

# STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

## What is the best way to build relationships within your department?

Leaders often fail to engage in **meaningful personal conversations** with their employees on a **one-on-one** basis. Their **perception** may be that they spend ample time with each employee (or external customers they serve outside their department).

While the **quantity of time** spent with employees may align with teamwork and relationship-building efforts, the **quality of these interactions** often lacks a genuine understanding of the individual.

*The process of building relationships between an employee and their leader is commonly referred to as "Rounding."*

*This dedicated time involves a leader meeting with an employee one-on-one, asking systematic and purposeful questions to foster a relationship centered on improving the employee's work environment and experience.*

## Why Should Leaders Use Rounding to Build Relationships?

Leadership entails **inspiring a group to pursue and achieve a common goal**. Effective leaders **cultivate teamwork** and collaboration to produce outstanding results. They understand what **motivates each employee** and strive to bring out their best performance daily.

Leaders **cultivate engagement**, knowing that it leads to better results. Building **relationships is key**, as evidenced by studies showing **reduced patient safety incidents** in highly engaged nursing teams.

Gallup research highlights the link between engagement and reduced stress, emphasizing the importance of fostering relationships in **reducing workplace stress**.

Rounding, a **proactive leadership approach**, involves dedicated time and follow-up to address issues proactively.

Rounding serves as a **valuable tool** for confirming that the aims, goals, strategies, and changes implemented in your department have been **embraced and internalized** by your employees. It's one of the **four methods to validate the success of change**, emphasizing the importance of seeking feedback directly from your employees.

*It is meaningful to employees when their manager focuses on recognition, collaboration, goals and priorities, and strengths. And if these conversations happen regularly, they can be brief. Naturally, problems and challenges will arise -- and managers and employees should discuss them -- but to improve engagement, managers need to have conversations that inspire each individual.*

--Adapted from "A Great Manager's Most Important Habit" from Culture Shock by Gallup

## How to Build Relationships Using Leader & Employee Rounding

### Four Categories of Recommended Relationship-Building Questions

The following Rounding categories of questions are suggestions we know through research and years of use and study that work to make improvements both at the front-line level, on projects, and at the executive level.

***(CASE them “Copy and Steal Everything” but use your voice and relationships to make them yours and make them better.)***

- Begin with a positive relationship-building question or statement.
- Ask about the work environment. Assess for safety, training, equipment needs, and positivity.
- Validate
- End with positivity by asking the employee for recognition recommendations.

### YOUR *personal* TEMPLATE FOR DEVELOPING YOUR ROUNDING QUESTIONS

A positive relationship-building question or statement.

Question about the work environment. Assess for safety, training, supplies/equipment needs, and positivity.

Validate your recent change, focus, standard, or behavior.

Harvest recognition.

## Activity:

Partner with someone to round with. Spend a few moments to select a few rounding questions you feel would be most impactful for your employees based on the current state in your own department. Write those questions below, prior to beginning your rounding.

### **Here is the #1 Success Tip for your Rounding: Follow Up and Follow Through**

Documentation is essential for several reasons, depending on your organization's standards. Establishing a method to document rounding notes is crucial for maintaining records effectively. There are two significant benefits to this practice:

- 1. Keeping senior leaders informed:** Documenting your rounding notes allows senior leaders to stay closely connected to the operations of your department by providing them with valuable information about employee concerns, achievements, and areas for improvement.
- 2. Enhancing employee engagement:** By referring back to previous notes during subsequent rounds with the same employee, you demonstrate attentiveness and appreciation for their input. Acknowledging their concerns from previous discussions shows that they are valued and heard, fostering a sense of appreciation and engagement.
  - Follow up and follow through to build trust in you as a leader.

*"Follow-up is the secret sauce to leadership."*

--Karen Stockton, RN, MSN, Southwest Division Director of Employee Health @ Common Spirit.

## Best Practice for Building Relationships

### Physician/Provider Rounding

We are often asked, "How do you get your providers on board with all the changes you put in place?" Front-line leaders often struggle with provider *relationships*.

