

Culture of Quality: Improving Communication within the Organization

Organizational culture: The personality of an organization; consists of values and operational standards that support its members and their behaviors.

Key Questions:

Within our organizational culture, how does our communication measure up?

How can we improve communication among our organization's members?

Understanding Key Concepts for This Project's Success

- Developmental steps to achieving high performance must occur in sequence.
- Implementing new skills takes time! Be patient and make honest self-assessments.
- Be able to judge our performance (collectively and individually).

Basics of Communication

Communication: The process that enables people to co-orient their behaviors. Communication empowers people to establish functional interpersonal relationships that allow them to work together toward a goal.

I. Creating the Communication Vision

Vision: A statement of the values and ideals that paints the future and provides a guide for action. Specifically, a **Communication Vision** should be distinct enough that it clearly relates to communication; not so broad that it can substitute for the organizational vision.

- Why do we need a *common* vision?
 - What do we expect to achieve from a vision?
 - How does quality communication fit into the organizational approach to care?
 - What are the roles/responsibilities of communication in our organization?
1. Ground rules: Everyone participates. Focus on understanding a point of view rather than debating it.
 2. Think outside the box: Wild ideas are the building blocks for creative thinking.
 3. Keep the focus *inside* the agency, not industry-wide.
 4. Maintain a future perspective: Imagine the future as it could be- as you want it to be. Then from that perspective, “look back” to see what obstacle must be overcome.

Our Communication Vision:

(Example: The communication vision is that all staff will achieve improved communication skills with interdisciplinary team members and staff.)

II. Developing the Communication Model

The Communication Model is simply a picture-representation of *how* communication can be improved within our organization. The Communication Model should reflect the Communication Vision. In effect, we take the communication vision and adapt it to our organization's structure.

Pre-Communication Model brainstorming:

Types of Communication in our Agency: (add your ideas)

| Technological Communication | Interdisciplinary Communication | Interpersonal Communication |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone • Voice mail • e-mail • Pagers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and/or management meetings • Staff encounters in office • Staff encounters in patient's home • Interdisciplinary documentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management ↔ Staff • Staff ↔ Staff • Staff ↔ Patient • Staff ↔ Physician (facility) • Handwritten documentation (memos, stickies, etc.) • Non-verbal |

Problems and Strengths

What are the top 1-3 **problems** related to communication within our agency?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the top 1-3 **strengths** related to communication within our agency?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Where is communication improvement needed most within the organization?

Suggested areas:

- Management style
- Staff development
- Daily processes
- Organizational goals
- Staff retention
- Others....

What communication approaches are or should be in place? How should communication occur?

Suggested methods:

- Verbal
- Written
- Technological (email, pagers, voice mail)
- Non-spoken (attitudes)
- Personal vs. Public
- Interdepartmental
- Branch-to-branch
- Frequency/consistency

Evaluating our Current Communication Processes

| Communication Process | Yes | No | Possible Improvements |
|--|-----|----|-----------------------|
| 1. Is there a process for handling phone communication? | | | |
| 2. Has staff received phone education? | | | |
| 3. Is there a seamless policy for leaving messages? | | | |
| 4. Is staff aware of information system policies? (Including security policies?) | | | |
| 5. Is staff aware of impact of communication on other staff? | | | |
| 6. Does staff document patient and physician communication in a consistent manner? | | | |
| 7. Is staff aware of interdisciplinary schedules? | | | |
| 8. Does the documentation system support interdisciplinary communications? | | | |
| 9. Does staff contact physicians in a consistent manner? | | | |
| 10. Does staff demonstrate comfort when approaching management with concerns? | | | |
| 11. Do systems allow for communication efficiency or does staff complete duplicate work? | | | |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 12. Does staff meet with management on a consistent basis? (Both individually and as a team?) | | | |
| 13. Is patient case conferencing completed on a consistent basis? | | | |
| 14. Are communication systems in place to support disaster situations? | | | |
| 15. Is staff aware of disaster plan/emergency planning? | | | |
| 16. Is staff recognized for individual achievements? | | | |

Communication Model: (Any answer is a good answer. This is simply a way to graphically represent how to improve communication within the organization.)

III. Establishing Communication Systems

Define the skills and systems needed for quality communication.

Skills: What skills are needed?

How can we improve/focus on the skills needed to implement the communication model?

Systems: What systems are needed?

How can we improve/focus on the systems needed to implement the communication model?

Are the resources needed to fulfill the communication vision and model available?

Examine the Org. Chart and Floor Plans to see current communication systems and problems areas that need communication attention.

Communication Systems should include:

Intervention Actions: The actions that our team selects to move our agency forward in improving organizational culture.

Select from the following or create original Intervention Actions. Limit selections to 3 or fewer.

(Follow through with implementation of Communication Model):

Problem: _____
Solution: _____

Problem: _____
Solution: _____

Problem: _____
Solution: _____