

warmer helped save time from previously having to either walk a longer distance to get the item or borrow the equipment from other hospital units. This improved work efficiency and staff satisfaction. One idea to volunteer as a unit project to donate school supplies to children in need was a huge success, with both managers and staff members verbalizing feeling good about what they accomplished. This showed just how effective the idea board is in encouraging staff collaboration and working together as a team to achieve goals.

Six months after the idea board was implemented, there were approximately 40 ideas posted on the board, 70% of the ideas were implemented, and management noted an increase in staff engagement due to the quality improvements made on the unit. To capture the board's impact, an anonymous survey was provided to staff members that simply asked what they found to be positive about the idea board and what they didn't like about it. Twenty nurses and five UAP completed the survey and then participated in an informal discussion with the nurse manager about what they liked or didn't like about the idea board. Positive effects noted included staff ownership of and recognition for ideas, enhanced team building and collaboration, increased engagement, and improved unit processes. All 25 participants verbalized positive comments; only two negative comments were made. (See *Sample comments*.) Because most comments were positive, it was decided that the idea board should be implemented on all hospital units. The manager who first introduced the idea board provided direction to the managers of the

Sample comments

Positive staff comments

- I can put an idea down anonymously and not feel threatened if someone doesn't agree with my idea.
- We have input in what we do.
- We can see what we've accomplished.
- The idea is acknowledged, and we can follow where we are with the implementation of our idea.
- Everyone feels free to give ideas and it's nice to see that we're getting things done on the unit.

Negative staff comments

- Some equipment requests take a long time since they have to go through a capital budget request.
- Some classes that have been requested were out of the hands of the manager.

other hospital units on how to implement the board.

ENGAGE

An ENGAGE mnemonic was created and shared with all of the hospital unit managers to help those utilizing the idea board reap the benefits of frontline nurse engagement:

- Empowerment
- Nursing support
- Gap identification
- Accountability for change
- Goals
- Excellence in performance.

Empowerment. Frontline staff members can positively impact both staff and patient satisfaction and patient outcomes. Nurse leaders can empower frontline nurses to see their contributions as being important to the unit's improvement processes. A vital nurse leader role is creating empowered teams, which, in turn, can impact morale, productivity, retention, and the quality and safety of care.⁵

Nursing support. Support from nursing leadership is crucial to empower frontline nursing staff. Nurses feel that their managers should promote unity and team

spirit, be visible and approachable, and have regular contact with them to listen to their opinions.⁶ Frontline nurses also appreciate leaders who form collegial relationships with staff.⁷

Gap identification. It's necessary to identify and address gaps in nursing practice. Nurse leaders are often aware of these gaps and must be able to communicate them to frontline staff. For instance, organizational pressure to increase productivity places the focus of nursing on cost-effectiveness and external accountability, which may leave nurses feeling like they don't have the autonomy to influence quality of care and patient satisfaction issues.⁶

Accountability. Nurse leaders need to ensure that all employees are held accountable for their actions and role in adhering to practice guidelines and professional standards. Each person working in healthcare is held accountable as a staff member, as a member of a team, and as an employee of the organization. Staff members are accountable for speaking up and advocating for needed improvements. Organizations that have a culture of

accountability foster employees who are credible to both themselves and each other.⁸

Goals. The World Health Organization, The Joint Commission, the National League for Nursing, and the ANA are among a sample of organizations with the goal of ensuring competent, safe, and quality care for patients, families, and communities. The Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals are intended to improve patient safety by both identifying healthcare problems and finding solutions to them.⁹ Nurse leaders must ensure that frontline staff members have the resources they need to provide safe, competent care to all.

Excellence. The Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey measures patients' perceptions of the care they received while at the hospital.¹⁰ It's the goal of nursing staff on each unit to receive excellent patient satisfaction scores on the HCAHPS survey. Managers play an instrumental role in disseminating survey results to frontline nurses and making changes to improve scores.

Raising our voices

Frontline nursing staff members have enormous potential to lead substantial quality improvement efforts. The idea board empowers staff members and recognizes their contributions, thus creating a positive work environment. Through the implementation of best practice initiatives, nurse leaders can help engage our most precious resource—frontline staff—and address the many challenges they face. The idea board gives employees a voice and shows them that the management team is listening, with the ultimate benefit of improving nursing practice and transforming patient care. **NMI**

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