NATIONAL QUALITY CENTER

Leading a Quality Effort

The Quality Academy
Tutorial 17

STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

National Quality Center (NQC)

The National Quality Center is pleased to bring you the Quality Academy, an online learning opportunity on key quality management concepts. The NQC provides no-cost, state-of the-art technical assistance for all Ryan White Program grantees to improve the quality of HIV care nationwide. The Center is funded through a cooperative agreement with the HRSA HIV/AIDS Bureau and managed by the New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute.

This Tutorial is titled:

Leading a Quality Effort.

Learning Objectives: You Will Learn About…

- The power of effective leadership
- Building organizational capacity to lead improvement
- Skills for effective leadership
- Self-assessment and tips

Hello and welcome to Tutorial 17 by the National Quality Center. If you have participated in any of the other Tutorials so far, you'll know that we have spent a considerable amount of time arming you with the required fundamentals for evaluating, formulating and implementing a successful quality improvement plan for your organization. We are going to turn our focus now to the people in your organization. More importantly, we want to focus on the skill set of your organization. We will outline the capabilities and skills that organizations committed to quality need to have in order to achieve quality improvement success. We will also focus on how the leaders in your organization can build and sustain the needed skills over time. Finally, we want to provide you with ways that you can assess how well your organization is doing today and start thinking of ways that it might do better in the future. The National Quality Center appreciates your participation in this training session, and we hope that you enjoy it.

Leaders Have Impact

"Only leaders can root the quality concept."

Donald Berwick

"The leader's job is to ask, 'How can I help you improve?'"

Chip Caldwell

4   Power of Leadership   National Quality Center (NQC)

Every field has its own leader. Whatever their role or source of authority, leaders have one thing in common: they make an impact on those whom they lead.

In the quality field, leaders must make one specific type of impact: it is leaders, and only leaders, who can root the quality concept and commit their organizations to quality.

And leaders need to establish a dynamic within the organization by asking a simple question as a leader: "How can I help you improve?'

The leader needs to build an organization that has the infrastructure, and the organizational capabilities, so that the people who work in that organization are able to improve the quality of the services they provide.

Before we get started, let's ask the question, who can be a leader?

Leaders are those individuals who have the ability to formally and informally influence and inspire others providing a vision and direction for the quality program. Leaders create the culture in which quality is both prized and promoted.

Leaders are not just CEOs. There are many leaders in each organization. In a successful organization, each individual is capable of thinking like a leader and is given opportunities to do so.

Quality-Focused Organizations Need:

- Data and measurement
- Systems thinking
- Developing change
- Testing and making change
- Cooperation

6   Required Skills   National Quality Center (NQC)

Several years ago, Don Berwick, a national leader in the health care quality improvement arena, identified the areas of expertise that organizations committed to quality need to have. The references section at the end of this Tutorial includes a series of articles where he and his colleagues published this work.

We have adapted this list slightly for our purposes. An organization that is quality focused has expertise in data analysis and measurement. They have ideals that focus on systems rather than individuals and they have vision to generate ideas for change. It is important to also have the flexibility to test ideas and make changes where needed. Finally, an organization needs cooperation from everyone to allow for individual contribution towards a common goal.

Quality Improvement Requires Attention to Several Key Areas

	Data & Measurement	System Thinking	Developing Changes	Testing and Making Changes	Cooperation
Successful Improvement Requires:	• Measurement of progress towards aims • Measurement of needs and status of patients and other consumers of care • Measurement of local process characteristics that may be related to aims	Understanding of the processes of the system and of their interactions	"Good ideas for change" • From the clinical evidence • From operations research	• Tests of change in action: the PDSA cycle. • Creating support structures for change (training, documentation, standardization) beyond the testing period. • Addressing resistance to change	• Understanding that system performance is closely tied to interaction and interdependence. • Knowing how to foster this interdependence

Source: Brooklyn Alliance Clinical Collaborative, 2003

7   Required Skills   National Quality Center (NQC)

Take a moment to study this chart. It describes some of what's involved in each of these skill areas.

You can see that successful improvement in the area of data and measurement requires measurement of:
- progress towards aims
- needs and status of patients and other consumers of care
- And local process characteristics that may be related to aims

Systems thinking is a complex topic, but basically it means having an understanding of how the parts of your organization interact. If change happens in one part of the organization, how does it "ripple through" to the others.

Organizations need to be able to get information about new ideas for change, and they need to support the idea of "learning by experimenting", which is the root of the PDSA Cycle.

Finally, organizations need to work in a consistently coherent fashion. The parts of the organization need to cooperate with each other, to move the organization towards its common goal.

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Which of the following activities is not characteristic of a quality-directed organization?

