

Growing Physician Champions

2017



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Introduction

Increasingly, physicians are employed by hospitals, with 38% employed in 2015 versus 26% in 2012.¹ And, creating and developing physician champions is integral to creating an environment where every person can receive and deliver the best healthcare experience. For many, physicians represent healthcare; whether they want to be or not, they are leaders in your healthcare system. Their aligned commitment to delivering the best experience leads the way to commitment throughout the organization.



Unlike administrators, who typically take on increasing levels of leadership as careers unfold, physicians have tended toward a deepening path of clinical specialization versus a broader span of administrative control. They have not traditionally been trained in leadership skills and have had relatively few opportunities to develop these skills while pursuing their clinical careers.

Compounding these challenges, research demonstrates that only one in four Physicians are “Strongly Engaged” with their hospital and twenty-nine percent are disengaged at some level.²

And, while the skillsets yielding a brilliant specialist may be different from those of a successful administrator, the crucial addition of leadership competencies to a clinical skillset results in bi-lateral improvements. Learning relational and strategic approaches for working with colleagues and patients provides a solution to a sole focus on clinical problem-solving that ignores leadership challenges. While there are many paths to cultivating physician champions, each organization must prioritize the best methods for strengthening key proficiencies that represent successful adoption of experience competencies.

If the senior leadership of the organization is truly committed to patient experience outcomes and fostering a climate of physician ownership and engagement, it becomes the conduit for introducing learning and development resources. In our work with over 200 organizations, we have seen great success with blended approaches, endorsed by senior leadership, drawing on sequenced elements of coaching, training, and curricula. Some of the most effective approaches include

- Train-the-trainer certification
- Master coach certification for physician-administrative leader dyads
- Physician leadership development and accountability



Leveraging engagement techniques to drive significant and sustainable culture



Transferring knowledge of key competencies and executing processes to drive outcomes



Cultivating an environment of joy, meaning, and purpose

**Cultivating Physician Engagement Through Champions
for Quality and Service Outcomes**

Characteristics of Effective Development Models

The most effective models for engaging physicians in healthcare experience efforts leverage six essentials:

1. Build trust and confidence with Senior Leadership
2. Demonstrate connections between experiences and outcomes of care
3. Cultivate engagement and role-modeling of consistent, patient-centered care strategies
4. Teach essential skills and competencies and validate adoption
5. Empower physicians to innovate and improve patient experiences
6. Introduce measurement transparency with scorecards specific to physicians



Expected Outcomes

We recommend building consensus with administrative and medical staff leadership for a shared vision. Then, we focus on selecting the best physician and administrator trainers and building mutual accountabilities. It is important to establish role and training expectations to set everyone up for success. By investing in developing physicians and physician leaders, your organization will build an influential team of coaches who role model putting your standards into practice.

In addition to fostering a climate of patient-centered care, organizations can impact

- Patient Experience (CAHPS)
- Quality Outcomes
- Physician Engagement
- Turnover
- Overall profitability

This internal cohort of Physician Champions will represent the organization well by living your values and understanding, teaching, role modeling, and leading your efforts to put the patient at the center of everything you do.

Physician Champion Qualities and Attributes

As representatives of your organization, physician champions must exhibit the qualities and attributes you espouse. Highest on this list is the level of respect and credibility your champions hold in the organization. *All levels of experience and tenure can be successful if the physician is viewed as a genuine and trusted leader.* Other factors are important as well:

- **Clinical Outcomes.** Candidates with a strong clinical background and positive quality outcomes are seen as very credible. These balanced outcomes are typically reflective of the individual's ability to work well with others (e.g., surgical outcomes require a team effort). The best champions are those who are devoted to pursuing quality and excellence yet are also team members.
- **Leadership.** Previous informal or formal roles as leaders are valuable as they reflect an ability to work in a multidisciplinary fashion and the value and importance of getting input/feedback and ideas from others.
- **Communication.** Possessing a strong interpersonal communication history with patients, as reflected in CAHPS scores and comments, as well as with peers and directors of specialty services, is important. Place emphasis on enlisting those who are good listeners and effective public speakers. Champions will need to share compelling ideas, deliver difficult feedback, and communicate to influence.
- **Enthusiasm.** Candidates should display a passion for patient care, service excellence, and the organizational mission. They demonstrate these attributes by being continuous learners.
- **Intangibles.** Physician champions who can demonstrate flexibility, relatability, and a generally good sense of humor can build rapport and inspire others. Individuals who are both willing to take charge yet humble enough to see the value and importance of others are excellent choices.

The best news is that you likely have many physicians who fit these characteristics and are waiting to be tapped to make a positive contribution.

Sample Confidential Evaluation Tool for Selecting Physician Champions

Candidate Name: _____

Greatest Sources of Strength:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Greatest Areas of Concern or Development:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Characteristics	Scale				
	Expert	Solid Performer	Average	Needs Development	Poor Fit
	5	4	3	2	1
Clinical					
Operational					
Leadership					
Values					
Experience					
Interpersonal Communication					
Other: _____					

Sample Role Description

Reports to CMO, CEO, or CXO

Committee Memberships: Medical Board Quality Committee (voting), Patient Experience, Safety and Risk Management

Chairs: Physician Advisory Group

- Serves as expert resource to Medical Staff in relation to Patient Experience
 - Expert in understanding quality data from CAHPS core measures and shares the quarterly data with department physician leaders
 - Assists physician leaders with creating action plans to address quality measures below national average
 - Serves as Primary Coach to individual physicians who desire to improve CAHPS scores and improve patient perception of care and communication
 - Provides Medical Staff with bi-annual update presentations/best practices in Patient Experience
 - Conducts Physician Leader Rounds on patients within organization minimum 1x week
 - Conducts Physician Leader Rounds on physicians and physician extenders min 8x/month
- Provides orientation to new providers on why the patient experience matters, data, and best practices
- Makes recommendations to Medical Board on Patient Experience outcomes and tactics to improve physician loyalty and engagement and patient experience
- Attends Executive Staff Meeting quarterly

Avoid Common Pitfalls

- Give physician champions a formal designation. All too often, these new responsibilities are just “added” without a formal job title or description.
- Invest in development of your physician talent. Avoid enlisting Champions and then failing to assure proper support and mentorship.
- Work to create balance. Many times, organizations do not address tension and conflicting work responsibilities. For instance, help the Champion address the demands of clinical and physician coaching workloads. Give the Champion a say in decision-making in areas important to him or her.
- Consider an incentive structure that allows physicians adequate time and/or compensation for their work. Consider blocked time on their schedules to focus on patient experience workload and/or recognizing the additional responsibilities beyond normal duties via compensation. Organizations can inadvertently dis-incentivize physician champions by failing to align the demands of the organization’s expectations with their ability to be successful.
- Select the right Champion. Take time to assure you build the right team filled with individuals who will embody your success.



Reference

1. Drozd, E. (October 27, 2016). Rates of hospital acquisition of physician practices have accelerated dramatically in rural areas. Avalere Insights.
2. Lonquist, J. and Owens, K. Creating Physician JOY. Lecture Presented: Forum for Healthcare Strategists. May 2017. Austin, TX

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