

Service Excellence: Strategies for Healthcare and Nursing Services

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, healthcare industry is evolved under conditions of intense competition in approaching health prevention, protection, and promotion. Healthcare organization especially nursing organization should adapt strategic planning of excellence (1) promotion and prevention excellence; (2) service excellence; (3) people excellence; and (4) governance excellence. Therefore, healthcare providers and nurses are challenged to always ensure better patient experience, winning patients' satisfaction, and loyalty and remain competitive advantages.

Achieving service excellence is a potential factor for gaining competitive advantages in today's healthcare industry. Sustained competitive advantage is the direct result of the value differential which a marked difference in clinical quality, service quality or price between other hospital services. As an executive, the job is to set a service strategy and enable staff to both innovate and continuously improve services. To achieve a service excellence, the healthcare and nursing organizations should start with components as followings; (1) creating and sustaining a culture of service excellence focusing on the six principles of service excellence, (2) leadership function and leadership roles for achieving service excellence, (3) strategies for achieving service excellence in healthcare with service-staff-system strategy, and (4) implementation of healthcare and nursing service strategies

In conclusion, patients nowadays are systematically becoming aware of the diversity of their choices, being increasingly involved in making better healthcare choices, and, so, more and more innovative services are introduced. The all components of service product, service setting and service delivery system is not complete without patients. Achieving service excellence should be started with patient focus and everything ends with the patient as well.

Keywords: *Service Excellence, Healthcare Strategy, Nursing Service Strategy*

INTRODUCTION

In healthcare, the primary goal is to achieve a positive clinical outcome. The rest of the patient experience; however, often receives much less attention, to the detriment of all concern¹. Managing the total healthcare experience means ensuring that every component of care including the physical environment, organizational culture, healthcare clinician and staff behaviors, patient and healthcare team interpersonal

relationship, communication system administrative policies, clinical protocol and standard of operation¹. The unique and multilayered players (e.g. physicians, nurses, regulatory agencies) in healthcare industry have cause healthcare organizations to pay less attention to their primary patients. However, medical or nursing managers have focused on reaching patients' clinical needs, not their wants, needs,

In the present, the hospital seeks patient satisfaction ratings of 9 or 10 out of 10 by exceeding expectations for patient care delivery to assure maximum medicare reimbursement. Although congregations are not driven by the same imposed requirements for financial gain,

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the concept of service excellence is transferable to the setting². Nursing strategic plans were carefully designed and specifically structured to lead to successful implementation of a shared leadership and a new nursing culture of excellence. Nursing excellence was further verified by achieving outstanding results in patient, physician, and nurse satisfaction scores and nurse retention³.

Definitions of Service Excellence

Service excellence is both obtrusive and elusive. Service excellence in healthcare is difficult to define and better described as an “I know when I receive it, or perhaps more frequently, I know when I have not⁴. According to Robert Johnson (Institute of Customer Service), service excellence has four key elements: (1) delivering the promise of quality healthcare, (2) providing a personal touch, (3) doing a more than adequate job and (4) resolving problems well⁴.

In order to achieve these elements, healthcare institutions, in particular, must be concerned with reducing the drivers of dissatisfaction, and providing exceptional healthcare⁵. Schneider and Bowen demonstrated that “evidence indicates that satisfying customer is not

enough to retain them because even satisfied customers defect at a high rate in many industries” satisfaction is a judgment. Delight is ‘an expression of very high satisfaction’; delight is a result of excellent service that exceeds expectations. “Exceeding expectations” implies that organizations have continually to do more in order to deliver excellent service and delight their customers⁶. In conclusion, service excellence is the exceeding expectations compliance and anticipation exceeding standards accommodating and flexible subject matter expert, focusing on purpose, and customer loyalty⁷.

Creating and Sustaining a Culture of Service Excellence

Establishing a culture of service excellence can be a catalyst for the service excellence strategy to move forward. Once service excellence is recognized as a valuable tool to improve the delivery of healthcare and nursing services, the next step is to assist each unit in finding methods to pursue nursing service excellence. To create and sustain a culture of excellence, the six principles of service excellence is a comprehensive approach to effectively improving the work environment, employee performance and the nursing service experience for patients all in one initiative⁷.



Figure1: Creating & Sustaining a Culture of Excellence⁷

Principle 1: Vision and mission statement

The vision/ mission that are clear and simple and that every employee top-down within organization knows own and energizes. The vision statement should articulate for employee what the organization wants to be

in 20 years. On the other hand a mission statement should clarify for employee who we are as an organization what is our purpose what legacy do we want to leave or even how we plan to achieve the vision and mission now.

Principle 2: Organization objective

The organization objective should be 3-4 primary key objectives and what that do for employee is it articulate how we do and what are our goals. The objectives should achieve the vision and mission; and employee understand exactly how their role and job performance.