**WHY?** Because it is not a habit to spend time working on those relationships. Imagine if you suddenly had providers that assisted you with change implementation and were your partners in a great work environment. This is an important relationship for you to cultivate.

**HOW?** Physicians and providers are busy people with a lot on their plates. Schedule a time that works for them.

### YOUR TEMPLATE FOR PROVIDER ROUNDING QUESTIONS

Is there an employee and/or physician you would like to recognize and why?

Do you have any Safety issues or concerns?

Provide Two or three things that could improve the quality of care to your patients.

Do you have any Supplies, Equipment, Space, and/or Training Needs?

Am I (or are our leaders) responsive to your needs?

\* Access an editable copy of *Provider Rounding Questions* at the end of this topic

## Best Practice for Building Relationships

### Interdepartmental Rounding

Think of all the times you knew that amazing care and productivity would happen for your employees and in your department, if you could only get other departments to see it your way! To foster understanding and collaboration between departments, interdepartmental rounding is a great tool. When you communicate and collaborate in this pro-active and positive manner, operations improve, and better care happens!

**HOW?** Choose the three departments your department interacts with the most and make an appointment with all three leaders of those departments. Watch the changes happen when you are role-modeling relationships between departments. ALSO - maybe you are a department of a few employees, yet your department serves an entire organization, or process. You may use interdepartmental rounding as your most influential relationship builder.

### YOUR TEMPLATE FOR INTERDEPARTMENTAL ROUNDING QUESTIONS

Can you describe a recent situation in which our departments (or members of our departments) worked well together? Was this to serve a patient? Resolve a problem? Improve a process?

Select 1-3 questions from the following suggested questions:

- Can you describe a recent situation in which our departments didn't work well together?
- What are the top 1 or 2 things we do to make it difficult for you to do your job?
- If you were running our department, what would you do differently?
- If we were easier to work with, what would that look like?
- When you need something from our department, can you count on us?

Customized Question(s) – Focus on a current/recent change or happening

And, as always - end with gratitude:

Is there someone in my department that I can recognize for doing a great job?

\* Access an editable copy of the *Interdepartmental Rounding Questions* at the end of this topic

## Best Practice for Building Relationships

**New Employee Rounding in the first 30,60,90 Days of employment.**

### YOUR TEMPLATE FOR NEW EMPLOYEE ROUNDING QUESTIONS

#### At 30 and 60 Days, ask:

- What do you like most about your job? About the organization?
- Is the position and the organization what you expected? Provide details.
- Who has been helpful in the orientation period? Provide details.
- How happy are you working here on a scale of 1-10 with 10 representing the happiest? What would have to happen for that number to become a 10?
- Is there anything that would cause you to leave us?
- What type of feedback would you like to receive about your performance that you are not receiving now?
- Is there anything else that is important to you that we did not cover during this meeting?
- As your supervisor, how can I help you?

#### At 90 Days, ask:

- How does the job compare to what you thought it would be?
- Is there any reason you feel this is not the right place for you?
- Do you know of anyone who would be a good fit for our organization?
- Is there anything your previous employer did that worked really well we could adopt?
- How happy are you working here on a scale of 1-10 with 10 representing the happiest? What would have to happen for that number to become a 10?
- Is there anything else that is important to you that we did not cover during this meeting?
- As your supervisor, how can I help you?

*\* Access an editable copy of the New Employee Rounding Questions at the end of this topic*

## Best Practice for Relationship Building and Retention of Staff

**Stay Interviews:** recommended for departments with high turnover, or a goal to reduce turnover. You may notice an employee is at risk for "flight" based on their behaviors. Switch to a Stay Interview with this employee for Rounding.

### What is a Stay Interview?

**Stay Interviews** are comprised of standard questions and are conducted by the leader to discover what makes a current employee stay with their team or company, and what might cause them to leave. It is a time of discovery!

Simply put, Richard Finnegan, author of The Stay Interview said, "Stay Interviews are the absolute best trust-building activity... and therefore the best retention tool."

