

# **Winning with High Performance Teams**

By  
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High performance teams outperform other work groups and promote the flexibility you need to stay ahead of the competition. They also improve your bottom line.

Why use high performance teams in healthcare? Healthcare is labor intensive. Workloads have increased while staffing has decreased. This has caused burnout, decreased productivity and high turnover. High performance teams handle large workloads effectively. They support productivity, professional pride, and motivation.

A typical day on a high performance team in a staff friendly culture:

The staff arrive for work. When they receive their assignments, they know that others will help if their workload becomes unmanageable. They value diversity, and sometimes ask each other for advice.

The nurse manager finds time to talk to his or her staff frequently, building relationships and trust.

Most of the staff attend today's staff meeting, because they know that their opinions are valued. When they originate good idea, the manager implements it in days, not months. The best managers know that the finest ideas come from direct care staff. Nurses and others are motivated to keep their ideas flowing because they are gratified by their improvements to patient care.

If a staff member calls out, the manager looks for a replacement. Staff members work with the manager and volunteer to rearrange their time to fill the vacancy. They know that when they are the ones needing some time off, their manager and other staff will at least try to help.

Everyone pitches in when three admissions arrive during a two-hour period. Staff remember how others helped them when they were the busy ones. They joke with their colleagues to manage stress. They say, "I can hardly believe how much we were able to accomplish today," as they leave work. They feel pride, and are grateful to the team that helped them accomplish so much.

Is this a fantasy? No. This scenario comes from my day to day experiences working on high performance teams.

### **Characteristics of high performance teams**

#### Big picture thinking

Staff are capable of understanding senior management's perspective. And, when they understand, they collaborate and strengthen strategic goals.

#### Respect

Respect means that the physician, manager, nurse and CNA feel that each is essential to the whole. Staff can honestly say, "We don't do rude here." You hear the same message in *Jack*, the new book by Jack Welch, retired CEO of GE. "Treat people with dignity and give them a voice. That's a message that translates around the world."

#### Empowerment

Nurses need power to ensure safe care. Empowered nurses avoid burnout because they control the quality of their product, excellent patient care.

#### **When you are the leader:**

1. Delegate decision-making

Enable nurses to solve patient problems on the spot instead of having them go up and down the chain of command. Delegation

achieves better solutions. And managers can use the time saved to build relationships that improve retention.

2. Coach your staff

Remember the adage: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime". Encourage staff to maximize their abilities. Coach them. There is magic in the mix of diverse personalities within any organization.

3. Think long term

Coaching results don't happen overnight. They are an investment that takes time and patience. People need clear communication, praise, and a supportive environment to willingly surrender their old ways.

Coaching maximizes your human resource investment.

4. Encourage lifelong learning

Hire for attitude, train for skills. When your staff have lifelong learning habits, you leap ahead of healthcare change.

5. Be a good role model

You are more likely to achieve results when you teach your staff by example. Your rewards are quality and productivity improvements.

**When you are a staff member**

1. Value diversity

According to his recent book, *From Conflict to Creativity*, Sy Landau reveals how to unleash creativity and enhance productivity with or without existing conflict. Healthcare needs this approach.

2. Think critically

Be confident and think for yourself. Good organizations support professionals who use common sense when applying policies and procedures.

3. Cross train

It doesn't make sense to have too many staff on one unit and too few on another. Patient census and acuity change rapidly. Cross training improves your organization's ability to manage those changes. However, set necessary limits. Organizations should both train and compensate you for this offering.

4. Use synergy

Synergy happens when groups achieve more than the sum of what people could have done on their own. It's the best way to manage heavy workloads.

5. Build your own self-esteem

Low self-esteem magnifies the imperfections of others. Successful people focus on maximizing their strengths.

Our current healthcare environment needs sensible ways to improve productivity. High performance teams can help. Try them.

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