A) We have staff meetings based on processes, not departments

B) Each staff member knows what to measure about his or her own work, and how this contributes to organization-wide measures

C) We do lots of PDSA* cycles, but the first one better work or else you get a lot of grief

D) We share ideas with other organizations at conferences

Let's talk through which of the following activities is not a characteristic of a quality directed organization?   Is it A – We have staff meetings based on processes, not departments? Is it B- Each staff member knows what to measure about his or her own work, and how this contributes to organization-wide measures? Is it C – We do lots of PDSA cycles – *PDSA stands for Plan, Do, Study, Act – but the first one better work or else you get a lot of grief? Or D – we share ideas with other organizations at conferences?

The answer is C – this is not a characteristic of a quality-directed organization.

Questions of Change for Leaders

- What changes are necessary?
- What do they mean to everybody?
- How do I feel about those changes?

Tom Nolan

As a leader you should ask yourself the following three questions before you introduce changes. You need to answer these questions for yourself.

What changes are necessary?

What do they mean to everybody?

How do I feel about those changes?

Leaders Need to be Involved in all Areas of Improvement

	Data and Measurement	System Thinking	Developing Changes	Testing and Making Changes	Cooperation
Leader's Job: Generally: Creating a system in which change can be made and sustained	• Clarify the aim • Constantly assess progress towards the aim • Help staff to improve	• Overcome inertia in the present system • Provide the will for change	• Find and present new knowledge and ideas for how it can be used	• Encourage experimentation • Implement support structures • Offer consistent support to change	• Develop / inculcate / reinforce a sense of common purpose

Source: Brooklyn Alliance Clinical Collaborative, 2003

Previously, we identified several areas of expertise for an organization that is committed to quality. Now let's look at how leaders can support those critical areas and Create a system in which change can be made and sustained.

We inserted another row in the chart we reviewed earlier. Here, you can see the very specific tasks a leader should do:

•Constantly remind people of the aim of the organization

•Help overcome inertia in the existing system by helping people understand the need to change

•Provide his or her staff with knowledge about how to do things better

•Encourage experimentation

•Help the people in the organization see their common purpose

By being involved in all areas of improvement, the leader will be able to make more informed decisions and also see opportunities to blend the efforts of all the staff involved.

Leaders Support Others in Improvement Areas:

- Support a systemic approach to quality

- Communicate priorities to staff and stakeholders

- Educate staff on quality

- Encourage sustained improvement

- Facilitate innovation and learning

11   Leading Improvement   National Quality Center (NQC)

Here's a slightly different approach to how leaders can support a sustainable quality program. A leader needs to support a systemic approach to quality by communicating priorities to staff and stakeholders. This needs to include education of staff on quality and encourage sustained improvement. Finally, they need to facilitate innovation and learning.

Let's look at each category more closely.

**Supporting a Systematic Approach to Quality Requires Leaders to:**

- Attend quality meetings
- Ask teams to justify their decisions
- Trust the data
- Use data in decision-making
- Support quality improvement changes
- Allocate resources, not just money

12   Leading Improvement   National Quality Center (NQC)

First, leaders need to support a systematic approach to quality. To do this, they must adapt their actual leadership actions to support data-centered, team-driven improvement work. They need to make quality a part of everyone's job.

"Quality is not a department" but an environment in which every step of the process is quality oriented.

Communicating Priorities Requires Leaders to:

- Facilitate the development of quality-oriented priorities
- Develop and reinforce a sense of common purpose
- Guide staff through conflicting priorities
- Clarify the quality goals of the organization
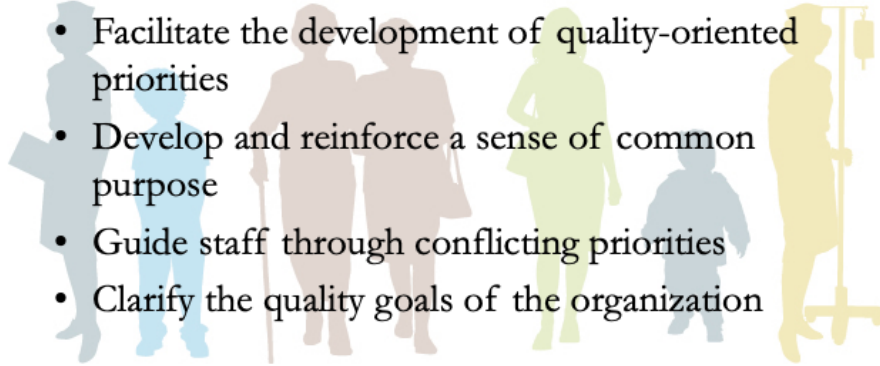
Organizations are complex, especially health care organizations. Staff people can, and do, get caught up in day-to-day work and may lose sight of long-term goals around meeting client needs. The job of the leader is to communicate priorities by keeping everyone focused on these long-term goals and fostering a sense of ownership of the goals with the staff. They should guide staff through conflicting priorities and clarify, sometimes many times, the quality goals of the organization.

We said earlier that leaders need to make time in their schedules for quality work. This requires leaders to act as teachers, reinforcing the concepts of quality improvement and making sure teams, and all staff, apply them throughout their work. They need to provide reassurance and guidance, if needed, to consistently support staff in quality efforts.

