

STRENGTHENING THE CULTURE OF YOUR TEAM: Suggestions for Engaging Your Staff



“Engagement is not an event or activity. It is continuous adaptation and awareness of the group dynamics and culture. Once realized it involves subsequent activities carefully organized and planned to address the needs, strengths, and dynamics of the group.”

- ***Danielle Martin, MDHHS Director of Osceola and Mecosta Counties***

ENERGIZE DEPARTMENT CULTURE

Work Environment

- Do you rely on data and not on people? Data may be the number one concern cited as a reason for a lack of engagement among staff. Approach work with a staff-driven data strategy, rather than leadership and compliance driven.
 - Engage staff in every aspect of planning and organizing around data, including discussions regarding data trends. Have them sit on sub-teams to provide input regarding practice improvement. Staff have ongoing input and can guide discussions proactively from a field perspective, rather than a legislative, political or crisis perspective.
 - With this strategy, staff better understand the data and their involvement in creating accurate and timely data, and are less inclined to be argumentative or defensive.
 - Utilize dashboards to convey progress to managers. This allows programmatic or systems issues to be detected and identified, which engages staff by demonstrating advocacy.
 - Message data to staff timely and with support. Give support and attention to workers who fall behind to ensure their success. We achieve and fail together!
- Develop a culture of safety. In metrics-focused environments, staff might be willing to step on others to assure they are at the top of the chain. If the focus is too much on staff support or enabling, the culture might be one of resentment, and productive, engaging work is not accomplished. Culture is a fine balance!
- Address gossip at your new employee orientation all the way to staff exit surveys. Discuss the importance of the alternative of safety and support.
- Address trauma and secondary trauma if experienced in your work environment.
- Partner with your staff – teamwork is key! Set the bar for expectations high, but do it with the group as a team. Implement strategies that involve staff and utilize their skill sets. Reach out to staff for solutions to problems, delegate tasks, and allow staff to develop leadership skills.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

- Assign chapters from a leadership book to managers monthly. The manager then reports out the pertinent points at the monthly meetings.
 - Utilize leadership podcasts at monthly meetings.
 - Staff and managers share training information from training attended. This allows shared learning, but also perpetuates the culture of being one team that shares and learns together.
 - Encourage staff to participate in committees – wellness committee, CQI, resources team, employee engagement team, etc.
 - Bring in guest speakers to team meetings to learn about other areas of the department.
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COMMUNICATION

- Utilize a local share point site to provide updates to staff on metrics – work and engagement related.
 - Send consistent emails, including staffing updates, budget and policy changes, etc.
 - At staff meetings, play games like “Who Am I?” where staff members submit an answer to a supervisor for a question ahead of time, and then they have to guess who submitted it.
 - Provide information to staff about the department’s strategic plan, goals, where things are headed, etc.
 - Acquire feedback from staff on updating employee engagement plans
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LEADERSHIP

- Hold regular office meetings. These are purposeful and based on staff feedback. Offer a survey to staff to determine the nature, length, or content of meetings. They have to be consistent!
- Maintain advisory groups from various program areas. These groups should consist of front-line staff.
- Offer regular one-on-one meetings. Are staff supported, and do they feel engaged and part of the team? Providing feedback here is important. This can’t be done only at times for performance evaluations.
- All managers walk through the office each morning to say “good morning” and “hello” to staff.
- Empower staff to make decisions whenever possible. For example, let staff give input on who covers the “on call” for holidays.
- Provide staff with opportunities to give feedback to leaders about performance through manager assessments, anonymous note cards, etc.