



STAFF ENGAGEMENT AS A MEANS TO CLINICAL ENGINEERING SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Mario R. Ramirez, P.Eng., M.A.Sc., CCE, Rocky Yang, Navtej Viridi CBET, Greg Patterson, CBET, Eric Niles, Bsc., *The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

ABSTRACT

Staff engagement has been identified as a good indicator of Departmental performance. An engaged work force represents the commitment of the employee to the organization and the department. Job engagement represents the satisfaction that the employee feels about the job they do, their ability to get immersed in their work and produce satisfactory results that could result in Service Excellence. Engaged employees are less prone to take time off sick and are more productive overall. The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Ontario has been conducting Staff Engagement surveys for the past ten years. The Medical Engineering Department has used the Engagement survey results to improve staff engagement and improve service delivery to our customers. Through annual departmental planning days and follow up on actions the departmental engagement has improved over the past years to the recent results where only one of the 28 drivers of engagement fell below the Hospital's average. This has resulted in improved Service Excellence to customers as demonstrated by the quarterly Service Excellence conducted by the Corporate Service Portfolio. The presentation will illustrate the engagement results in the past year, and the steps taken to improve staff engagement. In addition, examples will be presented of how the department has demonstrated service excellence and commitment

INTRODUCTION

The Hospital for Sick Children is committed to providing an environment where employees feel engaged in their job and the institution. In 2003, the hospital started to measure staff engagement as a means to assess the level of

engagement for the employees. The intent of this measure was to serve as a reference point for subsequent engagement surveys, and enable the hospital to compare engagement scores to other high performing institutions. To this end, the Gallup Poll company was hired to administer an Engagement Survey.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

The Gallup Poll company had a well developed methodology for measuring staff engagement [1], [2]. The company not only had the Engagement survey tool, but also the methodology for follow up on the interpretation of the results. The Gallup Poll survey consisted of 12 questions that in the company's experience, "most closely captured employee's perceptions of their workplace environments, thereby deducing what the company define as employee "engagement"" [1]. The Gallup Poll research indicated that employees go through four stages for complete engagement: What do I get; What do I give; Do I belong and How can we grow [1]. One can think of the four stages as "building" blocks that each employee goes through while employed at an organization. Each stage had to be satisfied before employees could move to the next building block. The Engagement Survey is administered for three to four weeks. Each employee received a personalized survey code to enter their response to the twelve questions. The results from the survey were then collated and results were presented for the whole institution. As the employees have a unique identifier, the Gallup Poll company was able to present results based on each portfolio and ultimately to each department. It is important to know that no employee is identified and that if a department had less than 5 people, they could not receive departmental results. After the results were presented to the institution, each

manager/director received their individual results. Each department had to review the results, and in consultation with the department's employees develop, an action plan to address areas for improvement. Each department had to implement and monitor their action plan to improve on staff engagement.

The hospital continued conducting annual staff engagement surveys; however, due to budget restrictions in 2009 the engagement survey was not conducted. In 2010 a new company was selected to conduct the survey; Metrics@Work. This company had the experience in conducting Engagement Surveys in various sectors including Health Care. However, they also had some flexibility in allowing the institution to ask "institution specific questions". That was seen as an advantage in order to tailor the survey to SickKids needs. Following the survey, the results were provided to each department, and in turn, each department was expected to develop action plans for improvement.

Medical Engineering Engagement

Medical Engineering received the engagement results each year. As expected by senior administration, the department developed an action plan to improve the results of the department's engagement results. Figure one below illustrate the results.

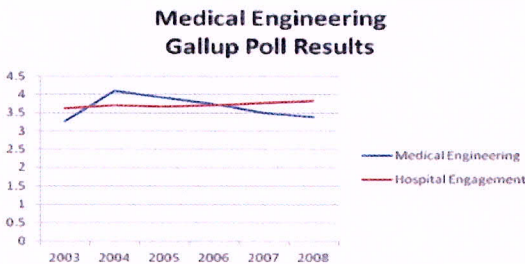


Figure 1: Medical Engineering Gallup Poll results

Although the department made significant improvements on the engagement survey's results on year two, and exceeded the Hospital's average, we subsequently observed a steady decline in our engagement results. The department continued to be above the Hospital's average, and in 2007 and 2008 we fell below the hospital average.

Our planning day consisted of a whole day meeting where all staff participated in reviewing the results of the engagement survey. To ensure full participation by all, we made smaller groups to review the survey results and to develop possible action plans for improvement. Each group made a presentation of their deliberations and proposed action plans for improvement. All members present then "voted" on the activities that we were going to focus on over the subsequent year. As part of the action plans, we achieved the following:

- Developed a departmental Vision
- Developed a departmental mission
- Improved on the job descriptions
- Committed to annual performance appraisals for staff
- Organized a communication course for the department
- Improved communication with IS
- Improved listing of available training courses for staff
- Established an Education committee

As a result of the change from Gallup Poll to Metrics@Work, the department had a different method for measuring staff engagement. Figure two shows the results of the departmental engagement results towards the organization.

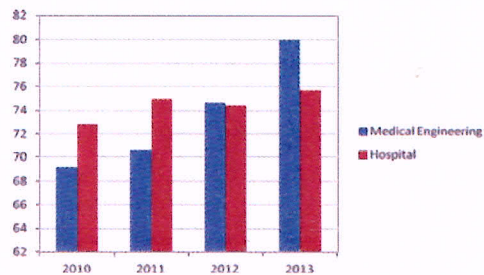


Figure 2: Medical Engineering Organization Engagement

Figure three shows the results of the departmental Job engagement.

