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CONSULTING

Case study

Interim leadership leads to improved employee engagement

A 235-bed, non-profit rural community trauma center was struggling with decreased employee engagement and morale. The emergency department had very tenured leadership which was thought to have led to stagnation of employee input opportunities and employee recognition programs within the department. Philips Blue Jay Consulting led efforts to improve employee engagement with leadership by 23%.

Assessment

Philips Blue Jay Consulting was engaged to provide enhanced interim leadership in the emergency department. Hospital leadership was concerned with the lack of employee input into departmental decision making, diminishing department morale, and increasing turnover rates. Observations and interviews with departmental leadership and staff revealed that opportunities for employee feedback and involvement were extremely limited, and employee recognition programs were dated and not impartial. Furthermore, staff voiced an overall lack of effective departmental communication.

Approach

Philips Blue Jay Consulting provided a consultant to serve as the interim department director, who reported to the Associate Director of Nursing. Two approaches were utilized to begin the process of enhancing employee engagement: employee rounding and creation of departmental initiatives.

The methodology for employee rounding was built upon a team mentality and started with defining the key department leadership roles. The department manager was deemed the “head coach” and six permanent charge nurses were designated as “special teams coaches.”

Each charge nurse was assigned 8-12 employees to perform monthly focused rounds. In addition, the manager and interim director each performed focused rounding on each employee quarterly.



New processes and programs

The process of creating departmental initiatives was started by identifying three department-specific work teams. The work teams were created to provide an opportunity for employee involvement and to provide direction on key department processes. The three teams included an employee engagement team, a patient excellence team, and a front office team. While each team had specific objectives and identified team members and leaders, the work of the employee engagement team is further highlighted below.

The employee engagement team was charged with developing programs on a departmental and individual level for increasing department morale and engagement. The employee engagement team met and chose a team captain and play keeper (secretary). Over the course of three meetings, the team developed departmental metric goals that would be celebrated upon achievement. These goals were then shared with staff during a monthly team meeting. The team also developed three individual awards to be presented at every team meeting. The awards included the Behind the Scenes Award, Kudos Award, and SAIL Award (Situation, Action, Impact, and Link).

The Behind the Scenes Award was created to highlight an employee who was diligently working out of the limelight to ensure excellence in patient care. The Kudos Award was awarded based on submissions from staff in the “kudos bucket” in the break room. Finally, the SAIL Award was presented by the department’s charge nurses to an employee whose action exemplified the mission and vision of the organization.

Results

An annual employee engagement survey was conducted after four months of enhanced interim leadership. The overall director composition score is calculated from six questions. The overall director score mean **increased by 23%**.

Through Philips Blue Jay Consulting’s enhanced interim leadership, employee engagement, and morale were restored. Secondly, open positions within the emergency department are now sought after positions within the organization due to the positive change in the departmental culture.

Annual employee engagement survey results

Question	Pre-engagement	Post-engagement	Percent increase
Overall	2.63	3.23	23%
Communication	2.74	3.34	22%
Constructive feedback	2.76	3.21	16%
Conflict management	2.14	2.86	34%
Personal recognition	2.87	3.25	13%
Represents issues to administration	2.57	3.33	30%
Director trust	2.71	3.37	24%

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