Pick a few stay interview questions, like these below, to ask your employees during 1:1 rounding sessions once or twice each year (especially if you have a focus on retention, reducing turnover, and improving the overall employee experience):

### YOUR TEMPLATE FOR NEW EMPLOYEE ROUNDING QUESTIONS

1. What do you look forward to when you come to work each day?
2. What keeps you working here?
3. What changes could be made to create the best job of your life?
4. Think back over the last 12 months. What frustrated you the most at work?
5. What makes for a great day at work? How often do great days happen?
6. What could be done to make this a better place to work?
7. What may tempt you to leave?
8. What are you most proud of at work?

\* Access an editable copy of the Stay Interview Questions at the end of this topic

## Best Practice for Building Relationships at the Executive Level

### Senior Leaders in Healthcare have a two-fold rounding agenda.

1. They round with all who report *directly* to them (leaders and others). We recommend a monthly business meeting called the "Accountability Meeting" between a senior leader and the leaders who report to them, but there can be a relationship component to this meeting, or the rounding can be done separately. The best practices in questions are the same.
2. Executive Rounding to be "seen" and to appear "approachable" is fine, but we do recommend there is *purpose* when executives rounding in the departments they oversee, or round in departments assigned to them every month, or quarter.

## Example of Executive Rounding

Source: Rainy Lake Medical Center

Executive Rounding Template		
Department Rounding	Department:	Month:
Topic/Question	Response/Notes	
<b>Positivity</b> – Reach out to department leader in advance to ask for any accomplishments recently achieved to celebrate during visit		
<b>Goals</b> – Ask an employee/employees if they can provide you an outline of their departmental goals and progress toward them. They can show you their pillar board and you should check that it is up to date.		
<b>Interdepartmental Rounding Question</b> – Ask if the executives service departments provide the right service needed to support the department. Ex. Is HR or _____ providing you with what you need?		
<b>Safety</b> – Do you have any safety concerns that the executive needs to address?		
<b>Burning Questions</b> – Do you have any burning questions I can clarify or answer for you?		
<b>Custom Question – If you were an administrator at this organization, what would you tackle FIRST?</b>		
<b>Recognition</b> – Is there someone I can recognize on your behalf? You can ask the leader in advance and/or ask the employee(s) as well		
<b>THANK YOU</b> – thank the employee(s) for their time. Provide next steps to them.		

<b>Patient Rounding</b>	
<b>Topic/Question</b>	<b>Response/Notes</b>
<b>Introduction</b> – Introduce yourself to the patient	
<b>Assess Environment</b> – Look for clutter, safety concerns, etc. to fix immediately. Check white board is up to date.	
<b>Service</b> – How has your stay so far been? Is there anything we can do to improve our service/care while you are here?	
<b>Likelihood to Recommend</b> – We strive to be this community's preferred healthcare provider. Would you be willing to recommend us to your friends and family? Is there anything that would prevent you from doing so?	
<b>Recognition</b> – Is there anyone I can recognize for outstanding service?	
<b>Thank you</b> – Sincerely thank the patient for their time choosing RLMC.	

**Resource:**

### **My Customized Rounding Plan**

General considerations: At a minimum, the plan incorporates the organization's set standards for rounding. Yet, customizing the plan to each leader's individual unique needs & opportunities helps to support the purposeful and impactful intent of rounding.

#### **Employee Rounding & Stay Interviews**

Organization's Standard for Employee Rounding (if applicable):

# of employees: \_\_\_\_\_ My Frequency of Rounding: \_\_\_\_\_

My Employee Rounding Plan:

- Daily FOCUS + ACTION question(s)

**AND**

- Monthly or Quarterly Employee Rounding

How will Stay Interviews be incorporated into your employee rounding plan?

Considerations: current engagement/satisfaction survey results; vacancy rate; turnover rate; overall department operational performance

## **New Employee Rounding**

Organization's Standard for New Employee Rounding (if applicable):

Number of new employees in the department, on average, per month: \_\_\_\_\_

My New Employee Rounding Plan:

Considerations: Turnover in first 90 days, 6 months, 1 year, and 2 years; new employee engagement scores

## **Interdepartmental Rounding**

Organization's Standard for Interdepartmental Rounding (if applicable):

Listing of departments that interact daily (or several times weekly) with your work unit:

My Interdepartmental Rounding Plan:

Considerations for frequency: overall department operational performance; current engagement/satisfaction survey results or other assessment findings related to "silo behavior" or lack of collaboration/teamwork, errors/defects/occurrences.

