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Functioning in an Effective Team

WHY CHARTER YOUR TEAM?

To charter a team means to create a mental model for success. The chartering methodology is often underestimated or completely overlooked because managers do not recognize its value to team performance. As the team charter is created and implemented, certain critical outcomes are achieved:

- Through purposeful action steps, a clear model for team success is established.
- A road map to effective performance is created, amplifying the team's contributions to organizational goals. The work of any team must also be congruent with the strategic and the value structure of the organization.
- Because team-based systems are cross-functional in nature, the essential functions for each team are delineated along with the outcomes of those functions.
- The organization defines and then supports the acquisition of appropriate competencies for successful teamwork, along with tools and processes to apply them.

- New expectations for individual and team performance are established, along with the tools to monitor and evaluate their realization.
- The accounting of team outcomes measures ensures that the team contributes to organizational goals and provides for intervention in mediocre performance.

Health care team development is distinct because all multidisciplinary functions must be aligned with the methods of the care delivery system. These include service planning and delivery, innovation execution, error reduction and problem solving, outcomes achievement, variance analysis, and performance monitoring. When health care teams and their functions are so aligned, the delivery of patient care services becomes more timely, of better quality, and more cost-effective. If structured well, team-based systems can reduce the time it takes to implement new services, from 3 to 5 years to 1 year (Taincez, 1996).

WHAT IF YOU DECIDE TO SKIP THE WORK OF CHARTERING YOUR TEAMS?

- There will be consequences that will limit your success.
- Staff who have been working in your organization for a long time are usually quite comfortable in their roles and functions. Team-based systems require that they leave the comfort of a predictable specialty niche. This is not a simple process.
- Managers and staff alike will move only if they see the ramifications and risks that accompany staying in their technical worlds. They must be able to articulate not only how patient care will benefit from a new way of working together but also the ramification of failing to personally acquire team skills.
- This cannot be achieved without the implementation of a chartering methodology.

CHARTERING TEAMS: CREATING A TEAM MENTAL MODEL

- An individual mental model is essentially a psychological representation of the environment and expected behaviors. Its purpose is to assist human beings in the work of cognitive processing, by providing a shortcut that describes, explains, and predicts future states.
- Mental models allow people to screen out unnecessary information, limit information overload, and reduce intolerable anxiety resulting from confusion.
- A team mental model is the shared cognition of a group of people. It is developed through creation of a team charter and reinforced through repeated application as the team performs its work. Group affect, collective effectiveness, problem solving, membership factors and the quality of interpersonal relationships are social processes influenced by team charters.
- The work of chartering a team is the cornerstone of a carefully negotiated thought structure that transcends the individual belief systems.
- A team mental model provides the script for team action. Well-developed teams have an observable pattern of behaviors that allow them to perform well. Role expectations, team norms, behavioral routines, and clear expectations about how team members should behave in certain situations are imbedded in the procedural knowledge of a team mental model (Klimoski and Mohammed, 1994).

CHARTERING YOUR TEAM (SEE TEAM CHARTER TOOL CHEST)

Create a Team Mission Statement

Before you begin, be clear about what the creation of a mission statement will actually do for a team. Far too many people have sat through mindless planning sessions to create strategic plans or mission statements, only to see their work collect dust on a shelf. Document the reasons for moving

Remember that a team's shared vision is really the team norms. As different types of work issues confront the team for action, leaders will need to recognize that there may be as many mental models as there are members about that particular issue. Do not try to reach a "shared vision" in such instances. Instead work to consensus, recognizing the rich diversity of viewpoints.

Team mental models contain the shared expectations of the tasks and the authority of the team. They allow teams to more accurately predict what behaviors are needed to complete a task and to quickly identify resources needed for outcome achievement.

to a team-based system, who the team is, what the team does, and how individual mission supports organizational goal achievement. This may be different for different teams. A team mission statement helps people connect with what the team is and provides guidelines for daily decision making. A clear mission statement helps teams to know what to do when confronted with unexpected situations. Team-based systems demand that people exert individual behavior control rather than management control. A carefully worded mission statement can help teams to know how to behave. The mission statement should be short, concise, and motivating. It should paint a clear picture of the future and the team's accountability in getting there. Describe the team's external focus. Who are the team's customers? What are the team's critical network relationships? What does the team do for its customers? Describe the team's internal focus (Emery, 1996).

- What are the team's core values? What underlying values are important for team performance? For example, if teams are multidisciplinary and multifunctional in membership, diversity of viewpoints is very important to team performance.
- What unique talents are represented on the team? How is this team different than others? What is the unique contribution of this team to organizational goals?

