaders' round with one physician per week if possible. This may actually require setting a meeting time with them before they start their day, during their lunch or after their office hours. If you are going to round with them without a scheduled appointment time, you would definitely want to ask if they have the time. Many administrative/senior leadership teams scheduled a group rounding (entire leadership team with an individual physician or a group of physicians).

Suggested Physician Rounding Questions

- Thank them for the work that they do to care for patients.
- What is working well?
- Any Safety Issues/Concerns? Do physicians feel safe knowing patients are in the care of employees when they leave at night?
- Two or three things can we do to improve the quality of care to your patients?
- Does the admission (referral, scheduling, etc.) process go well?
- Any Supplies, Equipment, Space and/or Training Needs?
- Any Burning Question(s) for Senior Leadership? Anything that leadership can do to



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improve communication to physicians?

- Responsiveness of Leaders/Supervisors?
- Is there an employee and/or physician you would like to recognize and why?
- Anything else I should know or any further questions?



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