

# Estimate of the Situation

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## Productivity Quick Steps!

Here are a few productivity checks that may help you improve a department's productivity quickly.

Is the department getting the productive hours that it is paying for?

In U.S. acute care hospitals, worked or productive hours in a department are typically somewhere between 87% and 91% of paid hours. If your productive hours are below 87%, it's worth investigating causes.

Are your department's employees and your department's work in the same place at the same time? You may have to do a little research but it can be worth it.

- Chart when your staff is present, hour by hour.
- Now do the same thing with your primary workload indicator (admissions, billed tests, visits, examinations, cases, etc) to determine when demands are being made on staff time.
- Now compare the two charts.
- Does the current relationship between workload and staffing make management sense?

Can you reassign work to slower times? If you think about your department's tasks, you'll find that they can be put in some potentially useful categories.

- Tasks that can be scheduled.
- Tasks that cannot be scheduled.
- Tasks that are "time critical" (that is, they must be done at uncontrollable times because of clinical, regulatory, or other reasons).
- Tasks that are not "time critical" (that is, they have to be done, but, within reason, not at any particular time).

How much "stand by" time does your department have?

- Can you schedule certain tasks that are currently unscheduled?
- What will happen if you move tasks so they are done at different times, potentially even different shifts?

Are the right people doing the right tasks? As a general proposition, all work in the organization should be performed at the lowest level in the organization where it can reasonably be done at quality levels.

- Inventory your tasks. Inventory who it is that is doing these tasks.
- Apply hourly rates to these tasks and see if you're getting your money's worth.

Which issues cause the most time consuming problems in your department?

- How often do these problems occur?
- When they occur, on average about how much time is wasted as a consequence? How much time does that add up to in a year?
- Calculate the average hourly rate of the people affected and estimate how much this recurring problem is costing your department? You may be shocked at the answer.

Developing answers to these questions can produce powerful results!

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