Toward a Healthy Work Environment: Honoring the Voices of Frontline Nurses

Tracey Long, MSN-MPH, RN-BC, CPH

Carolyn Cumpsty-Fowler, PhD, MPH

Deborah Dang, PhD, RN

Jenni Day, PhD, RN

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Tracey Long, MSN-MPH, RN-BC, CPH
The Johns Hopkins Hospital

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- identify three critical elements of skilled communication present in a healthy work environment

- summarize two methods used in the case study to support skilled communication and a healthy work environment

Overview

This presentation describes how honoring the voices of frontline nurses impacted the professional practice model evaluation at a large academic medical institution.

Two-way Communication

Transparent two-way communication is one form of skilled communication and a key part of establishing and maintaining a healthy work environment.

A critical part of this transparency is giving a voice to frontline staff and valuing their input.

What Does Transparent Two-way Communication Look Like?

A transparent and accountable culture is characterized by a feeling of trust at all levels:

- Encourage open communication

- Share failures and successes

- Foster idea sharing and collaboration

(http://www.broadvision.com/en/blog/improving-workplace-communication-transparency-accountability)
(http://sa.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/images/communicatingwithtransparency.pdf)

Behaviors Present in Transparent Two-way Communication

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Communication is a broad concept and includes any behavior that conveys your thoughts and feelings.

- Read widely and often
- Talk to people and ask their opinions
- Ask questions and challenge assumptions
- Listen carefully to learn from others

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# Key Points of Transparent Two-way Communication

Communicating transparently is intentional.

People who communicate honestly, openly, and authentically are more credible, more often heard, and considered more trustworthy.

Clear, honest communication builds trust. Without trust, relationships can't grow.

(http://sa.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/images/communicatingwithtransparency.pdf)

Importance of Two-way Communication

"A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity." – Dalai Lama
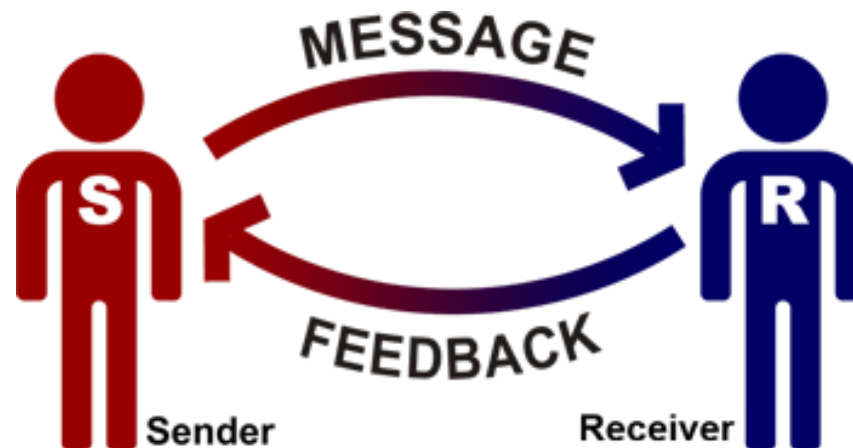
Communication in Healthcare

Clear and concise communication is a key component of a professional work environment; especially in healthcare, where communication lapses can lead to patient safety events.

Case study example

An example of the impact of transparent, two-way communication and its link to a healthy work environment, is how the voices of frontline nurses were captured during the evaluation of the Johns Hopkins Hospital Professional Practice Model (JHHPPM).

The What?

A professional practice model is the framework that guides nursing practice at the frontline.

The Why?

- Johns Hopkins Hospital nursing leadership wanted to know how well nurses knew the professional practice model and its impact on nursing practice.

- A pilot evaluation of the JHHPPM was conducted to gauge nurses' familiarity and engagement with the existing PPM so that it could be revised with their input.

The How?

- We came to this approach because creating a healthy work environment is an organizational priority; leadership was committed to hearing the voices of frontline staff.

- Skilled communication is one of the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN)'s six essential standards for establishing and sustaining healthy work environments.

- Nurses must be as proficient in communication skills as they are in clinical skills. (AACN, January 5, 2017)

What did we find?

