Overcoming Resistance

Description:

This tool provides strategies and a matrix to help deal with resistance to accreditation.

How it can be used:

When preparing for accreditation, there will be some people in every organization who will resist anything new (just because it is new): however, the vast majority of employees who demonstrate a reluctance to engage have legitimate concerns. Use the strategies in this tool to help you be more successful at overcoming resistance.

1. **Seek to understand the root cause of the resistance.**

   Find out what people are most concerned about. Be careful not to label resistance as impediments or barriers. Resistance is really a form of communication as it is exposing people's concerns. Your role is to understand those concerns and take action to validate and inform.

2. **Address personal concerns first.**

   Most organizations justify the need for change by telling their employees all of the wonderful things the change will mean for the organization. But, when faced with a change, people react first with their own concerns: "*What's in it for me*?" "*Does this mean I'll have more work*?"

   Address the personal concerns and focus later on the organizational benefits of accreditation.

3. **Link the changes to other issues that matter to your organization.**

   The need to begin accreditation can be enhanced by linking it to other issues that your organization already cares about – for example, improving the health outcomes of your community. Tie it back to your key strategic priorities or your health plan.

4. **Tap into the human desire to avoid loss or pain.**

   People are more sensitive to loss than to gain. Therefore, rather than telling people only what they stand to gain from the accreditation process, you may have a greater impact by telling them what the organization stands to lose by *not* beginning

5. **Consider how you present the information to different groups.**

   Overcoming resistance to accreditation will be more effective if you work with different groups separately, tailoring the message and the approach to their needs. How you present to leadership (identifying the positive outcomes for the community overall, the value for the cost, etc.) will be different than how you explain accreditation to your staff (the ability to make a difference, the improved outcomes, the enhanced relationships with stakeholders and partners, etc.).

6. **Show how accreditation will make a positive change within *your* organization and *your* community. Show how it is *local*.**

   It is human nature for people to want to disregard issues that aren't close to them. However, if the

situation affects them, then there is a more compelling reason to accept the change and buy-in. Provide concrete examples of exactly how accreditation will positively affect their organization and their community.

7. **Use a variety of approaches to reach different learning styles.**

   Quality improvement is often demonstrated with numbers, results and statistics. However, that approach is only effective for people that respond to facts and figures. Other people process information through an emotional lens; seeing how accreditation and improved care helps their family and friends. Include both types of information so you can appeal to different learners. Combine analytic information with vivid messages that include relevant personal experience.

8. **Be honest about the pros and cons of accreditation**.

   Although this may sound like a contradiction, it is helpful to be able to validate the concerns that people have. For example, a 'con' of accreditation is the extra time it takes to fill out the standards and demonstrate how you comply. Discussing this openly can be helpful to allay the fears of your employees' workloads. But it also gives you the opportunity to frame it a different way. For example, the extra time spent now will reap rewards later as we implement systems to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Give both sides a voice so concerns are addressed.

9. **Demonstrate your own commitment to accreditation.**

   If possible, dedicate someone to the accreditation coordinator position (part- or full-time) to demonstrate your commitment. This will also reduce the workload on others.

10. **Identify and constantly reinforce your organization's priorities.**

    It is the role of the organization's leadership to help people allocate their time appropriately. For example, if a key priority is to improve access to mental health programming, then efforts related to other non-priority areas should be put on the shelf if it compromises the accreditation efforts.

Common forms of resistance and how to combat them		
Complaint	**Root Cause**	**Solution**
"This is just another 'flavor of the month.'"	Many past initiatives have been launched with lots of fanfare and few results or staying power	- Select effective people to be involved and assign them to the key roles in accreditation - Minimize fanfare (hoopla without substance) - Integrate into daily operation of the organization; a review of accreditation efforts should be on every team agenda
"I don't have time…cannot free up resources."	Too many projects/activities in process	- Identify and stop other initiatives that aren't priorities
"This does not apply in my part of the organization."	Misconception about how accreditation works; lack of information about how it applies to the organization	- Highlight that accreditation has been successfully integrated into all types of health organizations - Have team members make presentations to co-workers throughout the organization - Share experiences from other successful organizations - Invite outside speakers to make

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Complaint	**Root Cause**	**Solution**
		presentations to managers and employees
"How is this different from past quality/improvement initiatives?"	Fatigue from multiple quality improvement initiatives	- Explain and demonstrate key differences.
"Does management really believe/support it?"	Lack of confidence that everyone is on board	- Show that leadership is genuinely engaged in the process