



LIFECYCLE EXIT SOLUTIONS STARTER®

This Solutions Starter provides strategic and tactical ideas to consider when starting an improvement project. The Starter is organized by the standard survey sections and questions of the Lifecycle Exit Survey. Section definitions were developed in consultation with Press Ganey research scientists. The suggestions are based on literature reviews of industry best practices, top-performer experience, and practical fieldwork.

Solutions Starters support your ability to build an organizational culture and purpose-driven workforce to achieve exceptional patient-centered care. Improvement requires selecting tactics that are aligned with goals and implementing them consistently across your organization. For assistance, please contact your Press Ganey representative or partner with [Press Ganey Strategic Consulting](#) to design and implement a tailored action plan.

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MANAGER

MANAGER

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of their manager. This includes such factors as the amount of independence and recognition they received, as well as their perception of the manager's ability to communicate, demonstrate respect, and encourage teamwork.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “My department/team was able to bond. Supervisors/Management was understanding on employee needs.”
- “The manager lacked communication and good leadership skills.”

SECTION ITEMS

- I had the right amount of independence in my work.
- The person I reported to is a good communicator.
- I respect the abilities of the person that I reported to.
- I was satisfied with the recognition I received for doing a good job.
- The person I reported to treated me with respect.
- The person I reported to cared about my job satisfaction.
- The person I reported to encouraged teamwork.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Make sure you share communications from the leadership team in a timely manner.
- Encourage your team to discuss how changes will affect them individually and as a team.
- Communicate new changes often to ensure the message is being heard by employees.
- Take action to mitigate any risks created by organizational change.
- Consider the points that you want to make and ensure they are communicated upfront, clearly, and as succinctly as possible. Then provide additional details as necessary. Too much detail upfront can confuse the audience as to the main take-away.
- Ask for feedback on how employees view your leadership style.
- Watch for opportunities to recognize employees who have overcome barriers and challenges to provide excellent customer service. Provide specific details in your recognition (e.g., system downtimes, high patient volumes, inclement weather, staffing shortages).
- Watch for and recognize employees who serve as supportive team members to others (e.g., those who help others with workload, cover for lunches, organize birthday celebrations, volunteer for additional work or committees).
- Reserve time at the end of all staff meetings to recognize the performance of direct reports and allow employees to recognize their peers for outstanding performance.

- Demonstrate respect for all team members by acknowledging achievements, ideas, and contributions of all individuals.
- Treat all employees, regardless of their performance/contribution, with respect.
- Actively listen and interact with your employees in a positive manner.
- Honor the privacy and confidentiality of discussions with your employees.
- Respond promptly to employees' requests for time off, assistance, and other needs.
- Demonstrate empathy and concern with your words and actions. For example, if an employee is on Leave of Absence, mail them a note.
- Acknowledge service anniversaries and other milestones.
- Intentionally create an environment of inclusion by involving employees of differing levels, roles, experience, and cultures in decisions that impact their work.
- Make the connection for employees in how their work affects patients, other employees, and processes within the organization.
- Share stories that highlight how employees have an impact on the business and patients.
- Increase employees' involvement in decision making. This can be done individually or as a group during staff meetings.
- Brainstorm a list of effective teamwork behaviors with your team. Identify and agree upon the behaviors that will have the most positive impact. Monitor and reinforce appropriate behaviors.
- Communicate the performance goals that were set for the entire team. Identify how employees can work together to achieve the group goals. Routinely update the team on progress against the goals.
- Consistently recognize employees who demonstrate outstanding teamwork. Reinforce specific examples of good teamwork.
- **VIDEO:** [Model the Behavior](#)
- **VIDEO:** [Overcoming the Authority Gradient](#)
- **VIDEO:** [Recognizing Excellence](#)

ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of the organization. This includes such factors as senior management's leadership, as well as their perception of the level of communication, quality, and safety at the organization.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “Amazing senior leadership. I felt that the organization cared for its employees.”
- “There are too many egos and the patients seemed to have gotten lost in the shuffle. I will not treat patients as just a number!”

SECTION ITEMS

- I felt respected at this organization.
- Different levels of this organization communicate effectively with each other.
- This organization provides high-quality care and service.
- I had confidence in senior management's leadership.
- This organization cares about quality improvement.
- This organization cares about employee safety.
- This organization cares about its clients/patients.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Treat everyone fairly and create an inclusive environment among the work group.
- Work with leaders across teams/departments to share information and bring information back to your employees on anything that impacts their work and the way in which work units work together.
- Conduct the “Start, Stop, Continue” exercise to identify issues that may affect high-quality care and service. Use the exercise to uncover exactly what you can do to address employees' concerns about quality. Ask employees the following questions:
 - What should we **Start** doing to provide high-quality care and service?
 - What should we **Stop** doing that is standing in the way of our providing high-quality care and service?
 - What should we **Continue** doing to provide high-quality care and service?
- Engage employees in a dialogue to develop meaningful ways to build accountability for continuously improving processes and the overall quality of care and service.
- Your employees should have regular contact with your immediate manager, as well as other senior management. Invite senior leaders to periodically attend staff meeting and provide updates to your team.
- Invite senior leaders to a staff meeting to provide an overview of the organization's mission, values, strategy, and/or customer satisfaction.