- Nurses spoke eloquently about their practice

- Nurses evoked similar themes contained in the PPM – their pride in being a nurse was clear

- Few could speak to the model or its components

Now what?

- The traditional approach, according to the literature, is to create an educational campaign to teach the PPM to staff

- Instead, Johns Hopkins nursing leadership supported the revision of the PPM using the voices of frontline nurses who live the PPM everyday

- Educational campaigns can be burdensome, short-lived, and may not result in lasting change; we chose an inclusive approach that did not create extra burden and supported long-lasting impact

The A-Ha Moment

If the professional practice model was in their words, nurses would not have to learn about a model, they would simply speak to their experiences.

The Plan

- Magnet Ambassador nurses volunteered to record informal conversations with peers on their units, talking about what it means to be a Hopkins nurse.

- No scripts – just talking

- When opportunity allowed: huddles, shift change, impromptu meetings, small groups, lunch breaks, etc.

The Details

- Conversations were anonymized and transcribed

- Thematic analysis was performed on the qualitative data

- Results of the analysis were vetted with:
  - Peers in direct practice
  - Nursing leadership
  - Nursing PPM committees

What did we hear?

"it was very gratifying to see that how I felt as a Hopkins nurse aligned quite easily with my colleagues…the reason why we come to work every day is for our patients"

"we're not really aware of just how much pride there is when we say 'I am a Hopkins nurse'…that was surprising to me"

"the graphic really rings true to me because it is who we are in our own words and what it means to be a nurse here at Johns Hopkins"

What did we hear?

"the PPM defines our strengths…it governs everything that we do here…I think that's the pride I see in it and having worked on it, I feel special"

"the words and images that are here in our new model describe the situations that we encounter every day…together we make a difference in our patients' lives every day"

"it was surprising just how much positivity and excitement this work generated"

Key Communication Points

- Regular progress check-ins with the Magnet Ambassadors for them to see the results of their efforts and suggestions

- Consistently championing for the voices of nurses to remain in the forefront of the process

- No major edits or revisions without approval from the Magnet Ambassadors

Three Critical Elements of Skilled Communication

Communication must:

• Be respectful

• Be transparent

• Close the loop

*Take home message

Toward a Healthy Work Environment

- Noticeable increase in positivity in units as nurses realized their voices were the driving force behind the new model

- The regular feedback increased Magnet Ambassador engagement in the process – they saw progress

- Built a high level of trust with nurses who realized their voices were being heard and honored

Sustaining a Healthy Work Environment

- Magnet Ambassadors unveiled the revised PPM in a panel discussion

- Nurses at all levels collaboratively developed methods to integrate and sustain the PPM

- The PPM will be embedded into processes (recruitment, orientation, nurse residency programs, job descriptions and evaluations) based on nurses' suggestions

Two Methods Used to Support Skilled Communication

- Creating venues for in-person communication

- Frequent check-ins for clarity and credibility – is this what you said?

*Take home message

Discussion

Has anyone used a similar approach in their organization? If so, what did you learn?

Is there anything else you'd like to know that I haven't covered?

Lessons Learned

- Maintaining transparent, two-way communication has led to the creation of a meaningful professional practice model that supports a healthy work environment.

- Asking nurses *at every level* how they want to receive information built buy-in and ownership of the process.

- Involving nurses and leadership in the process from start to finish increased trust, teamwork, & two-way communication - all fundamental pillars of a healthy work environment.

What Changed and Why? Hearing Their Voices

People – Gender neutral design; added baby to represent full life span; ethnic neutral color (JHH blue)

We Achieve – Overarching continuous goal; connected to patients and families with unifying color

We Care – Where excellent nursing (and the arrow) begins; the gold standard (JHH gold)

Color & Text – Aligned with each component; easier to read; warm; incorporates JHH colors

Case Study - The End Result

Summary

The success of this evaluation method may lead to its use for other hospital initiatives

The role of the Magnet Ambassador may be expanded to facilitate learning across departments and the health system

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Recognition

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Questions?

For questions or further information:

Tracey Long, MSN-MPH, RN-BC, CPH
tlong9@jhu.edu

Carolyn Cumpsty-Fowler, PhD, MPH
cfowler1@jhu.edu

Deborah Dang, PhD, RN
ddang@jhmi.edu

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