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"It's not over until the fat lady sings": Fine tuning your organization's approach to healthcare in chaos

Written by Z. Colette Edwards, MD, MBA, Founder, Insight MD | October 13, 2014

It's going to be messy and dramatic, with lots of high and low notes. You're probably going to want an intermission. While it may feel like the latest opera, it's healthcare in 2014 and beyond. The reality is that the fat lady will continue to sing. The upside is that she'll have many more options to get healthier and expand her repertoire.

The only thing that is certain is that no one knows exactly how the plot will unfold. With so many moving parts in the healthcare arena, following some basic strategies and principles will help you navigate through (and sometimes improvise) what is shaping up to be a very complex plot line.

Knowing the score and your place within in

As your organization moves through the process of change, consider framing those changes through the lens of Prochaska's "Innovate to Change" model:

Stage 1: Pre-contemplation. Not ready for change; overestimate the cons and underestimate the potential benefits.

Stage 2: Contemplation. Getting ready and intending to make a change within the next six months or so; able to better envision the desired change and the benefits which will accrue.

Stage 3: Preparation. Ready and typically inspired to make the change within the next 30 days; small steps taken to lay the groundwork and support the change.

Stage 4: Action. Actions taken and change happens; need to reinforce commitment, celebrate successes, and set up techniques to help avoid moving back into old habits.

Stage 5: Maintenance. Change has taken place; need to reinforce actions which will further solidify new behaviors, strengthen new habits and identify red flag warnings of triggers that may signal slippage.

Change is hard. Knowing where you are in the overall process is essential to both limiting frustration and celebrating incremental successes. Organizations wishing to not only survive but thrive should take a few pages from the "Innovate to Succeed" playbook. This includes the following:

- Taking calculated risks and "failing fast" in an efficient and cost-effective way;
- Leveraging the lessons learned from successes and applying them in an iterative fashion;
- Staying hungry enough to avoid complacency;
- Continuously finding ways to delight customers, thereby creating brand loyalty;

- Valuing data and feedback loops as essential tools to identify opportunities, anticipate challenges and build an evidence-based culture;
- Captivating audiences and cultivating connections through storytelling and powerful imagery;
- Talking less and listening more;
- Connecting employees to a higher mission — one that instills a passion for delivering exceptional results every day;
- Adopting best practices and tapping knowledge from other leaders and industry sectors; and
- Putting the right people in the right seats at the right time.

Conducting greater outcomes through the change

Here are five steps that will fine tune your orchestra's performance, inspire greater execution and yield bottom line results:

- 1. Allocate "think time."** Take a long, hard, reflective look at your organization. This invaluable process is far too often a low- or no-priority activity.
- 2. Assess who you really are as an organization.** What do you aspire to be and create? Then develop programs and initiatives that reinforce that aspiration.
- 3. Do a top-to-bottom evaluation of processes.** Map out workflows, policies and procedures, as well as how different parts of the organization integrate or should integrate.
- 4. Be "all-in."** Achieving long-term, sustainable success is not for the faint of heart. It requires stamina, an open mind and unwavering passion to withstand the challenges, pace of change and rapidity of technological (r)evolution that is the new normal.
- 5. Remember who it's all about — the patient/consumer.** If each person in the organization simply started each day with the intention of treating everyone the way they want their family, friends and selves to be treated, the cascading positive impact would be transformative.

The ultimate masterpiece: The golden rule

The "golden rule" is golden for a reason: The ROI is priceless. The fat lady is singing her heart out. It's time to step up to the podium.

"If we can recognize that change and uncertainty are basic principles, we can greet the future and the transformation we are undergoing with the understanding that we do not know enough to be pessimistic." — Hazel Henderson

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