C15: Building the Capacity of Middle Managers to Support Improvement

Building Capability for Middle Managers

*Frank Federico*

*Jill Duncan*

*Kate Jones*

*These presenters have nothing to disclose.*

"Top management can spend all their time creating strategy, but without someone there to implement it, where are you at the end of the day?"

Thomas Colligan Wharton Executive Education
Continuing Interest in Developing Middle Managers

- Empowerment as perceived by middle management is crucial for carrying out leadership duties and, in turn, empowering frontline staff. Even though the work is challenging, resources and support, among other constructs of empowerment, must be improved to increase the empowerment of middle management. **Nursing administration must understand the importance of an empowered middle management so that middle management can lead effectively and facilitate the delivery of safe, high-quality patient care.**

*Nurse Empowerment from a Middle-Management Perspective: Nurse Managers' and Assistant Nurse Managers' Workplace Empowerment Views*  

Calling All Leaders

- Supervisory staff within the organization hold formal management positions, affording them both the opportunity and responsibility to provide leadership to their staff. As “middle managers” they receive communications from the top and from the front line. They are the key conduits for sharing information, setting expectations, role modeling, rewarding desired behaviors and performance, and demonstrating vigilant attention to the quality and safety of patient care.

- Middle management has often been called one of the most difficult roles in any industry, as these managers juggle information from all corners and levels, while still needing to “get the laundry out.”

*Calling All Leaders* Deborah M. Nadzam, PhD, FAAN  
[http://jcrinc.com/calling-all-leaders/](http://jcrinc.com/calling-all-leaders/)
What have we learned?

- Tremendous interest in developing capability of middle managers
- Developing a curriculum is resource intensive
- Managers are asking to develop their skills
- Organizations are changing from hierarchical to engaging all layers

Observations of Middle Managers

Information overload
Observations of Middle Managers

- Focus: “What am I being evaluated on?”
  - Productivity
  - Budget
  - “Keep the trains running on time”

Lack of Expertise in Managing a Portfolio
Observations of Middle Managers

- Change is difficult: no one wants to take a risk
  - Managers are risk averse
  - "Most people are more comfortable with old problems than with new solutions."  John Maxwell
- As with most of health care: they do not receive training in quality improvement techniques

Middle Managers: Tips for Success

- Move away from day-to-day operations
- Think like senior managers
- Understand the business strategy
- Participate at all organizational levels
- Manage change and people together
- Utilize your role as ‘ace mediator’
- Become a practical visionary
- Become the master of change

Steven Towers, Chair, Business Process Mgmt. Group, 2005
What is Improvement?

- Improvement is not about using a set of tools and techniques.
- Improvement is not going through the motions of organizing improvement teams and training people.
- Improvement is a result, so it can only be claimed after there has been a beneficial change in an organization's performance.

THE QUALITY GURU

“Can we all agree that no matter the methodology…?”

- What are we trying to improve?
- How will we know the change is an improvement?
- What changes will we make to improve?
Should We Use Lean, Six Sigma, Kaizen or the MFI?

- A familiar question. The wrong question.
- These concepts are nothing more than tools in your management toolbox.
  - You don't fix a watch with a hammer, and you get the same results when you deploy Six Sigma, Lean, and Kaizen (and the Model for Improvement) incorrectly.
- Understanding the application of these tools to various improvement opportunities is the key to success.

Terrance Burton

How do we know what works?

What is important is not what works, but where and why it works.
# A Checklist for Middle Managers to Help Sustain Patient Safety Performance Over Time

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<tr>
<th>Daily</th>
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<tr>
<td>✨ Model the safety-enhancing behaviors that you expect of your staff (e.g., admitting faults, providing support, challenging others)</td>
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<td>✨ Work to create a “Just Culture” in which individuals that make errors are treated fairly, unsafe behavior is addressed, and reckless behavior is appropriately disciplined</td>
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<td>✨ Maintain “zero tolerance” for “disruptive behavior” (i.e., behavior that threatens an environment of psychological safety for ALL staff/physicians)</td>
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<td>✨ Observe and coach staff/physicians on patient safety behaviors/actions</td>
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<td>✨ Review complaints and grievances to identify and address patient safety concerns</td>
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<td>✨ Start meetings with a safety message</td>
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<tr>
<td>✨ Share patient safety data, stories, and other information with frontline staff/physicians</td>
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<tr>
<td>✨ Recognize and reward frontline staff/physicians for working safely and reporting responsibly</td>
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<tr>
<td>✨ Perform proactive hazard identification (this is a formal “safety search” looking for issues related to facilities, equipment, supplies, staffing knowledge &amp; competence, communications, workflow and the like)</td>
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