

## LEADERSHIP

## 6 Leadership Strategies for Navigating Perpetual Change in Healthcare

To facilitate organizational change, leaders need to base their approach on the understanding that transformation begins with their staff. Consider the following change-management tips.

**Recruit for new roles.** New positions and skills requirements are emerging in light of increased emphasis on HCAHPS scores, population health and the emergence of accountable care organizations and retail-based care facilities. Healthcare organizations need new roles, such as RNs who can effectively coordinate the provision of care post-hospitalization, patient advocates who work with front-line staffers to promote patient satisfaction and community navigators with the clinical and communication skills to provide education through community outreach programs.

With many areas of forecasted growth in nontraditional care locations, demand for these new roles is quickly rising. Hospitals and health systems are competing directly with the local pharmacy for qualified clinical and administrative talent. Healthcare leaders should develop human

resources strategies to recruit new talent to meet changing consumer demands or risk losing qualified applicants.

**Train existing employees on required skills.** Critical skills healthcare staffers need today are behavioral or soft skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership, flexibility and critical thinking. Although organizations must hire people with these inherent behavioral competencies, they also need professional development programs in place to build out these skill sets.

Healthcare organizations that successfully adapt to new delivery models are training staff on population health management, the importance of patient handoffs, discharges and follow-ups, and diagnostic and treatment approaches associated with EHRs.

**Implement new performance goals.** New employee performance goals are emerging in healthcare, and the performance appraisal process is evolving. We're moving beyond focusing solely on appraisal completion rate, pillars, value-based purchasing, reducing hospital-acquired infections and readmissions. Performance goals should now be focused on key improvements such as cross-care coordination and handoffs, patient communication, the timeliness of access to care and the reduction of inpatient utilization.



**Optimize processes across new entities.** Given the number of mergers, acquisitions, partnerships and organizational changes in recent years, healthcare organizations must reevaluate and standardize talent management processes across the complex health system to ensure consistency and scalability. Most healthcare organizations are likely standardizing processes today for clinical protocols; why not do the same for your talent acquisition and employee development initiatives?

**Sustain employee engagement in times of change.** Research shows that only 40 percent of hospital employees are considered “engaged,” yet employee engagement is a key driver of patient experience and hospital performance. Healthcare leaders must proactively focus on the known engagement drivers of executive behaviors, quality of care, commitment to mission engagement, promotion opportunities, stress management, communication and feedback and recognition.

**Develop the leaders for tomorrow.** Having the right people in place at the top is more important than you may think. A 2012 Survey of Employee Engagement by The Advisory Board found that even just a 1 percent decrease in leadership effectiveness correlated with a 33 percent decrease in revenue per bed. It starts with the right selection of leaders for the organization. That’s why an effective model and programs for leadership selection and development are a necessity and the biggest levers for organizational success.

Strong leadership is required to get employees engaged and encouraged to contribute to the adoption of new initiatives through clear and consistent communication. The right technology solutions are also essential tools for managing and measuring the results. Remember, you can’t manage what you don’t measure.

**Source:** Adapted from an article by Peter Segall, President/CEO, HealthcareSource, Woburn, MA • Visit [www.healthcaresource.com](http://www.healthcaresource.com)