

The Fantastic Five Best Practices in Health Care System Training



A well-thought and skillfully delivered training plan can help health organizations realize a return on their investments, reduce operational risks, heighten the skills, engagement and productivity of employees and improve the quality of care and services.

Whenever implementing new technologies, policies and/or workflows in health care, it is vital to have a well-thought and skillfully delivered training plan in place, for many reasons: to realize a return on investment, reduce operational risks, heighten the skills, engagement and productivity of employees and improve the quality of care and services. In other words, training is not an optional “nice to do” but a critical, business-driven “need to do.”

It’s amazing how many health care organizations spend substantial sums on new technology and skimp on properly training staff members on their new systems.

A major part of the issue is that organizations often underestimate the amount of time and resources needed to properly establish, develop, deliver and sustain a successful training curriculum. By viewing employee training as a core part of your business success and applying sufficient lead time and attention toward organizing and delivering your training resources, you can achieve high-quality results in your training initiatives.

Following are five best practices to consider when developing your organization’s training processes:

1. **Do not over-rely on system or product vendors for your training** – Just as you wouldn’t rely on the maker of your new washing machine to instruct you on the gamut of your garment cleaning needs, so too should

you be cautious about relying solely on a vendor for training. While vendors can be great at providing basic or introductory information about their products or services, their training is often cookie-cutter and unlikely to be sufficiently specific to your operations. Instead, based on your strategic requirements and operational realities, consider developing a customized training curriculum specific to your needs. If needed, seek help from outside your organization to gain the training expertise and resources necessary to make your efforts a success.

2. **Know your trainees and their needs** – One size does not fit all in clothing or employee training. When developing a training curriculum for your employees, consider the wide variety of your trainees, their individual roles and responsibilities, their prior knowledge and training, and their future needs. For example, we helped a client develop entirely separate training curricula on its new care management system for front-line staff and managers. We found that while it was important for staff on the front line to know how to do event/occurrence risk entry and understand how this data would get used, it was equally important for managers to understand how to follow up on reported events and generate reporting for performance improvement initiatives.
3. **Create training programs and materials for different learning styles and needs** – Depending on the type of system or product requiring training, it may be wholly inappropriate to develop and deliver information in traditional lecture-style fashion. As much as possible, make your training experiential and interactive. Take advantage of computer-based or video-based offerings or modules that can complement (or even replace) a single trainer lecturing to a room full of trainees. When developing complementary materials to supplement your training, strive to make these materials as engaging and useful as possible. For example, with one of our clients, staff members who had been trained continued to reference and use the high-quality training materials they had received. These included tip sheets, manuals and videos, which were specifically constructed to ensure a long “shelf life” after their initial introduction was over.
4. **Consider your organization’s culture and receptivity to the new system or product** – If your training accompanies the introduction of a new system or product, expect some degree of resistance or pushback. Change can be difficult for some people to accept, even when the change is for something better. Thus, pay as much attention to ensuring your training curriculum matches your organization’s culture and audience as you do on the technicalities of the training itself.
5. **Measure the usefulness of your training and adjust accordingly** – Do not assume that simply because you have spent considerable time and resources on your training curriculum that it will be an unfettered success. What matters most is the amount of applicable knowledge and learning that your trainees receive, not the work you put in up-front into your training approach and materials. You can measure this based on post-training surveys of employees, as well as by assessing the proper use and success of the system or product on which they were trained. We have found that proactively factoring trainee feedback into ongoing edits to your training curriculum results in a training approach that becomes increasingly stronger and more relevant

as it progresses.

Conclusion

By adhering to the five best training practices described, you can achieve a highly successful post-implementation outcome with a new system or initiative. In fact, not only can this approach yield a tailored, effective training curriculum, your organization can also gain a training template it can use for other implementations. By doing so, you create a work environment more obviously dedicated to the success and engagement of your employees, and a business more likely to achieve positive results.