- Form a standing team within your work unit that focuses on quality improvement and patient care.
- Engage employees in a dialogue to develop meaningful ways to build accountability for continuously improving processes and the overall quality of care and service.
- Begin meetings with a safety moment.
- Ask your employees to provide input on ways to continuously improve safety.
- Immediately get personally involved with any situation where a safety issue is brought to light.
- Make use of associate rounding to reinforce safety behaviors and uncover safety issues.
- Model safety behaviors.
- Take leadership accountability and follow through on safety issues to ensure resolution.
- Form a standing team within your work unit that focuses on safety compliance and improvement.
- Conduct a focus group to find out why employees believe others are not working safely. Ask probing questions to determine if the problem is behavior- or process-related.
- Create a patient experience team within your work unit. Have the team focus on initiatives to improve patient experience and how your work unit can make improvements for patients.
- Discuss patient experience survey results with employees. Focus the conversation on both the good news and the opportunities (e.g., patient compliment letters, patient complaints, etc.).
- **VIDEO:** [Using Comments to Tell a Story](#)

EMPLOYEE

EMPLOYEE

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's perception of their work as well as coworkers within their immediate work unit. This includes such factors as the amount of job stress they felt, whether they enjoyed working with their coworkers, teamwork on the unit, and the level of care and service provided.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “The night shift crew were among some of the best coworkers I've ever had the pleasure of working with.”
- “No accountability with employees that were habitually absent and rude to other coworkers and created chaos and an uncomfortable office environment.”

SECTION ITEMS

- The job stress I felt while working here was reasonable.
- Overall, I enjoyed working with my coworkers.
- My work unit provides high-quality care and service.
- Employees in my work unit helped others to accomplish their work.
- Employees in my work unit helped clients/patients even when it was not part of their job.
- My work unit worked well together.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Discuss work-life balance and encourage your employees to talk to you about these issues.
- Communicate the organization's policies (e.g., time off, flextime) regarding work-life balance issues and reiterate your support of these policies.
- Do everything you can to support work-family balance. Reassess the flexibility for time off and the amount of work required of employees.
- Engage employees in a dialogue to develop meaningful ways to build accountability for continuously improving processes and the overall quality of care and service.
- Create a list of key quality actions to be completed and then keep employees up to date on the progress that is made to improve safety.
- Periodically recognize team members who demonstrates outstanding teamwork.
- Consistently reinforce examples of teamwork.
- Schedule team-building sessions with a trained facilitator. Hold an off-site session with your team focused on building relationships and teamwork.
- Identify effective teamwork behaviors for your team.
- Develop with your team the target behaviors that will lead to improved teamwork. Monitor and reinforce appropriate behaviors.

- Look for opportunities to rotate and share various job responsibilities between different team members.
- During a staff meeting, ask your employees to give examples of opportunities to improve how the team works together. Identify and discuss the opportunities and suggestions made for improving teamwork.
- Set performance goals for the entire team. Identify how employees must work together to achieve the group goals. Routinely update the team on progress against the goal.
- **VIDEO:** [Set Specific Behavioral Standards](#)
- **VIDEO:** [Share the Why](#)

ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of how engaged they felt in the organization. This includes such factors as feeling a sense of pride to work for the organization; being willing to recommend the organization as a good place to work and receive care; and being open to considering future employment with the organization.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “I especially enjoyed experiencing so many people in one workplace enjoy their job and truly enjoy caring for patients above and beyond the basic scope of practice.”
- “I came to the organization for its Vision and leadership. I left because the people who provided this are no longer there and current leadership has none.”

SECTION ITEMS

An effective engagement strategy targets the drivers of engagement, rather than engagement as a global metric. To achieve positive employee engagement, it is important to work on drivers such as job fit, communication, career development, etc. Focusing improvement efforts on the drivers of engagement will lead to increased overall engagement.

The recommendations in the “Improvements” section to follow can inform action plans on the aspects of new hire engagement listed below:

- Overall, I was a satisfied employee.
- I would recommend this organization as a good place to work.
- I would recommend this organization to family and friends who need care.
- I am proud to tell people that I used to work for this organization.
- I would consider working at this organization again in the future.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Speak directly with employees about their job description and uncover if they have any other skills/talents that could be put to good use in other areas.
- Figure out what aspects of a job excite each individual employee and provide them with opportunities to pursue these activities.
- Help your employees gain new experiences (e.g., project management) that align with their career development goals.
- Make the connection for employees in how their work affects patients, other employees, and processes within the organization.
- Share stories that highlight how employees have an impact on patients and/or the business's success.
- Let employees know you want to hear from them.

- Take time to get to know your employees. Express interest in their activities and what is important to them.
- Make time when employees approach you with their concerns. Listen actively and ask probing questions.
- Thank employees when they bring their concerns to your attention. Ask them what they would like to see as an outcome in resolving their concern.
- Include your employees in the solution of problems. Communicate your progress and follow up with your employees during and after the resolutions to monitor how things are going.

PAY/BENEFITS

PAY/BENEFITS

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of their pay and benefits. This includes such factors as being paid fairly, satisfaction with benefits, and feeling that their compensation was competitive with other healthcare employers in the area.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “Pay and benefits were great!”
- “The pay was not comparable to other hospitals in the area. Poor benefits.”

