



# CLINICAL CONNECTION

Diane Bradley, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, CPHQ, FACHE, FACHCA  
Regional Chief Clinical Officer, **HealthTechS3**

## IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

One of the goals of fast-developing technology has been to improve communication, yet organizations still struggle with communication. Take a moment, and think about the ways we use technology in health care; the EMR to describe patient problems, treatments, plan of care, report service delivery, patient progress or lack thereof, and interdisciplinary communication. Other uses of technology for communication include the use of patient portals, emails, texting, instant messages, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, etc. For this writer, a question that arises for further consideration is whether we are focusing on meeting the needs and expectations of patients and families through our modes of communication.



The January issue of Clinical Connection publicized this writer's frustration with my mother's recent hospital and rehab care. The ubiquitous nature of cell phones is frustrating to generations who did not grow up with the technology, and who relied on landline connection and face-to-face communication. Let me provide a few actual illustrations that you as the reader may relate to. Picture this: you're walking down a hallway in one direction, and you see another person coming directly towards you who is engaged with their cell phone. In order not to collide, you step to the side. Second example, you're in a meeting and you notice many of the committee members looking down at their laps. Of course, you know that they are reading the messages on their phones. Finally, a patient is complaining of pain, knees drawn to their chest

with a grimacing face and teary eyes. Further discussion with the nurse revealed that the patient had pain medication 3 hours ago, and the order was for q4h. When asked what the patient had described, the nurse reported that the husband had communicated the pain, not the patient. With increased questioning, the nurse stated that she did not know what to say to the patient

If we can't solve  
it via email, IM,  
texting, faxing, or  
phone calls, let's  
resort to meeting  
in person.



someecards

to obtain more information. Clearly, education about other questions was in order, yet the lack of communication skills impaired the quality of the service the nurse was trying to deliver. Her productivity was compromised due to the lack of effective communication. No judgment was passed on her ability since she really tried to make this patient comfortable; it was an awesome teaching moment, the kind this writer loves!



## COMMUNICATION CORRELATES WITH PERFORMANCE

If you're familiar with ISO 90-2015, Clause 7.4 applies to communication. Regardless of involvement with the ISO framework, the use of this standard's requirement can apply to any organization.

**7.4 Communication** – the organization shall determine the internal and external communications relevant to the quality management system (e.g. QAPI) including:



- A. On what it will communicate
- B. When to communicate
- C. With whom to communicate
- D. How to communicate

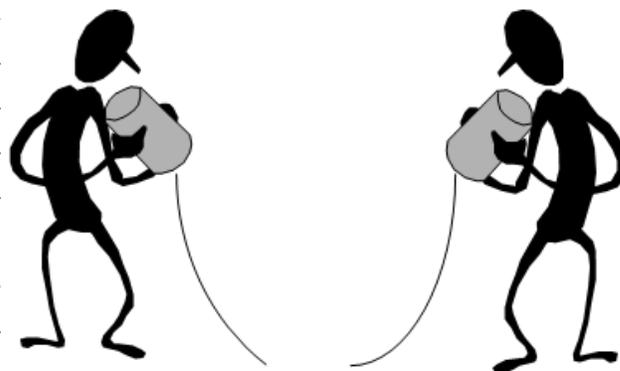
**Potential Results:** Based on the four tenets of internal and external communication, improvement can be realized in productivity since clear communication fosters better understanding of mission, vision, and strategic goals, provides employee empowerment and transparency yielding employee satisfaction, facilitates a culture of quality, patient safety, and improved employee morale, and ultimately each employee holds each other accountable for positive outcomes. Additionally, effective communication minimizes uncertainty within an organization.

## FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The customer environment is continually changing and messaging strategies must be thought about during changing times:

1. Generational differences, particularly millennial's ways
2. Remaining competitive in the ever-changing health care landscape
3. Providing effective and efficient messages
4. Maximizing use of social media outlets to solicit opinions about services
5. Addressing concerns/complaints expeditiously to avoid negativity being shared through social media
6. Encouraging internal bottom-up communication and decision-making
7. Commit to organizational transparency, e.g. voice of the customer tools, FMEA, benchmarking, value stream maps
8. Collaborating with others, both internal and external customers

The development of a communication plan hinges on responses to the above changes. Every person communicates, listens, and understands in different ways. As a child, some of you may remember the game where multiple people hear a whispered message that is passed along the players; the more players, the greater the chance that the message is nowhere near that which the first person passed on. Even face-to-face communication becomes embellished and sometimes misinterpreted because of the way we perceive verbal messages. The outcome oftentimes is that untold hours of productivity are lost due to simple misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. The key to minimizing communication missteps is to use clear, concise, and succinct statements, both for the spoken and written words. Next, keep written anecdotal notes to assure you remember what you have communicated and can remind others what was said, and your clear and concise message should contain actionable items to promote accountability. The next step may be to ask the receiver(s) of your message to summarize what they heard you say in an effort to clarify any misunderstanding. Finally, if your message has not been clear, always use constructive criticism.



Effective communication can have a positive impact on productivity. Productivity increases when employees are satisfied with their jobs, with the level of communication they receive from management, and with being empowered to carry out job responsibilities. Effective communication has a direct impact on morale which ultimately affects productivity. As a manager and leader, it is essential that employees receive regular feedback regarding their performance, and are informed about what is happening within the organization, and what their role is in assuring success. As a result, employees will work harder with you, be your best ambassadors in the community, and retention will be strong. Think about what would make you more satisfied with your job, and provide those same satisfiers to the employees you work with. Even better, ask what you can do to make their jobs easier, more efficient and more satisfying. They will respect you for that inquiry and work harder with you.



**For more information, please contact Diane Bradley:**

Office: 585-671-2212 | Cell: 585-455-3652

Email: [diane.bradley@healthtechs3.com](mailto:diane.bradley@healthtechs3.com)

[www.healthtechs3.com](http://www.healthtechs3.com)

*HealthTechS3 hopes the information contained herein will be informative and helpful on industry topics. However, please note this information is not intended to be definitive. HealthTechS3 and its affiliates expressly disclaim any and all liability, whatsoever, for any such information and for any use made thereof. Recipients of this information should consult original source materials and qualified healthcare regulatory counsel for specific guidance in healthcare reimbursement and regulatory matters.*

HealthTechS3 is an award-winning healthcare consulting and hospital management firm based in Brentwood, Tennessee with clients across the United States. We are dedicated to the goal of improving performance, achieving compliance, reducing costs, and ultimately improving patient care. Leveraging consultants with deep healthcare industry experience, HealthTechS3 provides actionable insights and guidance that supports informed decision making and drives efficiency in operational performance.

**BUILDING LEADERS | TRANSFORMING HOSPITALS | IMPROVING CARE**