

Creating a Culture of Service Excellence in Critical Access Hospitals

Presented By
Audrey E. Fletcher

Creating a Culture of Service Excellence

Lasting organizational change requires recognition of the problem, goal identification, *dedication*, and the ability to recognize and celebrate success.



Service Excellence

Service Excellence must begin at the top of the organization and then cascade down.

For the culture change to be successful the organization's management team must recognize the importance of Service Excellence, and it's relation to the *organizational values, mission and philosophy.*

Cont.

For most people change is an unwelcome event, an action that takes them out of their comfort zone.

Whatever change is taking place must be perceived as the way to achieve success, and create a better working environment.

Cont.

To be successful your customer service program must be linked to your *mission, vision, and organizational values.*

In other words your core philosophy must be the foundation of your program.

Customer Expectations

Most patients are not customers by choice. Although in recent years the focus on wellness programs has increased, the medical model still in use is built around patients receiving treatment due to illness or injury.

Patients expect:

- ✓ Courteous Service
- ✓ Quality Care
- ✓ Personal Concern



Is There a Difference?

Do Today's Patients Differ From Those of Yesteryear?



7 Steps Towards Creating a Culture of Service Excellence:

1. The Road to Success
2. Facing Reality
3. Creating Meaningful Standards of Performance
4. Ensuring Physician Buy-In
5. Holding Everyone Accountable
6. Service Recognition
7. Measuring Success



(1) The Road to Success

To determine your current level of customer service take a step back and assess your service in the following areas:

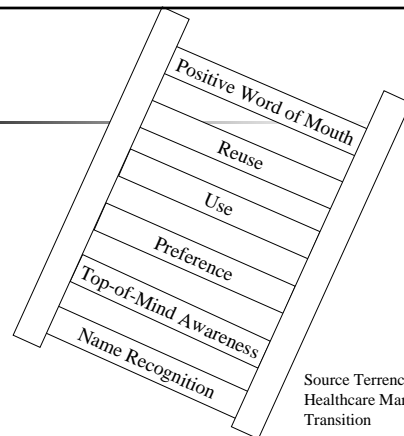
- How effective is your current customer service training program?
- What is your process for hiring employees with PQ?
(IQ + EQ = PQ)
- What measurement standards/tools are you using to determine success? Are they reliable?
- How effective is your Service Recovery program?

The energy required to start the employment relationship off on the right foot is a wise investment. It is important to remember that a little extra effort on the front end can prevent some major hassles later on.

1) The Road To Success Cont.

Is your Recognition and Rewards program fully utilized by managers who are taking personal responsibility for promoting and rewarding desirable behaviors?

Are employees aware of the relationship between employee attitude, interaction skills, caring behavior and *patient satisfaction*?



Source Terrence Rynne:
Healthcare Marketing in
Transition

(2) Facing Reality






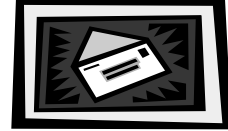
Establish the true picture your customers have of you now! It is virtually impossible to set specific goals towards where you want to be tomorrow unless you can clearly establish where you are today.

NB: It's not just about getting the right people in the right seats on the bus, but ensuring the bus is headed in the right direction!

Gathering Information

Baseline data should include:

-  Employee Satisfaction
-  Patient Satisfaction
-  Physician Satisfaction



Once the organization has defined its direction, and determined its standards, evaluating employee's customer service skills will become easier.

Satisfactory VS. Exceptional

From the customer's first contact with the organization you are sending a message about the service you provide.

What kind of message are you sending?

(3) Creating Meaningful Standards of Performance

Setting standards is a fundamental ingredient of any customer service program.

Having agreed standards ensures that the customer:

- Knows that the service will meet their expectations
- Knows what to expect

Agreed standards ensure that the provider:

- Knows exactly what to do, how to do it, and when to do it.

Involve Everyone!

Involve your employees in creating the standards that their performance will be measured by. Without their full and active participation, you will at best, only receive sullen acceptance.

Clarifying expectations helps ensure service oriented behavior and provides a measurement tool by which managers can evaluate performance.

Specific standards ease the task of measurement.

Trust

The customer comes to trust the organization when the organization does the following things:

1. They do what they say.
2. They prove it.
3. They say what they do.



(4) Ensuring Physician Buy-In

Involve your physician group in the changes taking place within your organization. Encourage their participation by explaining:

- What is Service Excellence.
- What are Standards of Performance.
- Why you are introducing Standards of Performance.
- What your start date is.
- Who will be impacted.
- What your expectations/goals are.
- How they can contribute.

(5) Holding Everyone Accountable

Getting the Message Out:

Unless the CEO and the administrative team, exemplifies and publicly and regularly promotes the necessity for exemplary customer service the program will be unsuccessful. In turn managers must also actively promote exemplary customer service practices. By demonstrating desired behaviors managers pave the way for successful change. Remember that employees learn service behaviors in 3 ways:

Development Strategies

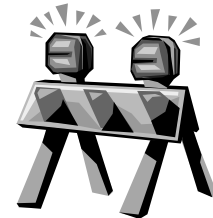
1. Example
2. On-the-job training
3. Formal training programs

It is vital that the Leadership Team ensures that everyone sees Service Excellence as a priority issue. Be certain to identify:

- What forces, or factors prevent good Customer Service
- What forces, or factors encourage good Customer Service

Removing Barriers

Once identified take the necessary steps to minimize inhibitors and maximize encouragers.



A Foundation of Excellence

I can think of no company that has found a way to look after external customers while abusing internal customers. The process of meeting customers needs begins internally.

Tom Peters

Leading By Example

•In *winning* organizations, employees demonstrate purposeful behaviors that lead to the achievement of organizational goals, they have become active participants in ensuring the continued success of the facility.

•These employees are lead by managers who are *passionate, committed, and active* in demonstrating *organizational values*, managers who are able to "grow" and *develop* others. These managers *set the tone* and *lead the way*, holding themselves and others accountable for meeting the standards.

So...Who's Along For The Ride?

Are the
right
people on
your bus?



(6) Service Recognition

Regularly measure employee performance against agreed standards and recognize and reward positive results through either:

Informal Recognition
Or
Formal Reward Programs

NB. Make the size of the reward appropriate to the achievement.

Link Behavior to Results



Continuous reinforcement of the standards and expectations is necessary to maintain effort, but be sure to link service behavior with service results.

Remember...

The more immediate the reinforcement, the more powerful it is.



(7) Measuring Success

Regularly measure customer perception and satisfaction. Publicly review the results and take action FAST! Why?

- Employees need to know that their efforts are having the desired effect
- You can begin re-assessing priorities and reformulating action plans



Staying On the Ball



Conducting a SWOT analysis on a regular basis will help ensure that you keep employee attention focused on your Service Excellence goals.

Staying Ahead of the Game

Cultural change requires persistent and consistent effort. It cannot be a piece meal process; *on again, off again!* But customer expectations change and employees must be prepared to deliver at ever-increasing levels of service quality. *So staying on the ball makes sense right?*

In Conclusion:

The changes in health care will continue. The aging population, increasing medical costs and technological advances guarantee it. However, the fundamental expectations of the patient, and all your customers will remain the same. They want to be treated as worthwhile human beings. If you can achieve this, their satisfaction and loyalty to your service will grow.