Principle 3: Service standard

Service standard articulates for employees the actions and behaviors that they must demonstrate to bring the organization objectives the vision and mission to life every day.

Principle 4: Intervention and learning strategy

Intervention and learning strategy are those things that new employee orientation problem resolution grooming standards telephone etiquette those processes that directly impact the customer and what we do is help organizations determine where their gaps and then put interventions to close some of those gaps. The learning strategy is the strategic plan that maps out when we implement them throughout the organization's consistently.

Principle 5: Organizational alignment

Organizational alignment looks at what is the communication strategy such as newsletters internet, social media whatever using to keep vision, mission, service standard alive re-energized, refocused, reinforced, re-emphasize. Organizational alignment is the strategy that helps us to put mechanism to repeat vision, mission and service standard every single day.

Principle 6: Measurement and leadership accountability

Measurement and leadership accountability is the key indicators measuring to determine and track how successful. Leadership accountability is going through all this laborious work creating and vision, mission, organizational objective, service standard that there are articulated and everyone understand them having processes in place to make them repetitious and consistent. Leadership accountability is addressing what mechanism the organization has in place to hold leader accountable for driving excellence.

Leadership function and leadership roles for achieving service excellence

To establish a culture of service excellence, the organization has to build leadership and develop a service excellence team. Leadership drives an organization; excellent leaders set the standard for everybody with their words and actions. At the same time, they bring out the best in people and encourage individual strengths. Commitment to service excellence by nursing manager should (1) create and instill a service excellence vision and an organizational climate conducive to the goals and principles of service excellence (2) ensure employees are trained and developed to give excellent service (3) facilitate and celebrate progress in service excellence goals (4) promote teamwork by building commitment to attaining the end-results and (5) communicate the success of service excellence to other departments, ministries, governments and to patients⁷.

A great nursing manager is defined as someone who informs employees of what is expected of them; provides the necessary tools for works; allows employee to do what they do the best; recognizes, praises; cares about employee's life; and encourages the professional growth and development of every employee¹. To be a great nursing manager for achieving service excellence, leadership functions should be as followings; (1) managing and overseeing division operations, (2) operating within budget, (3) hiring and managing employees, (4) attending meetings, (5) controlling costs and waste, (6) maintaining and improving worker productivity, (7) Handling internal/external conflict, (8) completing reports, and (9) maintaining safe work.

Also, leadership roles should be (1) inspiring, leading and motivating employees to achieve greater goals, (2) setting the vision and mission for the department or division, (3) being a mentor, coach and role model, (4) ensuring the team is aligned around a common purpose, (5) providing the direction, praise and recognition for a job well done, and (6) developing the skill and talent of nursing teams⁸.

Strategies in healthcare and nursing services for achieving service excellence

The strategies for achieving service excellence in healthcare and nursing services can be divided into three parts of strategies as followings;

Part I: The Service Strategy

The service strategy is the set of plans for fulfilling the organization's mission and vision, responding its values and culture, and reaching its goal. All services efforts are based on this strategy; the service strategies are including the three components of service product-setting and delivery system, the strategic planning process, environment assessment, quantitative and qualitative forecasting tools, evidence-based design and the healing environment, the customer-focused culture¹.

Part II: The Service staff

Staffing is the human resources activities that yield the personnel who develop, implement, improve and monitor the strategy including job analysis; recruitment, selection, and retention; leader and staff development; employee empowerment, motivation, and rewards; coproduction of healthcare and nursing services¹.

Part III: The Service system

System is referred to the processes, policies, standards, and other practices that support the strategy and the staff. The service system strategies are including health information system, blueprinting, fishbone analysis, and program evaluation reviews; waiting time and psychology of waiting; measurement and feedback methods; preventing service failure; and service excellence model¹.

Implementation of healthcare and nursing service strategies

The implementation of implementation in healthcare and nursing services for achieving service excellence that it is compound of three parts in 15 attributes as following;

Part I: The Service Strategy¹

Customer satisfaction as competitive advantage: Identifying and managing all aspect of the healthcare experience. Focusing on the customer, treating customers like guests. It is consists of four strategy activities which are (1) identifying the needs, wants, and expectations of patients, (2) creating a plan to overcome and reverse negative patient perceptions, (3) providing links of organization's website to healthcare resources and related information , and (4) "Think retail" when developing service features.

The customer as a guest: Meeting or exceeding the quality and value that customer expect. It is consists of four strategy activities as (1) treat each patient like a guest, (2) study patients by research related to patients' definition of quality and value, (3) designing memorable services, and (4) calculating the tangible and intangible cost of services.