SECTION ITEMS

- I was paid fairly for the work that I did.
- I was satisfied with my benefits.
- My pay was fair compared to other healthcare employers in this area.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Employees may not understand the value of all of their benefits. Focus on the total compensation package to put all benefits in perspective.
- Discuss work-life balance and encourage your employees to talk to you about these issues. Perceptions of fair pay and satisfaction with benefits can sometimes be directly tied to employees' feelings about work-life balance, days off, etc.
- Help team members understand the value of their benefits and that the organization consistently monitors the market to ensure it is offering benefits that are important to team members and their dependents at market-competitive levels.
- Have a discussion session with employees to determine why employees are dissatisfied. Are there particular benefits that employees feel are not adequate?
- Compare your organization's pay directly to competitors in the area. By addressing the issue head-on, it can eliminate some false information among employees. Leverage pay-range data from Human Resources to help communicate this perspective.
- Invite Human Resources to discuss pay with employees and focus on how pay at your organization compares nationally, regionally, and locally. When applicable, it is also important to explain how current financial constraints can affect pay.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of their work-life balance. This includes such factors as their schedule, workload, and the support received from the organization to balance their work and personal life.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “I liked that my supervisor was understanding of my school schedule and always worked with it.”
- “Not being able to have 30 mins for lunch. Feeling extremely overwhelmed with so much work and no relief.”

SECTION ITEMS

- This organization supported me in balancing my work and personal life.
- My work schedule was fair.
- My workload was reasonable.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Discuss work-life balance and encourage your employees to talk to you about these issues. Communicate the organization's policies (e.g., time off, flextime) regarding work-life balance issues and reiterate your support of these policies.
- Do everything you can to support work-family balance. Reassess the flexibility for time off and the amount of work required of employees.
- Invite your senior manager and/or Human Resources representative to attend a staff meeting to hear from employees.
- Ask experts (e.g., Human Resources, Operations) in the organization for help. They can often provide benchmarks for comparison purposes or help you conduct a work-flow assessment.
- Ask your team for their ideas on improving productivity and workflow. Engage them in a problem-solving process which will refocus them on creating solutions.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of career advancement at the organization. This includes such factors as having opportunities for career development, being supported in developing new skills, and receiving effective mentorship.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “The system provided a lot of growth opportunity, classes, and organization involvement if you were interested.”
- “I did not feel like there were any opportunities for leadership development or growth within the organization.”

SECTION ITEMS

- This organization provided career development opportunities.
- The person I reported to supported me in developing new skills.
- I received effective mentorship/professional development.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Meet with employees to determine their current knowledge and skill levels as well as their perceived training needs/gaps.
- Encourage your employees to take advantage of relevant training courses offered by the organization, tuition reimbursement, and certification funds.
- Reinforce the importance of development to your team and provide them with the necessary time and resources.
- Create career development plans with employees that have specific action steps. Align individual development with the needs of the organization.
- Help your employees gain new experiences (e.g., project management) that align with their career development goals.
- Have discussions with your employees about their career goals and development. Remember that your role is to develop employees and help them to work independently.
- Provide employees with autonomy within the scope of their job responsibilities.
- Look for responsibilities that could be delegated to your team members. This is a good way to help demonstrate to employees that you trust them, and that you want to help them develop their skills and abilities.
- Have regular conversations with your employees about their goals and professional development.
- Ensure employees are aware of professional development resources (e.g., training courses).
- Identify projects and assignments that would benefit both the employee and the organization and encourage employees to participate.

RETIREMENT

RETIREMENT

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of the retirement process. This includes such factors as receiving retirement resources and management support, being involved in succession planning for their job, and being treated fairly prior to retirement.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “I have worked here for over 40 years. I have loved the department and my job.”
- “I am of retirement age but did not want to retire. The workload became too difficult.”

SECTION ITEMS

- This organization provided resources that helped me plan my retirement.
- The person I reported to was helpful in navigating the processes for my retirement.
- I was involved in succession planning for my former job (e.g., training a replacement, writing documentation).
- The person I reported to treated me fairly in the time leading up to my retirement.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Convey to your employees that you value them and their future, even after they are no longer employed by you, by having as generous a retirement plan as is feasible for the organization.
- Make retirement plan tools and resources available in multiple formats (e.g., online, written, video) to accommodate employees' various learning preferences.
- Ensure new hires and all employees understand their retirement options, how to plan and save for retirement, how matching funds compound over time, etc.
- Provide support for navigating the retirement process and make sure employees know whom to contact with questions. Human Resources and benefits departments should be equipped to educate employees on the specifics of their benefits.
- Take time to co-develop with the retiring employee a well-thought-out succession plan for their former job. The employee should be involved as much as possible in documenting processes and training their replacement.
- Demonstrate to the retiring employee that the organization appreciates them and that they've made a difference. Thoughtfully plan ways to make their concluding days with the organization special (e.g., recognition luncheon, retirement gifts, stories from colleagues and leaders about the difference the employee has made to patients and the organization, etc.).

WORKING REMOTE

WORKING REMOTE

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of their remote work experience. This includes such factors as how often they were allowed to work remotely; whether they had the tools, resources, and support to work effectively from home; and whether they were treated fairly as a remote worker.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “I loved the flexibility to work from home.”
- “I would suggest, for staff involved or are part of the remote workforce, provide either separate or modified training.”

SECTION ITEMS

- I wanted to work from home more often than this organization would allow.
- I was able to maintain a good work/life balance while working from home.
- I plan on seeking employment somewhere that will allow for more remote work.
- I had the tools and resources I needed to do my job well while working from home.
- The person I reported to supported me while working from home.
- The person I reported to treated remote workers fairly.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Communicate the organization's policies regarding work-life balance issues (e.g., time off, flextime) and reiterate your support of these policies.
- Support work-family balance to every extent possible. Work with employees to create a work schedule that allows for flexibility when needed.
- Confirm that remote employees have the tools and resources they need to effectively do their jobs from home.
- Ensure remote employees have access to technical support and know whom to contact with any technical issues.
- Engage remote employees by creating multiple communication channels. This affords them various ways to interact with their manager and team.

