



By Modern Healthcare Custom Media

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT THROUGH NEXT-LEVEL HEALTHCARE COACHING

As healthcare organizations shift their focus to improving the patient experience, many industry leaders have turned to specialized business coaches to improve clinical quality, patient perception of care and profitability. Through partnering with Studer Group, organizations work to execute a framework called Evidence-Based Leadership[®] (EBL) that uses personalized coaching to align organizational goals, behaviors and processes in a way that moves and sustains results.

Organizations that adopt EBL often see immediate improvements in patient experience results, employee and physician engagement, HCAHPS scores and other measures. But initial success in this arena doesn't always translate to lasting success. No industry is changing faster than healthcare, and this change will continue apace. Business coaching should be a long-term relationship that keeps an organization positioned to sustain lasting, positive results.

THE KEY TO MAINTAINING SUCCESS OVER TIME

Looking back at the history of most healthcare systems, hospitals and medical practices, one truth stands out: Business today looks nothing like it did a decade ago. It has grown and evolved in many ways. Organizations may have extended their offerings within a particular service line, expanded the number of physical locations in their network, or adopted new technology. One thing is certain, managing organizational culture through transitions like these is crucial for establishing and maintaining performance gains achieved through initial coaching relationships.

“You know, change is difficult, and sometimes short-term change takes longer [than we might like], but we continue to see a positive trend,” says Warner Thomas, president and CEO of Ochsner Health System, an 11-hospital system based in Southeast Louisiana. “We’ve been working with the Studer Group for about 18 months, and we’re seeing improvement in our safety scores. It’s an ongoing process, but we’re positive about the initial results.”

The healthcare industry is never static, and organizations can fall into the trap of believing their initial positive results from coaching will continue unabated for years to come. In truth, evidence-based management should be viewed as a continuous improvement process. It is hard to maintain a high level of staff engagement over the long term.

The three-year mark of the coaching relationship can represent an important turning point at which an organization either commits to ongoing coaching and continues on an arc of high achievement, or curtails its coaching relationship and sees its curve turn downward over time. Studer Group coaches help leaders stay focused on incremental changes that keep people motivated on an ongoing basis.



Warner Thomas
President & CEO Of Ochsner Health System

TOOLS FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT GAINS

No healthcare organization ever reaches a perfect state of clinical quality, patient care and profitability. Continuous improvement is a journey that requires constant learning and innovation. Studer Group coaches bring their partners the right tools at the right time to create a learning environment that delivers sustained improvement gains over many years.

From high-level business insights to technology, no organization should waste time reinventing the wheel. Studer Group maintains relationships with experts who

are constantly innovating practices and advancing success. Over the long term, coaches deliver this business insight so new tactics can be implemented to drive growth, patient satisfaction and profitability.

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“I’ve always had the philosophy that in order for us to learn, evolve and develop as an organization, we need to seek other people who are actually advancing around the country,” says John Singerling, president of Palmetto Health System, an eight-hospital system in South Carolina. “That’s one of the things we’ve loved about the Studer Group. They have relationships with so many people all over the country, and they’re constantly refining the practices and the policies and the tactics that we need to deploy.”

DRIVING IMPROVEMENT RESULTS OVER THE LONG TERM

At a certain point in its EBL journey, an organization will reach a point when process improvements become second nature and are woven into the fabric of an organization's culture. However, occurrences such as staff turnover can erode these gains when employees unfamiliar with EBL ignore or undermine continuous improvement efforts. As organizational or department leadership changes occur, Studer Group coaches work to ensure that previously learned EBL practices are implemented consistently. This ongoing coaching ensures the positive results gained in the first few years of the coaching relationship do not diminish.

"I have always been a fan of saying that the coaching relationship is not a three-year engagement and it's done," Singerling says. "It will look much different in year three than it looked in year one, and for us it will look a lot different in year ten. As an example, in our physician practice network, if our results are not what our patients expect, we pull in the Studer Group and say we need focused coaching there."

For Palmetto Health System, Studer Group coaches provided specific attention to the physician practice network. Coaches were able to drive improvements in a nimble and consistent manner by re-aligning goals and absolute accountability to ensure individuals were executing every time. As a result, the organization was able to maintain its initial quality gains and continue on a path toward even higher achievement.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT FOR THE FUTURE

Healthcare managers must continually focus on creating both immediate growth and sustainable future gains. Achieving these dual objectives requires concentrating on staff engagement. Studer Group coaching facilitates employee commitment to EBL to deliver an outstanding patient experience now and long into the future.

“Engagement is the key to everything,” says Janice Skot, president and CEO of Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre, a 375-bed hospital in Barrie, Ontario. “If you have an engaged employee workforce, an engaged medical staff, your patients are going to receive higher quality care. Our coaching relationship with Studer Group Canada remains very strong. They coach all of our leaders to become more closely connected with purpose in the patients who are entrusted to us. I’m a very different leader today than I was five years ago.”

Skot recognizes that transformational change requires a decade or more of learning, growth and coaching. Now several years into its relationship with Studer Group Canada, Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre has seen an incremental, sustainable increase in staff engagement to benefit patients, but, Skot says, “There’s still lots of work to do. I’m quite confident [the ongoing coaching] will lead to quality and safety outcomes for our patients [over the long term.]”



Janice M. Skot
President and CEO of Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre

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HEALTHCARE COACHING: A NEXT- LEVEL COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

Change in any organization is difficult. In healthcare it is, perhaps, even harder.

Without a sustainable approach to managing change, some organizations abandon coaching once a short-term change yields results. They feel once they “get started” on a change path, everything will continue on course. Unfortunately, that’s not the case.

In reality, people are eager to abandon change and return to the status quo at the first opportunity. Studer Group coaches help organizations commit to success for the long term. After they have successfully implemented a system through the initial changeover to EBL, they stay committed to keeping organizations on track by providing focused help where needed and delivering new tools and tactics to implement as they’re developed.

“For me, having a Studer Group coach has been very rewarding,” says Thomas, the President and CEO of Ochsner. “I think it’s a very open and transparent relationship so we can be honest with each other. The coaches are very open to feedback on how they can get better, and they provide feedback to me, so it’s really been a very symbiotic, positive relationship for both of us.”

A recipient of the 2010 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, Studer Group, a Huron Healthcare solution, is an outcomes-based healthcare performance improvement firm that works with healthcare organizations in the United States, Canada, and beyond, teaching them how to achieve, sustain, and accelerate exceptional clinical, operational, and financial results. Working together, they help to get the foundation right so organizations can build a sustainable culture that promotes accountability, fosters innovation, and consistently delivers a great patient experience and the best quality outcomes over time.

To learn more about Studer Group visit StuderGroup.com.

