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How to set your practice team up for successful change

Use these five steps to help you organize and motivate your practice team to see changes through to completion.



Make sure practice changes take hold

Organization of your practice is crucial to enabling transformation and will help everyone on your team stay focused on the change initiative while still managing daily responsibilities with patients. A [free online module](#) from the AMA's [STEPS Forward™](#) collection provides a framework for organizing your practice for this type of change implementation.

An analysis of your practice should depend on these two basic questions:

- A. Where are we now?
- B. Where are we going?

Use these questions as you follow the five steps to organize your practice for change:

1. Perform a practice assessment. First, investigate your practice's finances, personnel management, productivity and morale, performance metrics, patient engagement, and any other areas of your practice. Learning exactly how your practice team operates in the present will help you design the future.

2. Develop and share a vision for your practice. Now that you've assessed all aspects of your practice, consider where you want to go by asking:

- What are we trying to accomplish, and what are our goals for patient care and work flow?
- What do we want to be known for?
- What do we have to do to be successful as the payment system evolves?

Craft a shared vision of your practice with your team that defines where you are going—articulate this vision and discuss it often. You can even use signs, posters or tag lines to constantly remind your practice team that the entire practice is undergoing change together and moving toward providing more efficient and higher quality care for patients. Keeping this information “front of mind” will help your team stay motivated throughout the process.

3. Designate and train your change team. The change team should consist of three or four individuals who have the interest and aptitude to manage and monitor the change effort. Make sure these leaders have the time and resources available to do this while still meeting their patient care responsibilities.

It is difficult to send the entire team out for Lean or Six Sigma Black Belt training, but you can help train your practice team without expensive and time-consuming external training using the STEPS Forward [starting Lean health care](#) and [change-management](#) modules.

4. Document your progress with a project management approach. Simplistic approaches to project management go a long way toward reaching your goals. A project manager can aid in resource allocation, foster accountability and help everyone on the team appreciate daily progress.

You do not need to invest in expensive project management software. Using a one-year wall calendar to document milestones, responsibilities and resources can help keep the initiative on track and ensure that no one’s time and effort are wasted.

5. Design systematic and sustainable changes. Changes to your practice will not take hold immediately—patience is critical. To be successful in the rapidly changing landscape of the medical world, your practice must develop a “measure ... improve ... measure” mindset.

Sustainable and successful change is a constant endeavor. Opt for long-term, systematic solutions over quick “band-aid” fixes.

Following these five steps will help your practice team stay involved not only in the big picture of your change initiative but also in each short-term goal that is set. If you have not yet selected a change initiative to alleviate the needs of your practice, check out these [three steps physicians have offered](#) to help your practice successfully choose the changes that will improve your efficiency and the quality of patient care.

[Check out the module](#) to dig deeper into how the organization of your practice can help your team work together to implement changes efficiently. This module offers continuing medical education credit.

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