HARASSMENT

HARASSMENT

SECTION DEFINITION

The survey items in this section measure an employee's ratings of how the organization handled issues of harassment, bullying, and violence. This includes such factors as incidents of harassment by physicians, coworkers, leaders, and patients/patient families being taken seriously.

VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE

- “There is a concerted effort to improve the culture towards more respect and kindness. The goals of the organization are consistently discussed.”
- “Very uncomfortable working conditions with certain people, which in turn, made the environment all the more toxic.”

SECTION ITEMS

- Reports of harassment, bullying, or violence by physicians were taken seriously by this organization.
- Reports of harassment, bullying, or violence by coworkers were taken seriously by this organization.
- Reports of harassment, bullying, or violence by leaders were taken seriously by this organization.
- Reports of harassment, bullying, or violence by patients and/or patient families were taken seriously by this organization.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Toxic work environments jeopardize employees' and patients' physical and psychological health and safety and should not be tolerated. Establish systems, policies, and procedures to handle any report of harassment, bullying, or violence appropriately.
- Create a culture of safety that ensures individuals who report instances of harassment, bullying, or violence are not afraid of reprisal. Policies and procedures should be established to support and promote a culture of psychological safety.
- Maintain a clearly written, publicly available patient bill of rights that communicates a zero-tolerance policy for harassment, bullying, or violence of any kind toward health care professionals by patients and/or patient families.
- Develop a program for workplace violence prevention that is incorporated into the organization's overall safety and health program.
- Conduct focus groups with employees asking them to identify daily activities that they feel put them at the most risk for workplace violence.
- Conduct root cause analyses of all incidents of workplace violence to correct the conditions that allowed the incident to occur.

APPENDIX: SUPPORTING TACTICS

DATA USE AND LEARNING

Comment Analytics

Comment analytics leverages Natural Language Processing to assess and review open-ended survey items. The technology will group similar themes and concepts together to provide leaders with an overall frequency report to better assess workforce engagement and important elements of culture.

Use comment analytics to gain a deeper understanding of employee perceptions and observations of culture, teamwork, and care delivery.

- Comment analytics:
 - Quantifies and analyzes qualitative data for action.
 - Enables identification of emerging trends and root causes.
 - Uses sentiment analysis to represent the emotional tone in the comment text.
- Thematic and visual organization of comment responses and sentiments enable deep dives into certain themes and concepts.
- For example, a leader can isolate and display comments related to decompression or activation and then discern positive from negative sentiments to uncover inconsistencies in perspectives and opinion.
- Quantitative analysis of qualitative data provides information on:
 - **Topics:** What is being said?
 - **Volume:** Topic frequency
 - **Sentiment Volume:** Is the comment positive or negative?
 - **Sentiment Strength:** How positive or negative is the comment?

Learning Collaboratives

Learning Collaboratives expand on the concept of cross-functional improvement teams. The educational process engages health care professionals to learn about successful practices from each other within the same organization or in broad collaboration with other organizations and services within the community.

Learning Collaboratives engage the people doing the work in process and quality improvement. Adult learners can be energized by learning from those like them and contributing to institutional knowledge.

Identifying and promoting internal best practices is the most efficient approach to system-wide improvement. Sustainable employee engagement success is dependent on local continuous improvement organized around the specific needs of employees. Learning Collaboratives provide an opportunity for managers and leaders throughout a health care system to learn from each other, and to spread employee engagement best practices system wide.

Create a forum for sharing lessons learned from successful and unsuccessful efforts.

- Schedule time for formal, routine collaboration across departments and locations.
- Engage cross-functional improvement teams from across the enterprise. To be truly cross-functional, there must be representation from managers and leaders across the organization.

Use a system improvement model to standardize language and accelerate adoption.

- Obtain executive leadership buy-in.
- Identify management champions.
- Define the purpose, goals, roles, and responsibilities.
- Routinely discuss the collaborative's efforts at standing meetings.
- Embrace high-reliability principles and commit to continuous process improvement.

Include participation in Learning Collaboratives in job descriptions.

- Provide incentives for participation.
- Recognize managers for contributing knowledge gains – both through success and failure.

Codify innovation into a replicable improvement approach.

- Document improvement efforts and processes from the identification of an improvement need through follow-up and monitoring.
- Draft procedures to capture and reapply successful process improvement efforts.
- Recognize and reward innovation and the adoption of evidence-based strategies.

Strategic Engagement Assessments

Routine assessment of employee engagement, nursing excellence, physician engagement and alignment, resilience, diversity, well-being, and safety culture provide a straightforward and consistent process for interpreting data, identifying strengths and concerns, setting priorities for improvement, and measuring progress.

Note: Many of these engagement survey initiatives (i.e., nursing excellence, resilience, and safety culture) can be streamlined into one single survey administration to avoid survey fatigue and increase response rates.

Assess employee engagement.

- An engaged workforce drives sustainable excellence. Individuals who feel connected to the mission and vision of the organization, supported by their managers, and appreciated by their colleagues tend to be more engaged than those who lack such attachments.
- Because every element of the care experience is delivered to the patient through the workforce, investing in building an engaged, high-performing workforce is crucial to the delivery of high-caliber care and facilitates optimizing other key performance metrics across experience, quality, and finance.
- Engagement data identifies targets for investment and improvement that resonate across patient experience, workforce, safety, operational, and clinical outcomes.
- Ensuring employees' needs are met is foundational to establishing a culture of engagement.
- It is important to have a clear understanding of key drivers that impact employees' work environment (e.g., relationships with managers, access to tools and resources, and opportunities for personal development).
- Use a comprehensive, continuous approach to collecting and acting upon employee culture and engagement data. The measurement tool should have a firm theoretical and empirical basis.
- Results of any employee engagement analysis should capture:
 - An outcome-based engagement metric
 - A work-unit segmentation metric identifying which units need the most intervention
 - A management metric that identifies which managers need assistance or coaching in order to effectively drive improvement for their teams

Assess nursing excellence.

