

Summary: For my project I focused on creating a new hire orientation packet. The goal was to create a training packet to ease integration into the workplace for new employees by providing information to help them learn their jobs easier. A second goal was to reduce the stress of experienced staff by having a clear set of standards for the new hire.

Benefits: Clear consistent expectations for all staff. Easily accessible guidance for new hires as to what to do. By spelling out responsibilities, providing timelines, and outlining position specific tasks, new hires are empowered to act. Frequently, in traditional training methods, new employees are put in reactive roles and do not act because “they’re not told what to do”. This orientation packet gives the new employee tangible ways to start helping. This builds trust with team mates and lightens the load for the seasoned employee, who frequently has to devote extra effort to help train the trainee.

Stakeholders: All staff were stakeholders in this process. This team operates as one unit, and if one part fails, then to some extent, all suffer from lack of performance. There is not a lot of slack time, so it is crucial that all parties perform at a high level, as soon as possible. Literally all staff had a hand in developing this packet. Vendor contacts included Karen Christner and Brian Egan from Evergreen Pharmacy services. Our lead nurse, Justyn Coronado, and lead Medication Aide, Dawn Settles, were primarily responsible for developing the Med Aide task list. Karla Melvin, our lead caregiver, helped fine tune the Caregivers Cheat Sheet for Care, and updates it weekly. The administrator developed the Guide to Good Charting to enable new (and all) employees to be able to chart effectively immediately. Sheila Dodd helped create the Kitchen cleaning task list.

I primarily communicated through one on one meetings with a few group meetings to spread the message. One on one meetings were conducted initially to gauge interest, find the players, and find areas that seasoned employees and new employees thought would be appropriate to address. A group meeting was held in October 2011 to define the needs for the project, and scope was developed at that time. Note that the original project was shelved because it was hard to produce quantifiable results. The staff asked for guidance on how to do their jobs easier, and make it easier to train new employees, hence this project was developed instead.

Group meetings have been held 4 times since the initial meetings last October, and their purpose is to seek consensus on a) goals, b) wording, and c) seeking consensus on assignment of responsibilities. For the most part, it was key that the staff saw the project as something they could help build and shape. This increased ownership, and increased team effectiveness. Communication from new hires about the quality of the orientation process has been key in gauging effectiveness in reducing orientation stress.

There were several challenges that we faced. First off was staff turnover. The effect of turnover in experienced staff meant that the assignments changed frequently, and that training schedules had to adapt to reflect changes. Second: There was push back to embrace training by several staff members who were not interested in assisting, nor accepting responsibility for their assignments. Third: Personality conflicts can derail orientations. As an administrator, I had to watch that the current staff created a welcoming environment for new staff to feel welcome, and encouraged to perform. This has been the biggest challenge so far.

Overcoming staff turnover has been difficult. Turnover was classified into two categories. A) I don’t want to do this anymore, and B) Indifference to job requirements and/or poor performance. In general, the team was willing to step up when a staff member was let go for poor performance, because they recognized the team was better off without that person on the team. They were willing to welcome the

new hire more readily because of the hope that by training them to the team's standard, their jobs would become easier. Cases where employees resigned because the jobs no longer fit their goals were harder to adapt to for several reasons. First, the employees who resigned were direct caregivers, and almost all new hires start at this level, so when experience is lost, it's hard to replace. Secondly, both employees returned to school at roughly the same time, so there was little buffer to replace their institutional knowledge. To overcome this obstacle, the administrator encouraged new hires to ask experienced medication aides for advice, and instituted a formalized job briefing process so the new hires had consistent message and structure in how to approach their jobs. In addition, new hires were surveyed to find their preferred learning methods, and the new hires were scheduled to accommodate the preferred technique. Some new hires liked training all by the same person, focusing on task repetition. Others preferred using a "learn as you go technique". Trainer/mentors for the new hires were instructed to allow the new hire to pick, and practice their chosen paths, with as much freedom as possible.

As a result, the team bonded better, and the new hires responded to not being forced to use only one training paradigm.

Surprises: Personality conflicts with the goals. I was completely surprised that a seasoned employee was entirely disinterested in participating in training new hires, and actively avoided it. Another employee, while having a warm personality, did not demonstrate an ability to organize her day to allow others the opportunity to learn from her. Both employees also suffered in their job performance and their employment was eventually terminated.

Key leadership attributes. First; Encourage questions and focus on explaining why we do the tasks we do. I found that by giving context for our goals, we achieved better buy in. Additionally, seasoned employees, by explaining why they did tasks a certain way, became more confident and proficient in these same tasks. Second: Expect excellence and train for excellence. Third, speak softly, be firm, and give grace frequently. Although not found, per se, in the LPI, it's a key component of how we were able to be successful.

I encouraged participation in several ways. First: Asking for volunteers to take on parts of the project. Melvin, Settles, Dodd, and Coronado are mentioned above. Second, asking for feedback by the new hires. New hire Sarah Kimes gave good feedback about how to do a proper job briefing, and is now able to do so herself. New hire Sindal Benson came to me repeatedly for clarification on how to perform this task, and we had several real life demonstrations so she could see it modeled by the administrator.

All employees were briefed on standards repeatedly. This is really the focus of the project, which is to provide a measure of consistency so success is repeatable. When success is repeatable, the team builds trust, which led to a happier workplace. Staff meetings, one on counseling, and shift-wide counseling occurred to address concerns. Additionally, every new hire was evaluated by at least two mentors for fit and proficiency in job skills. The new hire was not released to work independently until they demonstrated competency. In one case, this date was pushed back three weeks. That one time new hire is now a successful medication aide.

We performed several team building exercises based around the principle of grace and kindness. During our September 2012 staff meeting, I had heard that a resident's suitability for this environment was in question. We used a ninety minute portion of the staff meeting to identify staff concerns, identify possible techniques to improve the resident's quality of life – and improve their suitability. I then asked

the following question: “If it were your mother/sister/grandmother, would you be accepting of her being moved if every possible alternative had not been explored prior to moving her”? This opened the door to the concept of grace, and allowed me to focus the staff on a very key concept: Our sole purpose at work, above all others, is to give the blessing of good care.

I intend to keep working on the following in the next year. A) Speak softly and gently. I don’t raise my voice, but I can be very direct, and this is intimidating to some staff. B) Continue to invite feedback from staff. Fortunately, I am blessed by having a staff that will come to me with ideas. To support this, I have to ensure that I act on their feedback in a timely manner. C) Continue to give grace, and treat mistakes as learning/coaching opportunities.