In contrast to the Gallup Poll engagement survey where engagement was measured



based on the results to twelve questions, Metrics@Work had over twenty-eight questions that covered more areas to assess not only the departmental engagement, but also the organizational engagement. The survey also had few additional institutional questions that allowed us to assess whether the departmental action plans were effective in improving engagement.

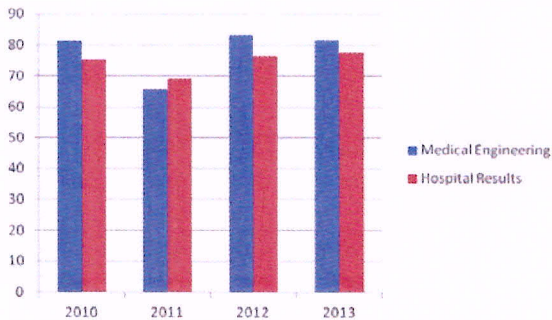


Figure 3: Medical Engineering Job Engagement

According to Metrics@Work, "Organizational Engagement represents employees' perceived relationships with their organization, which is primarily reflected in the form of emotional commitment to the organization, a willingness to remain (or, a lack of interest in leaving), and a sense of belonging to the organization. Job Engagement represents employees' perceived relationship to their work, primarily reflected in a sense of accomplishment from doing their work, the ability to become immersed in their work, and an energetic approach toward their work" [3].

As seen from Figure 3, the Job Engagement for Medical Engineering staff was higher than the hospital's engagement. The new survey was able to capture that the action plans that Medical Engineering had been working on was producing good results. With good staff engagement we saw more staff willingness to collaborate and participate in departmental initiatives which reflected in better customer service.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Corporate Service Excellence

As a Hospital initiative for Service Excellence, the Corporate Service portfolio developed a Corporate Service Excellence survey in 2012. The online survey helps Corporate Services identify its customers, its customers' expectations and how it delivers on those expectations. The survey consists of six questions to assess the level of service by a department. Medical Engineering is part of the Corporate Services, and hence, is one of the departments that receive feedback on the survey. The survey addresses the following six areas:

- **Request for Service** - It's easy to contact this service when I need help or have a question.
- **Response to Request** - Requests for assistance are acknowledged in a timely manner by the service.
- **Follow-up with Request** - The service makes the effort to find out what I need.
- **Timeliness** - Service is delivered in a timely manner based on an agreed time frame.
- **Professionalism and Service Orientation** - Staff in the service are courteous.
- **Appropriateness** - Overall, the service I receive meets my expectations

In addition to a scoring on the above questions, responders to the survey are able to enter specific comments for review by the appropriate department.

Medical Engineering Service Excellence

Medical Engineering is a member of the Information Management and Technology (IMT) Portfolio, which in turn, is a member of the Corporate Service Portfolio. As a member of the Corporate Service Portfolio, the results from the Corporate Service Excellence Survey are received quarterly. Figure four shows the results of the Survey for 2012 and 2013. From the Figure 4 it is clear that Medical Engineering has received higher scores on Service

Excellence than the average Corporate Service Score. In addition, there has been an improvement over the year, due to initiatives taken by the department that resulted from a review of the results from the first year.

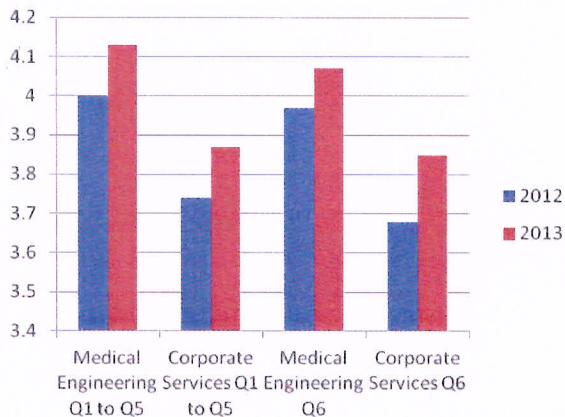


Figure 4: Service Excellence Survey Corporate and Medical Engineering results

As described above, Question 6 relates to Service Appropriateness – “Overall, the service I receive meets my expectation”. The above figure clearly shows that our customers are satisfied with the service provided by Medical Engineering staff.

SUMMARY

The Hospital’s initiative to conduct Staff Engagement has produced numerous benefits. The Hospital has seen an improvement on Staff Engagement as demonstrated by quantitative results from the staff surveys. In particular, Medical Engineering has taken the results to create annual Action Plans that have improved the working environment in the department. Departmental staff participates in the annual planning event and on the implementation of the actions identified in the action plan. The staff have seen that their input is valuable and appreciated, and hence, has enhanced staff engagement. With staff engaged, we have been able to provide service excellence to our customers as demonstrated by the Corporate Service Excellence survey.

REFERENCES

- [1] The Gallup Organization, “Building a Stronger Workplace” *The Gallup Organization 200- 2002*.
- [2] The Gallup Organization, “Building a Stronger Workplace – Manager’s Workbook” *The Gallup Organization 200- 2002*.
- [3] Metrics@Work Engagement Results for Medical Engineering 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013