- Nurse retention is top of mind as organizations seek to maintain institutional knowledge, ensure consistency in care delivery, and promote patient experience and loyalty.
- Nurse disengagement can be costly for an organization because of its impact on nursing turnover, patient safety, and patient experience.

- Including nursing-specific measures on the employee engagement survey can help organizations drive nurse engagement, improve performance, and facilitate the Magnet Recognition Program® application process.
- Insights gathered from the segmentation of RN scores can have implications not just for nurse engagement and retention, but also for interventions to drive safety, patient experience, and reputation.

Assess physician engagement and alignment.

- Strong physician engagement and alignment can lead to better patient experiences and quality of patient care. Conversely, when physicians leave, become disengaged, or are not aligned with the organization's mission, vision, and values, the impact can be felt throughout the care delivery process.
 - Engagement measures physicians' appraisal of their work environment, emotional experiences, and attachment to the workplace.
 - A highly engaged physician may be content with day-to-day, patient-facing activities, but resisting organizational change and preventing his department from attaining key goals. This describes an engaged physician who is not aligned with his organization.
 - Alignment measures the extent to which a physician feels a strong partnership or connection with the organization's leadership.
- By measuring both engagement and alignment, organizations gain insight into if your physicians are likely to stay, as well as if they will support your strategic initiatives. Organizations that meaningfully engage and collaborate with physicians and physician leadership are on the most direct path to deliver exceptional patient experiences and outcomes.

Assess resilience.

- Resilience metrics can act as an early warning sign for teams that are at risk of burnout.
- Resilience scores assist organizations in determining which groups may need support both at and away from work.
- Resilience is comprised of two major components: activation and decompression.
 - Activation is centered on the ability to connect one's work with meaning and a sense of purpose, and the ability to treat patients as individuals.
 - Decompression is centered on the ability to disconnect—to free one's mind from work stresses and enjoy personal time.
- To minimize burnout and build caregiver resilience, identify sources of avoidable stress and distress by ensuring the workforce has the resources and support needed to deliver the safest, highest quality care.

Assess diversity.

- As health care leaders strive to improve employee engagement, many organizations are expanding their efforts to foster diverse and inclusive work environments.

- Each organization is different; there are variations regarding which employees may face marginalization in the workforce and how this would manifest.
- Conducting an overall assessment of diversity-based issues gives a general understanding of how much of an impact an employee's background has on their daily work lives.
- It is important to understand diversity-related organization, manager, and employee dynamics such as:
 - This organization values employees from different backgrounds
 - This organization demonstrates a commitment to workplace diversity
 - All employees have an equal opportunity for promotion regardless of their background
 - My coworkers value individuals with different backgrounds
 - The person I report to treats all employees equally regardless of their background
 - Administration of diversity-based measures over time can identify emerging patterns of marginalization that may warrant action.

Assess well-being.

- Many organizations have started to focus on assessing employee and provider health and wellness from the more holistic standpoint of overall well-being.
- At a high level, this overarching concept of well-being includes multiple facets of an individual's life: emotional and physical health, social support and personal connections, financial security, and occupational fulfillment.
- Individuals who rate high on well-being are thought to be more engaged in their work, demonstrate more commitment to organizations that support them, are more resistant to burnout, and have the personal tools necessary to cope with being involved in medical errors, adverse events, or other traumatic experiences that personally impact members of the healthcare industry.
- Individual-level well-being measures can be used to gauge the impact of other workplace dynamics, such as organizational culture, leadership changes, external events, etc., on high-level measures of the overall quality of life of employees. Taken together, these components reflect a state of being that is beyond both engagement and traditional approaches of employee wellness.

Assess safety culture.

- Organizations are best positioned to develop a high-performing workforce when they build a culture of safety and adopt safe processes.
- To align the organization around a mission to achieve Zero Harm, one of the first steps is to assess care provider feedback, attitudes, and perceptions related to patient safety.
- Direct feedback from those responsible for delivering care informs the level of organizational focus needed to make safety a top priority across the organization.
- Assessing safety culture at the organization and work unit levels supports awareness around patient safety issues, identifies strengths and concerns, and evaluates the impact of patient safety interventions and performance over time.

Continuous Listening

In this challenging environment, the risk of caregiver burnout and turnover continues to threaten morale, retention, and profitability. Giving a voice to caregivers through purposeful and continuous listening empowers people leaders to mitigate these risks in real time, demonstrates respect for the workforce, and creates an environment of trust. Monitor workforce trends using culture and engagement surveys, stay and exit interviews, lifecycle and pulse surveys. Use the information to identify areas to target improvement efforts.

Conduct annual safety culture and engagement surveys.

- Have senior leaders promote participation and explain why the surveys are conducted and how the results will be used.
- Use the results to inform engagement and culture improvement strategies based on workforce readiness for change, leadership development opportunities, and coaching and readiness planning for leaders and teams with low engagement.
- Include measures of burnout and address resilience if results indicate high risk.
- Be transparent about results. Share the findings with all providers and employees.

Conduct Stay Interviews.

