

10 TIPS FOR PURPOSEFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUR MISSION

1. ANY ROAD WILL GET YOU THERE

Most of us don't leave on a road trip without a destination. Organizations with clarity of vision and purpose, a well-thought strategic plan, and realistic implementation strategies have the basics needed for the journey...getting there. Don't forget to think through outcomes and how they will be measured.

How effective are senior leadership and the board in making sure that day-to-day operations support quality service provision, and that things get done in ways that reflect the values of the organization?

2. TELL ME HOW YOU WANT IT

Trying to control every process within an organization or program is not leadership, it's micro-management and it doesn't work very well: a crucial part of purposeful leadership is delegation of responsibilities. Clear, specific expectations, with follow up and fair accountability provide managers with the framework and details for how the work is to be implemented. Delegate, and then let your managers work within the parameters you set. They learn how to manage well, and you're able to keep your eyes on the environment, deal with setbacks, and identify opportunities.

3. IT'S NOT ALWAYS ABOUT TRAINING

Customized training is a great strategy to ensure employees keep up with best practices. However, there are frequently situations where poor performance is a result of circumstances completely unrelated to training, such as lack of procedures or inconsistent supervision. A "performance management" system is a primary means for ensuring clarity of expectations through all levels of the organization, analyzing gaps in performance, and developing remediation plans as needed.

Recruitment of employees, job descriptions, and the performance evaluation process must all be in alignment, and developed carefully as part of the implementation strategy. Employees will feel they are treated fairly because they know precisely what is expected, and how they will be evaluated; and supervisors feel supported by a process that provides performance indicators and a means to assess them with employees.

4. "THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT THE GOOD THINGS WE DO"

Employee recognition is a logical outgrowth of the performance management process. Reinforcement of positive performance by using incentives that are meaningful is your best way of ensuring that good employees stay, and stay productive. Acknowledging effective performance and extraordinary efforts by employees sends a clear message that you are serious about the work of the organization (saying "thank you" costs nothing).

5. WHO'S MINDING THE STORE?

CEOs and upper managers rely on supervisors to ensure that the work of the organization is competently provided to persons served. In many cases clinicians and case managers are promoted because they're exemplary employees, and for some, training and support will bring them to a level of competency as supervisors or managers.

However, not everyone is suited to the tasks of oversight, providing employee feedback, and disciplining individuals, particularly those who may have been co-workers before the promotion.

There's an old saying in performance management that advises, *"You can train a turkey to climb a tree, but you're better off hiring a squirrel"* --care in selection and coaching of supervisors is a key organizational task.

6. AM I MAKING MYSELF CLEAR?

Do your employees know what the organization's priorities are this year? How you want clients treated? What to do in case of a disaster? Purposeful communication is a means to ensure that the things you consider important get to everyone in the organization. One important way to sharpen communication within an organization is to realize how important your words and attention are to employees. Whether it's meeting agendas, memos to staff, the policy/procedure manual, or hallway discussions, the things you pay attention to convey meaning to the people who work for you.

Purposeful leadership depends on everyone knowing where you're headed, what's important, and what's expected, so take advantage of communication opportunities as they present themselves.

7. IT'S JOB ONE

Continuous quality improvement, quality assurance, performance and quality improvement—whatever the name of the process, it all comes down to whether or not an organization places value on utilizing data to get better, and to learn from mistakes. In the tight financial environment that non-profits are operating in these days, consistent attention to quality improvement processes could mean the difference between staying competitive and losing a contract; for clients, quality means something altogether different, and it's very personal.

What matters is the value that CEOs and managers put on the data, the remediation plans, and the improvement in services. Remember, those things that get attention get done, so asking about quality improvement initiatives will increase chances that they will succeed.

8. PASS IT ON

With each change of staff organizations lose valuable knowledge, in addition to the disruption clients feel. Of course, continuity of care for clients is a given, but there are numerous other areas where information walks out of the door when change occurs, and that's expensive. It's also demoralizing to staff, who realize they wouldn't have to re-create the wheel if upper management had only planned for employee turnover.

CEOs who place an expectation that transitions will be planned and orderly whenever possible send the message that change can be handled positively, with as little loss of information as possible.

9. SO YOU WANT TO BE A PLAYER.....

They say, "timing is everything" and that we are lucky "being at the right place at the right time". But there is another old quotation that tells us to "put ourselves in luck's way" by seeking out opportunities. Committee and taskforce work is usually very time consuming, and unpaid. However, joining provider workgroups and making

contributions can not only help shape priorities and policies, but also facilitate relationships that may be helpful to the organization.

Find ways to sit and discuss experiences and ideas with governmental and private-agency colleagues, and you will not only learn things, but others will come to know what the organization does and how well it performs.

10. IF THEY PAY THE BILLS....

Relationships with funders are crucial. Understand what is being bought through the contract. Be clear about what is expected, when it is expected, and how outcomes will be reviewed and deemed successful. What are the reporting requirements and timelines?

Proactively provide feedback to your funders as to the progress of your work with hard data, not just anecdotal stories, and be prepared for their feedback.