## Provider Rounding

Organization's Standard for Provider Rounding (if applicable):

Listing of key providers:

My Provider Rounding Plan:

Considerations: How will the organization coordinate provider rounding activities if multiple people interact frequently with providers (... so that providers aren't missed or "over rounded with")?

## Patient-Validation Rounding

Inpatients Unit – 100% every weekday (assign special rounding needs for weekends)

Support Departments – Assist with inpatient rounding as needed

Outpatient Departments – 30 minutes per day

## My Commitment to Improving Relationships through Rounding

I commit to this rounding plan, including the follow up and follow through from what I learn through rounding activities.

I will re-evaluate this plan at a minimum of every six months to assess the impact of rounding on relationships, engagement, and results. I will adjust my rounding plan based on these re-evaluations and/or our organization's standards. I will ask purposeful questions and actively engage and listen.

I will round with purpose and intent to strengthen relationships, build engagement, and improve results.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Leader Signature

Executive Leader Signature

*\* Access an editable copy of the Customized Rounding Plan at the end of this topic*

## SAMPLE ORGANIZATION-WIDE ROUNDING PLAN

- JANUARY** - STAY INTERVIEWS
- FEBRUARY** - EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS
- MARCH** - EMPLOYEE ROUNDING
- APRIL** - INTERDEPARTMENTAL and/or PHYSICIAN ROUNDING
- MAY** - EMPLOYEE ROUNDING
- JUNE** - STAY INTERVIEWS
- JULY** - MID-YEAR CONVOS
- AUGUST** - EMPLOYEE ROUNDING
- SEPTEMBER** - INTERDEPARTMENTAL and/or PHYSICIAN ROUNDING
- OCTOBER** - EMPLOYEE ROUNDING
- NOVEMBER** - EMPLOYEE ROUNDING
- DECEMBER** - INTERDEPARTMENTAL and/or PHYSICIAN ROUNDING

**SEE: FOCUS + ACTION GUIDE**

**Resources:**

**Summary Report for Employee Rounding**

Describe any identified trends uncovered during rounding and hand to Senior Leader weekly.

<b>Start on a Positive</b>
<b>A Focus on Safety</b>
<b>A Focus on Equipment/Supplies</b>
<b>A Focus on Training/Education</b>
<b>A Focus on a Recent Change</b>
<b>Recognition</b>

## Rounding Follow-Up Stoplight Report

Department/Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

ACCOMPLISHED (Green)	Date	Rounding Recommendation	Update
IN PROCESS (Yellow)	Date	Rounding Recommendation	Update
FUTURE (Red)	Date	Rounding Recommendation	Why is it Tabled?

## Call to Action

Rounding on your employees will be the single, most impactful leadership tactic you develop. However, before noticing the many benefits and time savings of creating an engaged workforce, you will be doing your “old” work, and this “new” work at the same time. Hang in there! Within a few weeks, you will start noticing a difference!

## JustStart! Go Round!

### QR CODES/LINKS FOR RESOURCES:



[eLearning Course: CapstoneEDU – Strengthening Relationships](#)

Leaders in Partner Organizations – contact your Initiative Champion



[Customized Rounding Plan \(source: Capstone Leadership Solutions\)](#)



[Stay Interview Questions \(source: Capstone Leadership Solutions\)](#)



[New Employee Rounding Questions \(source: Capstone Leadership Solutions\)](#)



[Interdepartmental Rounding Questions \(source: Capstone Leadership Solutions\)](#)



[Provider Rounding Questions \(source: Capstone Leadership Solutions\)](#)



[Zone Rounding Report Out \(source: Tamarack Health\)](#)



[Executive Rounding Template \(source: Rainy Lake Medical Center\)](#)

**Reflection/Notes:**