- Stay Interviews are structured, one-on-one discussions led by a manager or other leader to learn ways to strengthen an employee's engagement and retention and to build trust.
- These should be held separately from annual reviews with a sole focus on what leadership can do for the employee or provider.
- There are several key questions for conducting a Stay Interview. Each question has additional probing questions to get the most out of the employee's feedback.
 1. What do you look forward to about your work?
 - Give me an example.
 - Tell me more about...
 - Who do you look forward to working with the most?
 2. What are you learning here, and what do you want to learn?
 - Which other jobs here look attractive to you?
 - What skills do you think are required for those jobs?
 - What skills would you have to build to attain your goals?
 3. Why do you stay here?
 - Tell me more about why that is so important to you.
 - Is that the only reason you stay, or are there others?
 - If you narrowed your reasons to stay to just one, what would it be?
 4. When was the last time you thought about leaving us, and what prompted it?
 - Tell me more about how that happened. Who said what?
 - What's the single best thing I can do to make that better for you?
 - How important is that to you now on a 1-10 scale?

5. What can I do to make your job better for you?
 - Do I tell you when you do something well?
 - Do I say and do things to help you do your job better?
 - What are three ways I can be a better manager for you?

Conduct Exit Interviews.

- Although Exit Interviews do not improve the retention of that employee, they inform opportunities to improve, including improvements in how engaged and valued employees feel.
- Explain that the purpose of the interview is to help the organization improve its processes and retain its valuable employees.
- Encourage employees to share the reasons why they are leaving. There are controllable reasons employers can address with improvement initiatives: insufficient training, no opportunity for advancement, feeling underappreciated, unfair treatment, or inappropriate distribution of tasks.
- Ask how the organization could be a better place to work.

Conduct Lifecycle Surveys.

- **Entrance surveys** provide a review of the job selection and hiring processes. Ideally, these surveys are administered within the first seven days of employment.
- **Onboarding surveys** provide data about how the experience of new employees changes over time. Research shows proper onboarding leads to more motivated and effective employees.
- **Exit surveys** focus on obtaining specific information about why individuals are leaving the organization. Ideally, data are used in tandem with qualitative information gathered via live and dynamic exit interviews.

Conduct Pulse Surveys.

- Complement in-depth culture assessments with real-time continuous measurement to understand the unique stressors that impact nurses, physicians, and employees. Doing so provides insights for building an engaged, resilient workforce.
- Ideal for gauging progress to goal on a defined action area.
- Target a smaller subset of units or a specific demographic group rather than surveying the entire organization.
- Create shorter surveys focused on a specific topic of interest.
- Gain a deeper understanding of key factors emerging from an annual culture assessment.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous Process Improvement

Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) is the ongoing effort to improve services by increasing the quality of those services or by reducing unnecessary or redundant steps. It supports both patient-centricity and employee engagement.

- It reflects a high level of interest in meeting patient needs and for providing a work environment that improves the delivery of compassionate, patient-centric care.
- Employees who experience the inherent rewards of directly or indirectly reducing patient suffering can take pride that their work is meaningful.

CPI is the core principle behind every structured improvement model, such as the commonly recognized Lean, Six Sigma, Kaizen, and Robust Process Improvement models. It involves the adoption of a structured process for ongoing assessment and improvement.

Care delivery is incredibly dynamic. Science, technology, equipment, personnel, and patient needs are constantly changing. Even organizations with high levels of performance across all metrics can only be sure of performance excellence through ongoing monitoring—a key component for continuous improvement. In fact, to become a high-reliability organization, you must develop a preoccupation with failure and conduct routine and ongoing self-assessment.

Everyone has room for improvement. Engaging in CPI indicates there is a formal program for routine self-assessment, and there are dedicated resources to identify areas of under-performance and to implement improvement plans. CPI processes allow an organization to identify low quality or care problems before safety events or harm can occur.

Adopt a formal, proven method for continuous improvement, such as (in alphabetical order):

- Kaizen
- Lean
- Robust Process Improvement
- Six Sigma

Implement continuous improvement across all locations in a system.

- This supports the Learning Collaborative approach for standardizing best practices.

Include all stages of a continuous improvement approach.

- Collect data to assess the quality of the patient experience and workforce experience.
- **VIDEO:** [Elements of a Data Strategy](#)
- **VIDEO:** [Selecting a Key Performance Indicator](#)
- **VIDEO:** [Identify Barriers to Success](#)

Include metrics reflecting the mission and values statements in a balanced scorecard for routine executive review.

- **VIDEO:** [Set the Right Goals](#)
- An improvement strategy is part of a broader data strategy and must align with organizational goals.
- Select a key performance indicator (KPI) that reflects organizational goals for the workforce experience.
- Set goals that directly improve the KPI.
- Set goals based on their unique performance.
- Identify key drivers and leading indicators reflecting the process or behavioral changes being targeted, and track performance on those indicators with routine board-level reviews.
- Routinely review data trends with executive leaders and board members.

Identify areas of low or poor performance.

- Conduct root cause analyses to identify the underlying process or human factors.
- Focus your efforts on two or three priority initiatives.
- **VIDEO:** [Focus Your Efforts](#)

Adopt a High Reliability operating system.

- Focus on the process failures and aim to build processes that overcome the tendency for human error.
- Employ cross-functional improvement teams with representation from physicians, other practitioners, nurses, reception, billing, technicians, human resources, and other staff.
- Define action plans with roles, responsibilities, and deadlines.
- Identify outcome measures for continuous tracking to assess the success and sustainability of the improvement plan.

Address obstacles and standardize best practices across the enterprise.

- Take a closer look at the obstacles impeding improvement and identify ways to eradicate or get around them.
- CPI is part of an overall data strategy. In addition to identifying and improving on areas of underperformance, it informs the identification of existing best practices.
- Standardize the adoption of best practices within a facility and system wide.

