STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TOOLS: EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

The University of Minnesota Medical School Department of Family Medicine and Community Health has a long history of success providing both high quality primary care as well as resident and medical student education. Over the last few years, the strains in the economy and the changes within the healthcare market placed significant challenges on the organization. The organization must quickly make fundamental and substantive changes to continue.

INTENT

As head of the department, I recognized the severity of these issues and realize that adaptive solutions must be brought about through greater synergies between local physician leaders and the department’s leadership. Success can only be achieved by physicians’ willingness and ability to take on more of the business, operational and leadership challenges.

Within the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, the implementations of some of the new initiatives such as Lean have begun but have plateaued as the level of physician engagement has flagged. In retrospect, there is a realization that stronger leadership at the local level is required to plan for and execute new programs designed to help family medicine better achieve its mission. We have identified a new model for the delivery of care and now have to create the leadership capacity to implement it. The next level of value changes in more complex activities relates to physician care process and educational roles. These higher level processes can be improved but only with very well-engaged physician and educators who must provide both care and education.

The Department of Family Medicine and Community Health partnered with The Leader’s Toolbox to:

1. Create a common platform for strategic leadership and action by providing common language, processes and tools to undertake and simplify the complex leadership work at both the department and clinic leadership levels
2. Provide practice fields in which participants use the learning to address the commonly experienced challenges in real time fashion to address the organization’s most pressing challenges
3. Establish the basis for an ongoing leadership forum in which leaders share the resolution and execution challenges with one another and hold one another accountable to achieve the new objectives

APPROACH

There are four steps to the implementation of the Strategic Leadership Tool program.
I. Design process

- Determine tools to put in the box; reinforce existing tools
- Select critical change initiative projects that are necessary to implement new model

II. Train trainers (includes the program director and clinic manager from each clinic)

- Provide training
- Prepare trainers to teach tools
- Team project: How do we create strong local leadership teams?

III. Train participants (includes remaining clinic and department leaders)

- Trainers provide training
- Teams work on projects
- Leaders approve project plans

IV. Implement

- Projects implemented
- New opportunities to apply the tools
- Incorporate tools/language in on-going processes (strategic and clinical planning, performance planning, performance appraisals, etc.)

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- Creation of stronger local leadership teams that can more successfully design and execute change work
- Implementation of new initiatives that help us implement the new model of care
- More highly engaged leaders and their employees
- Ability to more easily adapt to change
- Ability to more easily and successfully recruit new faculty and residents
- Greater ability to achieve necessary financial programs
- Ability to use the new learning to other aspects of running the organization What’s different about this Toolbox?
- Understanding that leadership is defined by the work not by where one sits on an organization chart
- Leadership is not about personality style or set of directives about what one should be; rather it is a describable, learnable, repeatable, measurable, improvable process.
- Leadership is a shared responsibility that requires people to work across organization silos.
- People leave with a comprehensive set of language and tools to do the complex leadership work.
- Participants immediately use the learning to address the organization’s most critical issues.
- We hold people accountable to achieve the new results.

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