Roles and Definitions

The team charter assists with the work of transformation. People will need assistance in feeling positive about a newly reorganized work environment. In the change process, it is not always clear what the benefits are to anyone. Team charters provide clear reminders of why the environment must change. Define the accountabilities of each member, including team leaders, facilitators, advisors, functional specialists, and team members in general. What do team member accountabilities look like? Samples of a redesign project team leader, executive advisor, and specialized team roles are located at the end of this chapter. These are useful handouts to accom-

pany a team charter workshop. Define how the team relates to the organizational structure. Where does the team fit? What can be expected from teams? What are the boundaries of team authority? Organizational members need this information to work in a team-based system. Delineate new processes critical to team performance: alterations in information flow to include teams, new communication systems, and new feedback loops.

Integrate the Team-Based System and Strategic Plan

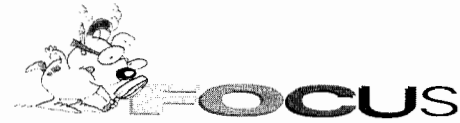
Carefully articulate the reasons why you believe a team-based system will get you where you want to be. Document precisely what the team-based system provides in terms of added value to the accomplishment of organizational goals. *Note:* This item defines the team-based system contribution to organizational goals. Individual team contributions are included in the mission statement.

Outline Expected Team Behaviors

Paint a clear picture of expected team behaviors. What broad behaviors are expected of people working together in teams? Include factors such as preferred conflict resolution process, decision-making tools, comfort with the acceleration or slowness of change, role model for new behaviors, and respect for the contributions of others. Include the accountability contract found in Chapter 4.

Identify New Workforce Competencies

Use expectations to define a set of new organizational competencies and skills-not position descriptions. What do you expect of the workforce for a team-based system to be successful? New behaviors can be technical (defined levels of computer literacy), team (positive group dynamics), or positional (manager as coach or CEO as system integrator).



Potential Team Roles

- *Leader*
- *Management advisor*
- *Functional specialists*
- *Quality improvement*
- *Risk management*
- *Finance/human resources*
- *Individual team members*
- *Executive coach*



Preparing for Success

- *Determine self-assessment methods.*
- *Conduct workforce self-assessment.*
- *Use a 360-degree process.*
- *Conduct competency development discussions.*
- *Plan training.*
- *Reevaluate competency achievement.*

Assess and Prepare the Workforce for Team Success Factors

Identify tools for assessing level of competency development present in the organization. Ask every employee to participate in a self-assessment against the set of new organizational competencies. Use a 360-degree feedback process to maximize the quality of information. Conduct competency development discussions—individual, organizational focus groups, and teams. Create and implement a plan to develop and sustain new competencies, such as formal training, preceptor/mentor programs, team academy, or train the trainer. Recognize the critical nature of the training investment. Evaluate the acquisition of new competencies.

Carefully Prescribe the Handoff Process*

Significant ambiguity is associated with the transition of new functions to teams. People struggle with questions about who is supposed to do what and when they are supposed to be doing it. Without a clear handoff process, new team members may become easily overwhelmed and then resentful about “doing management’s work.” On the other hand, managers may feel anger and resentment about losing control over certain decisions to the team. Everyone must be held accountable to a clear set of guidelines governing just how and when to hand off new functions and decision making.

In a team-based system, teams take on functions traditionally performed by managers. If there is mass confusion about authority for decisions, management credibility and team performance will suffer.

Do the basics first, to minimize this confusion and resistance. Ask hard questions. Think through the process. What duties are now being performed by managers and staff groups? How will this change with the implementation of teams? Sort the tasks into categories aligned with the accountabilities now assigned to teams through the team charter, bylaws, or council accountabilities, based on the ultimate sharing of accountability

*Holpp L: If empowerment is good, why does it hurt? *Training* 32(3):52-58, 1995.

once the team-based system is fully operational. Organize the tasks into distinct categories (Orsburn et al., 1990):

1. Should be done by any team member
2. Should be performed by team leaders
3. Should be performed by management advisors to teams
4. Should be done by policy, procedure, or protocol
5. Should not be performed by teams
6. Should remain with management

See the Tool Chest at the end of this chapter for a handoff process. Be sure to determine what additional resources, tools, or protocols teams will need to successfully perform the new function. Learn to do each new function flawlessly. Treat every new function as if were your last. Add new functions as the previous ones are mastered. Repeat *ad infinitum* (Brooks, 1995).

Communicate the Team Charter

The team charter cannot function as a road map for the organization to guide transformation efforts if it is not shared. Consider having several town hall or focus group meetings to discuss the implications of the charter and to answer questions. Be sure to include team leaders as facilitators of the discussions. Opportunities to articulate their work will translate into quicker assimilation of this important information. See the sample town hall questions at the end of this chapter.

BEWARE OF THE DARK SIDE OF TEAM MENTAL MODELS

You must take considerable care in the chartering of teams, because the mental models you create can be flawed. The application of erroneous mental models will almost certainly produce team performance problems (Box 9-1).