SUSTAINABILITY

Change Readiness

Improvement planning is often the first step in the process of driving change. It includes reviewing engagement data, selecting specific metrics of focus, setting achievement goals, and implementing strategies for reaching those goals and improving performance on the chosen metrics. Assessing change readiness improves understanding of the organizational context driving readiness for change.

Address change readiness issues.

- Ask questions such as:
 - Are senior leaders prepared to invest their time and energy in this effort on an ongoing basis?
 - Is the broader management team capable of understanding the value of improving culture, and do they have the associated skill set to execute and sustain cultural initiatives?
 - Are dedicated resources available to manage change, either within the organization or through external consultants?
 - What is the past experience of the organization with implementing large-scale change, and how may those previous experiences impact this initiative?
 - Is there a communications group charged with a communication strategy around change?
 - What listening methods does the organization have (e.g., leadership rounds, town halls)? How is feedback obtained from the front lines?
 - How is change assessed at the organization? What does success look like, and how is it measured?
 - Who is responsible for sustaining change?

Leader Skill Development

Managers are the organizational leaders responsible for empowering their employees, coaching for success, setting clear goals, recognizing achievements, communicating with transparency, listening carefully, providing constructive feedback, and helping employees to feel valued. They are essential to the health of the culture and the success of the organization.

It is important to properly enable these leaders to understand their team's culture/current functioning and their role in creating/reinforcing that culture. It is also essential to provide them with the necessary education and coaching to improve their skills and shape a culture that supports their goals.

Support managers in developing effective management skills.

- Many new managers are promoted based upon technical expertise, but this alone will not enable their success in this new and different role.
- Is the broader management team capable of understanding the value of improving culture, and do they have the associated skill set to execute and sustain cultural initiatives?
- It is critical that new managers are educated and supported with new manager training on basic skills (e.g., delegation, communication, teamwork, coaching, meeting management).
- In addition to targeted 1:1 coaching, cohorts of managers may be identified for training on specific management skills or leadership competencies. These groups can be monitored for progress that can be attributed, at least in part, to the training investment.

Prepare managers for success with a defined set of competencies.

- Consider the following questions:
 - How do you prepare your future leaders (and new leaders) for success?
 - Do you have a defined set of essential leader skills and competencies that leaders are trained on and coached to?
 - Are you proactive in supporting new leaders, or do they only get support when they start failing?
 - Do you see signs of burnout among new leaders (high activation/low decompression)?
 - Is your leadership team consistent in their level of competency in key leader skills that are essential to the business?

Establish Leadership Development Institutes.

- Best practice organizations regularly bring their leaders together for group learning and networking in sessions, commonly known as Leader Development Institutes (LDIs).
- LDI sessions provide leaders with the opportunity to:
 - Hear a unified message from their executive leadership.
 - Receive ongoing leadership skill refinement in areas like leading change, coaching skills, and emotional intelligence, etc.

- Learn from one another's challenges and successes. This strengthens the collective knowledge base and increases the cohesiveness of the leadership team.

Rewards and Recognition Programs

Rewards and recognition programs are structured systems that provide incentives to employees to meet or exceed behavioral standards. Rewards are typically monetary in nature, whereas recognition generally provides a psychological or emotional lift. They are often combined into one program, but the two components meet different needs and are addressed in different ways.

Caregivers experience a steady stream of stressors and rewards. When stress compounds unmitigated, it takes a toll on wellness, leaving them emotionally exhausted and struggling to find a sense of meaning and accomplishment. This leads to burnout, which is highly prevalent among caregivers and poses a significant threat to safe, high-quality patient care. Rewards and recognition programs help ensure the stressors are balanced with a sense of value and purpose.

Rewards and recognition programs are crucial for strong safety cultures and a highly engaged workforce. Amplifying the rewards of the work and creating opportunities for interaction through celebration can improve collegiality and enhance resilience.

Rewards and recognition programs should be developed and managed by a cross-functional team comprised of nurses, physicians, nonclinical operational leaders, human resources, organizational development personnel, and marketing and communications professionals.

Align rewards and recognition with the facility's mission, vision, and values.

- Connect recognition and incentives to expected behaviors.
- Leverage patient comments for individual and team success stories.
- Write notes to employees identified in the survey comments.
- Share positive feedback during daily huddles, department meetings, and leader rounds.
- Publish positive comments in newsletters, intranet communications, and on bulletin boards dedicated to a recognition process.
- Make recognition personal, specific, meaningful, and timely.
- Publicly acknowledge accomplishments, including innovation.
- Engage the team in peer recognition, such as a nomination process for awards or daily huddle kudos.
- Include notes in staff members' personnel files so they may be formally recognized during the performance review process.
- Celebrate with food and fun.
- **VIDEO:** [Recognizing Excellence](#)

Standards of Behavior

Culture is shaped by how the providers and staff behave toward patients and colleagues across the organization. The resulting environment influences patient, workforce, and operational outcomes—including safety, quality, and patient experience. Formally drafted behavior and service standards set the tone for culture and are essential to upholding accountability.

For example, without standards of behavior, it is possible for unhealthy interpersonal dynamics to develop within teams (e.g., competitiveness, large authority gradients, bullying). When these concerns are not addressed, both employee engagement and patient experience will suffer. We will see a lack of focus (i.e., if we are in “survival or “self-protection” mode we are not focused on the patient, nor are we likely to be fully situationally aware), less stability (i.e., more absenteeism and turnover), and more disruption (i.e., employee relations issues and manager time focused on problem solving rather than being future-focused).

Establish clear behavior expectations.

