



Hospital Wait Times Reduced With SIMPLEX®

Hospital wait times are problem issues and the focus of numerous studies. It has now become a political nightmare with enough visibility to attract renewed provincial and federal funding. This may not be a matter of making further dollar investments in equipment. Increasingly the issue is around the performance of the processes leading up to treatment.

09.11.05 During the summer of 2005, Basadur Applied Creativity (BAC) conducted process improvement projects at the Toronto Sunnybrook Regional Cancer Centre and the Hamilton Juravinski Cancer Centre to address the waiting time prior to radiation treatment. An important part of waiting is the planning time required to prepare a specific plan of treatment for an individual patient. The goal was to speed up the treatment planning process.

The team, with BAC support, applied the SIMPLEX system to the challenge. Creative problem solving sessions led by independent facilitators involved all of the stakeholders. They defined critical challenges, identified and assembled appropriate data, generated creative solutions and implemented the best solutions which reduced wait times the most.

Results and Impacts

For example, at JCC, the Radiation Treatment Planning process, a key contributor to total wait time was reduced from 12.5 days to 7.6 days. This represents a reduction of 39% over a four month period.

Methodology

Basadur Applied Creativity (BAC) has developed a proprietary methodology for applying creativity known as, "THE SIMPLEX SYSTEM". Its use in process improvement (PI) projects with front line staff greatly improves the ability to:

- Assemble quality facts
- Define and select the best opportunities to improve the process
- Create high quality, fresh solutions
- Objectively evaluate and select the best solutions
- Build team commitment to solutions and transfer ownership
- Prepare clear action plans
- Implement changes quickly and effectively
- Continuously improve the process

Participants are surprised at their ability to create novel solutions, reach consensus, and commit to concrete implementation plans.

Involvement

Successful process improvement demands the creative involvement of everyone from start to finish. SIMPLEX uniquely engages participants in interactive, efficient discussion and decision making in team working sessions.

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Key Considerations When Tackling Process Improvement:

Working on the Right Problems

Collecting and analyzing good data is essential and time consuming. Failure to do so can lead teams to solve the wrong problem. SIMPLEX greatly expands the ability to accurately capture, analyze and organize information to make reaching the right decisions obvious.

Removing Roadblocks to Implementation

Implementation roadblocks always emerge. The SIMPLEX methodology empowers participants to work through these roadblocks and maintain enthusiasm and commitment to the solution thus avoiding typical excuses for not taking action.

Quantitative Measurement

The fundamental objective of process improvement is to achieve measurable improvement in quality and efficiency. The team analyzes historical data to help identify the key indicators for benchmarking the impact of the new solutions. Teams are able to track progress, spot critical challenges, create new solutions and implement results continuously.

Independent Implementation Facilitation

The role of an independent implementation facilitator, solely focused on the project process, is extremely important for developing ownership and support from the various participants. Being neutral permits the facilitator to operate outside the content and focus on ensuring input from all the participants, and maintain a high level of objectivity throughout the project.

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Simplification

The team formulates and agrees on high-level, simplified process flow charts and other visual support tools. This helps them identify the most important improvement challenges, fresh solutions and specific metrics to document process improvements. Facilitated discussions are jargon free and in words all team members can understand.

Summary

In this case, SIMPLEX was applied to process improvement in radiation therapy planning to greatly reduce patient waiting times. SIMPLEX makes complex situations simple and aids diverse groups to work together to implement measurable change in a surprisingly short period of time.