

Choosing the Future

Critical Information for Critical Times, Edition of Thursday, December 9, 2015



A Change of Pace

Today we're going to step away from the mega issues confronting hospitals and focus instead on a very practical topic: Communication.

Communication-related issues rank high on the list of impediments to optimum performance. This is a huge issue because the efficient exchange of quality information is essential to patient care and effective management. Take a few minutes to evaluate the avenues of communication used in your hospital.

Meetings: When used appropriately, meetings can be effective means of communication. Unfortunately, meetings generally require all participants to be in the same place at the same time for extended periods. If meetings are used when another means of communication would accomplish the same or better results, they can be productivity killers. We suggest using a formal structured process allowing participants to anonymously evaluate each meeting's utility. Meetings should be used when the following applies:

- Immediate interaction or feedback is required.
- Team building is among the primary meeting objectives.
- The subject matter is new, not routine, or is sensitive and subject to misinterpretation.
- Multiple internal entities will be affected by the meeting or the information that is to be communicated.
- It is an absolute regulatory of JCAHO requirement.

Memoranda: Memoranda and other written communication should be used when it is necessary to communicate detailed information and memorialize its transmission (as in meeting minutes). Memoranda should not be used to initially communicate "bad news" or announce unilateral policy and or process changes affecting others.

E-Mail: Don't use e-mail as the only vehicle for communicating sensitive or very important information. It should be used when the first consideration is speed.

Telephone calls: These are best for rapid and direct transmission of routine information. Verbal communication should never be the primary and/or only choice when it comes to the transmission of very important information or data.

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