Strategies to Reconnect the “Why” of Daily Management Systems

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Daily management systems provide a window into the work of an organization. They offer tools for monitoring planned actions—how, when, where and by whom they are implemented—and evaluating the ensuing results. They enable teams to quickly identify deviations and, when needed, correct their course. And, at their best, they foster an organizational culture that empowers individuals, promotes collaboration, builds strong teams and helps the workforce understand and appreciate how their efforts contribute to the purpose of the organization.

As described in the December 2017 issue of Industry Edge, the most effective daily management systems (DMSes) are those that are aligned with and driven by the mission of the organization. In such circumstances, the DMS is understood to be a critical tool for successfully implementing strategies that will fulfill that mission. The behaviors and practices that the DMS targets, measures and seeks to improve should reflect the goals and focus areas of the annual strategy.

For this reason, leaders should consistently endeavor to link the DMS to the strategic objectives that drive the organization closer to its true north. This can be achieved in various ways. Two of the most effective approaches include developing a meaningful narrative and cultivating a culture of safety.

First, a meaningful narrative of the organization’s mission brings executives, leaders and other employees together around the same purpose. “The secret ingredient of extraordinary companies is purpose,” according to Haley Rushing and Roy Spence, co-founders of the Purpose Institute. Although it should be easy to describe the purpose of health care work in an inspiring narrative that creates passion, many health care organizations don’t do so.

In their book, Spence and Rushing provide an example of how purpose is created at every level for Wal-Mart employees.

When we were working with Wal-Mart, store-level Associates were able to talk passionately about the pride they felt in seeing a mother say ‘yes’ to their child—able to afford the things that their families wanted and needed because of the everyday low pricing Wal-Mart is famous for. They could relate to the value of Wal-Mart on a very personal level as they were shoppers too. The executives at Wal-Mart were equally motivated to serve the customer who was trying to make ends meet, trying to afford a better quality of life for their families. At the end of the day, the cashier and the CEO could all buy into the fundamental purpose of Wal-Mart: to save people money so they can live better. By focusing on the difference that the organization makes in the lives of the people it serves, an organization can find common ground on higher ground.

Likewise, the connection to a meaningful narrative will drive successful implementation of a DMS and provide the foundation for sustainability. To unit nurses, for example, the daily huddle and visual management board becomes more meaningful when they understand that the performance metrics indicate how well the mission of the organization is being met. That understanding motivates them to share with their teams the barriers they face in their daily work and collaborate on ways to address the barriers and drive improvement. In this regard, gathering around the huddle board every morning becomes

AT A GLANCE

- In the second of a two-part series, Press Ganey consultants provide strategies for connecting daily management systems to employees’ sense of purpose.
- Integrating the DMS into operations by aligning it with a meaningful narrative of organizational mission is an important step for successful implementation of improvement strategies.
- Because safety is an essential consideration in the delivery of quality care and is a shared goal of caregivers at all levels, keeping safety at the forefront of the DMS reinforces, in the eyes of the workforce, the link between the DMS and organizational purpose.

more than just a required task on a very long daily to-do list. It serves as the visual aid that supports dialogue among colleagues about what needs to change in order for the team to fulfill its purpose.

The intentional development of a culture of safety also reconnects the health care workforce to the “why” of the DMS. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) emphasizes that “High Reliability Organizations maintain a commitment to safety at all levels, from front-line providers to managers and executives.”\(^2\) The AHRQ further outlines the key components of a culture of safety to include the following features:

- Acknowledgment of the high-risk nature of an organization’s activities and the determination to achieve consistently safe operations
- A blame-free environment where individuals are able to report errors or near misses without fear of reprimand or punishment
- Encouragement of collaboration across ranks and disciplines to seek solutions to patient safety problems
- Organizational commitment of resources to address safety concerns

Safety measures should be a part of the metrics listed on the visual board and discussed first in the daily huddle, and the number of days since the last harm event should be readily visible to patients and employees. The prominence of safety measures in the daily huddle and visual board will connect employees to something that everyone wants to provide—a safe environment for patients and caregivers.

Ultimately we all want to connect to purpose. The tasks of our daily work become more meaningful when they connect to a big “Why.” A DMS can be an extremely effective tool for understanding performance and maintaining daily situational awareness across all levels and departments, especially if those who participate understand with their heads and hearts the “why” of the DMS. When front-line caregivers connect the visual board and daily huddle to how they make a difference and contribute to the organizational mission, the DMS will stick.

\(^2\) [https://psnet.ahrq.gov/primers/primer/5/safety-culture](https://psnet.ahrq.gov/primers/primer/5/safety-culture)