Inaccuracies in mental models can lead team members to ignore discrepant information and perpetuate confusion. Team mental models can



WORDS of WISDOM

It is no joke—leaders must be able to be taken seriously.



BOX 9-1

Team Performance

Problems and Poor Team Charters

- Inaccurate definitions of work and poor problem definitions
- Overreliance on shared information
- Negation of individual expertise in favor of shared vision
- False belief that everyone has to believe the same thing to come to consensus

BOX 9-2***Example from the Field***

A team became bogged down over the nature of its work to stimulate interest in clinical research. A strategic goal for this academic medical center was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the research being conducted in the organization. By the development and testing of new clinical practices, the organization hoped to establish its superiority in provide cutting edge care.

A dominant subgroup in the newly formed team was composed of people who were researchers. Their specialty niche in the organization was to perform the research review process and participate in the conduct of research. By refusing to abandon this niche, they successfully influenced the team's work to support the conduct of nursing research. This was a flawed interpretation, because the expected outcome for this team was the development of new clinical practice protocols, derived from research, that would become a part of standard practice. Imagine their surprise when the team was disbanded because of inadequate organizational support and lack of funding!

Team concepts, expectations of relationships, values, beliefs, and ideologies are the stuff of team mental models.

also be significantly influenced by group dynamics early in the team experience. A subgroup can form to create a dominant view of the world. Other team members may struggle with this view, but if the subgroup is strong enough it can cause remaining team members to abandon the incorrect viewpoint and replace it with an incorrect but group-validated perspective. This dynamic is known as groupthink. Box 9-2 gives an example of team mental models.

ACKNOWLEDGE SOCIAL AND GROUP DYNAMIC FACTORS

In the public examination of one's knowledge as compared with another, important social forces are set into play. As I test my thoughts against yours in the chartering process, we challenge our individual self-concepts, risk taking, and commitment. It is important for management to acknowledge that these social and group dynamic factors are powerful variables that must be managed in health care settings. Teams are often made up of members from various functional departments, and members may hold various levels of positional authority in the organizational structure. It is no easy task for staff members to challenge managers or for managers to challenge their own boss, even in discussions of the team charter! As managers facilitate movement through the chartering methodology, be sure that group dynamics do not unintentionally create barriers to team performance. The challenge is to maintain balance between unity and diversity, creating enough commonality to maintain coordination but enough diversity to maximize coverage of all functions (Klimoski and Mohammed, 1994).

The personal dynamics of transformation to teams includes shifts in reality perception, one's role in the environment, and one's view of self. People construct their own perceptions about what the real organization is and is not. This information is used to identify individual beliefs about the essential functions of their work and their own personal definitions of their

work. All members of the organization will need assistance in this developmental process:

1. *Anticipation*: A certain way of looking at self and others at work is challenged. This results in alterations in value and belief structures.
2. *Testing*: New beliefs about expected work behaviors are tested verbally or in action.
3. *Encounter*: Testing results in a feedback interaction.
4. *Confirmation/disconfirmation*: Alignment or discrepancy between real and perceived new behaviors occurs. This can be quite a surprise!
5. *Revision*: Feedback is accepted or rejected. Concept of self at work is adjusted.

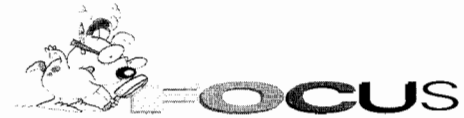
The first year of implementation is critical in shaping people's new career identity, within the context of teams. Motivation, sense of competence, and personal definitions of success are influenced by the process used to manage change. The goal is to ensure that these personal factors are aligned with the beliefs, values, and expected behaviors of team-based systems.

THE ENERGIZING PERFORMANCE EFFECTS OF TEAM CHARTERS

Effective teams have energized and committed members who apply successful strategies in the development of work products to achieve organizational goals. This state of affairs occurs as team members, through experience, repeatedly apply their charter. Team charters are tools that can be applied by managers in examining the level of development of a team or the identification of barriers to performance.

Through a facilitated dialogue, all of the elements of the team charter are examined and reaffirmed. Chances are great that poorly performing teams or novice teams will not have fully developed shared visions.

The behavior over time (BOT) tool (see sample BOT tool at the end of this chapter) is a useful exercise to apply in this assessment (Anderson and Johnson, 1997).



*The Process of Change in Self-Definition in Reorganized Workplaces**

1. *Anticipation*
2. *Testing*
3. *Encounter*
4. *Confirmation/disconfirmation*
5. *Revision*

**Fournier V, Payne R: Changes in self-construction during the transition from university to employment: a personal construct psychology approach, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology 67(4):297-305, 1994.*

ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF TEAM CHARTERING METHODOLOGY