Enhancing customer service through planning: Identifying and focusing on the key drivers of customer satisfaction in strategic planning. There are (1) performing an internal and external environment assessment, (2) considering the customer's perception of quality and value when creating services, (3) developing action plans to implement the service strategy, and communicate those plans to all internal stakeholder, and (4) conducting alignment audit to ensure that all critical activities are in sync with the mission.

Creating a Healing Environment: Exceeding customer expectations regarding the healthcare setting in both reception and patient care areas. There are (1) envisioning and create the environment from the patient's not the organization's point of view, (2) pay equal attention to public area, (3) identifying nursing service system problems and improvements related to the positive practice environment, and (4) creating evidence-based healing environment to convey and advance the organization safety, quality improvement, and patient satisfaction agenda.

Developing a culture of customer service: Defining and building a culture committed to providing superb service for all parts of the healthcare experience. There are (1) integrating beliefs and values into every aspect of nursing staff, (2) developing customer-focus beliefs and values, (3) creating reward systems and training programs, (4) adapting successful elements from other organizational cultures, (5) interacting with other nursing/ healthcare networks, and (6) sharing stories of organizational legends and heroes.

Part II: The Service staff¹

Staffing for customer service: Finding and hiring clinical competent people who love to serve. The strategy activities are (1) empowering nursing staff to serve, (2) performing a thorough job analysis before undertaking the recruitment process, (3) assessing the attitudes and values of job candidates, not just their job skills, and (4) involving the entire team in the selection process.

Customer service training: Train employees, and then train them some more. There are (1) teaching employees in creative problem-solving techniques, (2) aware of training outcomes from patient expectation, (3) developing both leaders and staff for the organization's future, and (4) making training and development in customer service an ongoing process.

Motivation and Empowerment: Motivating, empowering, and rewarding employee for achieving customer service goals. The strategy activities are (1) set clear, measurable standard that define expectations for job performance in all areas, (2) walk the talk as employee responds, (3) making all tasks and goals measurable, (4) pay attention to communication, (5) being fair, ethical, and equitable, (6) focusing on frequent, ongoing feedback geared toward improved job performance, (7) reward desired behaviors and identifies the types of rewards most desired, and (9) giving public reinforcement.

Involving the patient and family in coproduction: Empower patients and their families to help meet their own healthcare need. The strategy activities are (1) training nurses to coach, monitor, and supervise customers, (2) restructuring patient rooms to encourage family and friends to visit, and (3) motivating patients who derive value and quality from participation to coproduce.

Part III: The Service system¹

Communicating information internally and externally: Keeping the patient, family, and employee informed. The strategy activities are (1) learning the unique informational needs of each internal and customer and satisfy them, (2) making information available in a format that each customer expects ability to use, and feasibility, (3) put organizational information online but protect confident data, and (4) ensuring the information system generates and feeds back information for those who need it.

Delivering the service: Providing a seamless healthcare experience. There are (1) checking the system failure and service problem, (2) identifying and eliminate current policies, procedures, and rules that may impede customer services, (3) monitoring and maintain the quality of the service delivery system, and (4) designating the nursing staff position and responsibilities at each service.

Waiting for healthcare service: Managing all parts of the wait. The strategy activities are (1) managing the wait, do not just them happen, (2) knowing how long customer is willing to wait without becoming dissatisfied, (3) using queuing or waiting-line models, and creating and implement performance standards for waiting times.

Measuring the quality of the healthcare experience: Measuring the important things, and then pursue the superb healthcare experience relentlessly. There are (1) focusing on the quality and outcomes of both clinical service and customer service, (2) using the combination of qualitative and quantitative method for measuring customer satisfaction, and (3) assessing the quality of service for both internal and external patients.

Fixing healthcare service failure: Eliminate all sources of disappointment positively and quickly. There are (1) realize that service-failure prevention, (2) train and empower nursing staff to find and fix problems, (3) train nursing staff to listen to dissatisfied- customers with empathy, then records the service problem and its solution, (4) address the root cause of service failure.

Leading the way to healthcare service excellence: Leading others to provide a superb healthcare experience. The strategy activities are (1) starting with customer-both internal patients and internal staff members, (2) articulating a vision, transcending to nursing staff, (4) build a strong customer service culture, (5) organizing staff to be trained and reward, (6) ensuring the job is fun, fair, and interesting to help employees provide superb experience, and (7) establishing a standard of performance.

CONCLUSION

Service excellence is a key factor for gaining competitive advantages in healthcare industry. The healthcare and nursing leaders blend the healthcare or nursing service strategy, staff and systems so everyone know they are supposed to concentrate on patients and other customers. Only when these components are all in place can the leader be effective in enabling and empowering employees. Only then can empowered employees provide the outstanding healthcare and nursing services that fulfill the organizational vision of providing remarkable service that exceeds patient expectations.

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