Transformational Leadership: One Emergency Department’s Journey

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Introduction

The demands of healthcare are increasing and the temporal needs of associates are ever expanding. The emergency setting is an exhilarating setting but has inherent challenges if there is lack of leadership, vision and clinical support. A literature review reveals a greater need for transformational leadership and support to clinical staff which leads to shared governance structure resulting in higher retention rates. High quality reliable organizations have high scores regarding employee engagement, patient satisfaction and patient outcomes which are correlative to transformational leadership, strong shared governance and eventually great retention. Our emergency department struggled for consistent leadership and developed a plan to support staff while restructuring its leadership structure and expectations. The ultimate goal was a robust Shared Governance Structure.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of shared governance and transformational leadership is to guide best practice by having associates research, survey, test, evaluate and implement change. Servant leadership provides staff empowerment by giving them the opportunity for growth and the ability to lead others which yields higher associate engagement and satisfaction. This also has an effect on patient satisfaction as well. Staff retention is part of the resiliency process that adds value to the organization, improves stewardship, and improve the morale of a department which also provides and collaborative team. Recognizing associates, identifying and supporting their needs, and encouraging a staff lead approach partnered with visionary leadership promotes retention and resiliency.

Methods

The setting was a suburban level 1 trauma center. A descriptive design using a questionnaire with a convenience sample of emergency department staff. The survey (e.g. Press Ganey) provided the department leadership with national benchmarking as well as comparison to other workgroups in the organization. Data were analyzed using descriptive correlative design. The sample study consisted of nurses and emergency department technicians working in a high volume, high acuity level 1 trauma center in a metropolitan area. The survey measures issues that relate both employee satisfaction and engagement. The second survey was the Press Ganey Patient Satisfaction Survey. These patient surveys are randomized and measures patient satisfaction. The third metric we used was our annualized turnover rate and vacancy rate.

Results

There were 118 associate surveys distributed, 75 surveys were completed (resulting in 64% response rate). The workgroup has a mean score (overall rating) of 93 (on a scale 0-100). Table 1 reports responses were ranked by the respondents: “The person I report to treats me with respect” (4.52 vs. 4.34; 95% favorable), “The person who reports to me is a good communicator” (4.37 vs. 3.94; 91% favorable), “The person I report to cares about my job satisfaction” (4.21 vs. 4.11; 84% favorable), “The person I report to encourages teamwork” (4.41 vs. 4.20; 97% favorable), “I respect the abilities of the person to whom I report” (4.48 vs. 4.24; 96% favorable). This workgroup shows that employees in this department are more satisfied and engaged in comparison to working groups in the organization and to the national database. Many questions ranked leadership and management as a high performer. Table 2 reports top box percentile improvement of patient satisfaction scores (e.g. Press Ganey) respective of nursing. This is inferring with improved employee engagement satisfaction leads to improved patient satisfaction. Table 3 reports our FY15 turnover rate was 35.24% and the vacancy rate was 25%. Our FY17 turnover rate improved to 18% with a vacancy rate of 1.9%. Respectively our turnover rate improvement and reduction was 60%. Whereas our vacancy rate reduced and improved to 170%. We are optimistic with our projections to experience a turnover rate of 16.5% and a vacancy rate of 2% for 2018-19.

Discussion

Transformational leadership and shared governance is critical for a positive change in healthcare. Our data identifies an engaged and satisfied workforce to include satisfied patients. Several elements of transformational leadership are being authentic, having emotional intelligence, being a “Coach, Guide and Mentor”. These attributes enable leaders to have efficient and effective associates, have higher patient satisfaction scores and exceptional patient outcomes. Empowering, engaging staff and leadership together yields better results.

References