- Align all standards of behavior with the organization’s mission, vision, and values statements.
- All standards must be accessible and understandable by all staff.
- Behavior standards should be universal across the enterprise.
- Include service expectations for phone, email, text, and in-person communication.
- Include behavioral expectations for attending daily huddles, speaking up for safety, and reporting safety events (including near misses).
- Include behavioral expectations for professional courtesy and staff interactions.
- A clear set of manager expectations must exist to ensure consistent training, monitoring, and accountability for standards—especially relative to staff management and discipline, and communication.
- **VIDEO:** [Set Specific Behavior Standards](#)

Train employees and providers.

- Set the tone for the importance of service in new employee orientation. Help new employees understand the importance service holds in your organization.
- Conduct Service Behavior Training on a regular basis. Refer staff who are not upholding service standards for additional training.
- Develop a formal training program:
 - Apply a project management process to communicate action items, responsibilities, and deadlines, and to track progress.
 - Define trainer criteria and identify trainers.
 - Train the trainers.
 - Design interdisciplinary learning sessions.
 - Include attendees from various departments and disciplines at each training, such as physicians, care providers, nurses, medical assistants, registrars, schedulers, and billing.

- Set a schedule of training offerings to ensure everyone can attend both modules. Create a calendar.
- Track attendance.
- Embed training in orientations for new employees and in leadership training.
- Have senior leaders initiate trainings with a 15-minute presentation about the purpose, including why service behaviors matter for our patients and colleagues.
- Develop a communication plan to distribute the message about the training and its purpose (who, what, when, where, and why) enterprise wide using all mediums for communication at your disposal.
- Involve marketing to develop materials that will build enthusiasm for the effort.
- Provide mandatory annual courses.
- Assess the effectiveness of the training. Can front-line employees describe the organization's behavior standards and why they are important?
- Promote the standards on an ongoing basis.
- Mention behavioral expectations during daily huddles.
- Use multiple modes of communication to share reminders and prompts (e.g., intranet posts and newsletters).
- **VIDEO:** [Communicate the Why](#)
- **VIDEO:** [Model Expected Behaviors](#)

Hold everyone accountable for behavior and service standards.

- Build expectations into job descriptions and annual reviews
- Recognize and reward service excellence.
- Discuss service behaviors during leader rounds on staff.
- Conduct observations and discuss findings. Create an observation checklist.
- Provide service behavior reminders in follow-up communications (e.g., in newsletters and intranet posts).
- Measure provider and employee compliance.
- Include an evaluation of behavior and service standards in provider and employee annual performance reviews.
- Use an Appreciative Inquiry approach—empower staff to identify successful solutions to known issues.
- Present service standards as guidelines to achieve desired outcomes for each patient. This makes the connection between standards and the mission of health care.
- Immediately address any concerns about bullying, rudeness, or unprofessional behavior that may undermine how well employees work together.

Talent Strategy

The following key touchpoints for intervention in the talent lifecycle are most relevant to the work of driving toward and sustaining a culture of safety, quality, patient-centricity, and employee engagement. The elements below are interrelated and should be addressed concurrently as part of the overall talent management strategic plan.

Attract talent.

- Ask questions such as:
 - What is the current view of the organization in the labor market? How do we compare to our competitors in the eyes of potential candidates? How are we monitoring this?
 - What efforts are we making to define and create our narrative as an employer that is aligned with our mission, identity, and patient promise?
 - What is the recruiting experience like for potential candidates? How do they find us, or how do we find them? What does that first touchpoint feel like and what does it say about us?

Select talent.

- Ask questions such as:
 - Beyond “fit,” or an ability to fill the minimum requirements of the role, what are the non-negotiables that will ensure we select those that align with our vision for safe, high-quality, patient-centered care?
 - Have we defined the “candidate experience” and what we want that to be/feel like?
 - How are we building engagement during the selection process? Are we using messaging, mentors, and making connections to our senior leadership, coworkers, and culture?

Orient talent.

- Ask questions such as:
 - What is the content of the orientation? Is it focused on true cultural onboarding, or policy and form submission?
 - How would a newly oriented employee describe the “vibe” of the day (e.g., interactive and engaging, long and tedious, confusing)? How would you want them to describe it?
 - Is there a formal orientation for work-units that includes essential engagement elements of welcoming, valuing the person, and building connections and identity? How are leaders supported in making this happen in their departments? How do we evaluate the quality of the unit-level orientation experience?

Engage talent.

- Ask questions such as:
 - What touchpoints exist with new hires after the orientation?

- How is the safety, quality, patient experience narrative woven into the touchpoints?
- How do we address early warning signs of disengagement or role mismatch?

Grow talent.

- Ask questions such as:
 - Do scores on your employee culture and engagement survey consistently score low (either organization-wide or for specific groups) for career development items? Do these scores correspond with areas with high turnover rates?
 - If you conduct exit interviews, do you hear people talk about development opportunities as a contributing factor to their resignation?
 - Do you think the average employee has a clear idea of what their possible career paths could look like?

Retain talent.

- Ask questions such as:
 - Does the organization engage in workforce planning activities to predict future needs and make proactive adjustments to the talent strategy?
 - Does the organization conduct “stay interviews” with employees in key roles or in departments that are expected to grow/be of high future value? How do you act on that feedback?
 - Are leaders conducting regular 1:1 meetings with their direct reports? Do these meetings focus (at least in part) on how the employee is feeling overall about their employment situation, their goals, challenges, and current level of engagement? Are leaders empowered to “raise a red flag” when a strong performer shows signs of intent to leave and supported in proactively retaining that person?