

FAST FACTS

SERIES:

TECHNICIAN ENGAGEMENT & SATISFACTION

Each Friday in this 4-week series focused on pharmacy technician engagement and satisfaction, we will share what we have learned from our survey of nearly 1,000 pharmacy technicians from around the state of Wisconsin. We invite you to **SHARE** your own success stories of what you have done to improve technician engagement and satisfaction within your own pharmacy team.

WEEK 4: PHARMACY WORKPLACE CULTURE

Workplace culture is a complex combination of values, traditions, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes which form an organization's personality.¹ Culture has a significant impact on employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention, and will influence a pharmacy's level of success. Issues impacting culture can be complex and multifactorial. Changes in culture take time and a team approach. Listed are pearls surrounding key aspects to culture: communication, recognition, engagement, and leadership.

Avoiding the sound of silence

Humans naturally tend to avoid conflict to evade turmoil in their interpersonal relationships. Some will even go to extreme lengths to sidestep a crucial conversation. When employees feel like they are unable to speak up, overall engagement, productivity, and morale declines. A Harvard Business Review poll found when individuals do not speak up they tend to participate in one or more unproductive behaviors: complaining to others (78%), doing extra or unnecessary work (66%), ruminating about the problem (53%), or getting angry (50%). These behaviors lead to decreased workplace satisfaction.² A culture of silence does not have to be the status quo. The article suggests four simple ways to modify this workplace tendency.

- **Reverse your thinking.** Instead of reviewing the ways a crucial conversation may go poorly, think about the risks of not addressing the concern.
- **Change your emotions.** When issues arise, strong emotions can be involved. Take a step back and try to view the scenario from different perspectives. When others are involved, approach the conversation with an open-mind.
- **Make others feel safe.** Establish a safe environment for ideas to be freely shared to prevent people from becoming defensive and guarded. Express a genuine respect for his or her perspective and a desire to understand their point of view.
- **Invite dialogue.** Create an open discussion of the issue at hand and encourage sharing of opinions as both of you are there to learn from each other.

By incorporating these simple behaviors, peers will be able to move through difficult conversations by sharing concerns, discussing solutions, and engaging in change for the betterment of the workplace as a whole.

Recognize accomplishments and get on the same page

Many pharmacies utilize a routine employee satisfaction survey, but utilization of these results varies. Taking a strategic approach to addressing identified issues can foster a culture of change and improve overall satisfaction. An inpatient operations department shared a successful method for using the survey results as a way to increase employee engagement and satisfaction. The leadership team implemented a process for gaining feedback from front-line staff to focus on key areas of concern. Through these discussions, a focus on employee recognition and reduction in work-related stress were identified as being of the utmost importance.³

One key change involved forming an employee recognition program. Individuals were nominated by their colleagues with a committee determining who would be formally recognized on a recurring basis. Through this process, employee accomplishments were shared with all staff members and a small token of appreciation was received. In addition, leaders were encouraged to write handwritten thank you letters to a minimum of two direct reports on a monthly basis. A sense of appreciation and recognition can have a multitude of benefits on employee satisfaction.

The group contributed their success in reducing work-related stress by seeking ideas for improvement from front-line employees. When people feel their opinion is valued and see their ideas become reality, they are more likely to provide future feedback. By incorporating staff in quality improvement strategies, they develop a sense of ownership and employee engagement is increased. Incorporating a process for frequent communication of progress helps build a shared vision and strengthen commitment to implementing change.

Resources

1. Work Culture- Meaning, Importance & Characteristics of a Healthy Culture. Management Study Guide. Web. Accessed Mar 1 2017.
2. Maxfield D. How a Culture of Silence Eats Away at Your Company. Harvard Business Review. 7 December 2016. Web. Accessed Mar 1 2017.
3. Campbell U, Arrowood S, Kelm M. Positive work culture: a catalyst for improving employee commitment. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2013;70(19):1657-1659.