Facilitating Innovation and Learning

- Quality improvement → new issues about how staff members interact
- Support staff as they learn new skills
- Create a safe environment for learning and for experimentation

People in an organization look to the leadership for direction. The leaders affect their staff through the behavior they reward, the way they foster communication and cooperation among staff and through the way they convince others to feel ownership of quality improvement. They realize that quality improvement work will raise new issues about how staff members interact, especially as some staff adapt more readily than others to this work. Leaders need to support staff as they learn new skills and create a safe environment for learning, and for experimentation

How Can a Leader Best Engage in Quality Improvement Processes?

Conduct organizational assessment of the quality program

Review results and use as a basis for future goal setting

Evaluate progress of implementation

How can a leader best engage in quality improvement processes?

A good leader is using all the resources available to him to make informed decisions on the direction of the quality effort. Assessment is a key way of determining the strengths of an organization and consequently mapping a strategy to implement quality activities. Evaluation is vitally important to measuring the progress and effectiveness in implementing a sound quality program.

A Concrete Job: Senior Leadership Review of Improvement Projects

Purpose of the review

- To learn whether the project is on track, or is likely to fail
- If the project is not achieving the intended results, to understand why
- To provide guidance, support, and stimulus to the project team

Preparing for the review

- Know the content
- Be able to link the project to the organization's goals
- Review the project report
- Cooperate with the project leader to plan the agenda

Source: Reinertsen et. al., Executive Review of Improvement Projects: A Primer for CEOs and other Senior Leaders. Available on the IHI web site, see Resources.

17   Leading Improvement

National Quality Center (NQC)

Let's look at a concrete job for senior leaders: reviewing the progress of improvement projects. The *References* slide at the end of this Tutorial includes a link to the full article from which these slides were taken. We highly recommend this article.
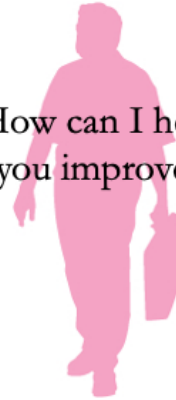
Senior leadership review of improvement projects helps leaders understand what is happening in the project's work, to diagnose and provide guidance on any problems that may be arising, or to decide to stop a project.

A Concrete Job: Senior Leadership Review of Improvement Projects (cont.)

At the review
- Clarify the project's aim
- Talk about measures
- Look at results
- Provide positive feedback
- Discuss trends and prognosis. If things aren't going well, why?
  - Will? Ideas? Execution?
  - Provide guidance in project management

How can I help you improve?

Source: Reinertsen et. al., Executive Review of Improvement Projects: A Primer for CEOs and other Senior Leaders. Available on the IHI web site, see Resources.

18   Leading Improvement   National Quality Center (NQC)

Here are some hands-on tasks to consider when conducting a review of quality improvement projects. Talk the team through the goals, measures and results.

Then, Reinertsen and his colleagues say, "Share with the team two to three good elements of the project and provide encouragement. For example, say something like "Excellent use of stratification in breaking this project up into manageable chunks."…. Or… 'You've already completed 16 improvement cycles? That's almost one every 2 days. Wow!' " Adapt this to your management style but remember, encouragement is important as the team is asked to do new things and adapt to a new way of looking at and measuring the effectiveness of care.

If there are problems in the project, try to identify if they are due to problems of will, problems of ideas, or problems of execution.

As the senior leader, you can provide the will.

You can help a team generate ideas, by asking open questions and clarifying your permission to try creative options.

Also, your project management skills can help a team identify next steps.

You are the CEO of an HIV care program. You visit a quality team charged with improving the performance of annual GYN exams. You sit in the background and listen to the members discuss potential solutions. After 45 minutes of discussion, the team is still unable to reach a consensus on a solution to test. As a leader, you decide to...?

○ A) Just jump in and make the decision for them.

○ B) Have an off-line discussion with the team leader and get her to support the idea you'd like.

C) Tell the team you expect them to reach a decision.
● D) Ask them if they need more time and, if so, agree on a new deadline. Then let them do their work.

OK, let's look at a couple more situations to see how well you understand today's material.

You are the CEO of an HIV care program. You visit a quality team charged with improving the performance of annual GYN exams. You sit in the background and listen to the members discuss potential solutions. After 45 minutes of discussion, the team is still unable to reach a consensus on a solution to test.

As a leader, which of the following would be the best course of action?

A – Just jump in and make the decision for them?

B – Have an off-line discussion with the team leader and get her to support the idea you'd like

C – Tell the team you expect them to reach a decision? Or…

D – Ask them if they need more time and, if so, agree on a new deadline. Then let them do their work.

The correct answer is D.

What is your role as a leader?

- A) Contribute to quality skills
- B) Contribute to quality infrastructure
- C) Contribute to quality at every step of the process
- D) All of the above

Let's try one more. Which of these best describes your role as a leader?
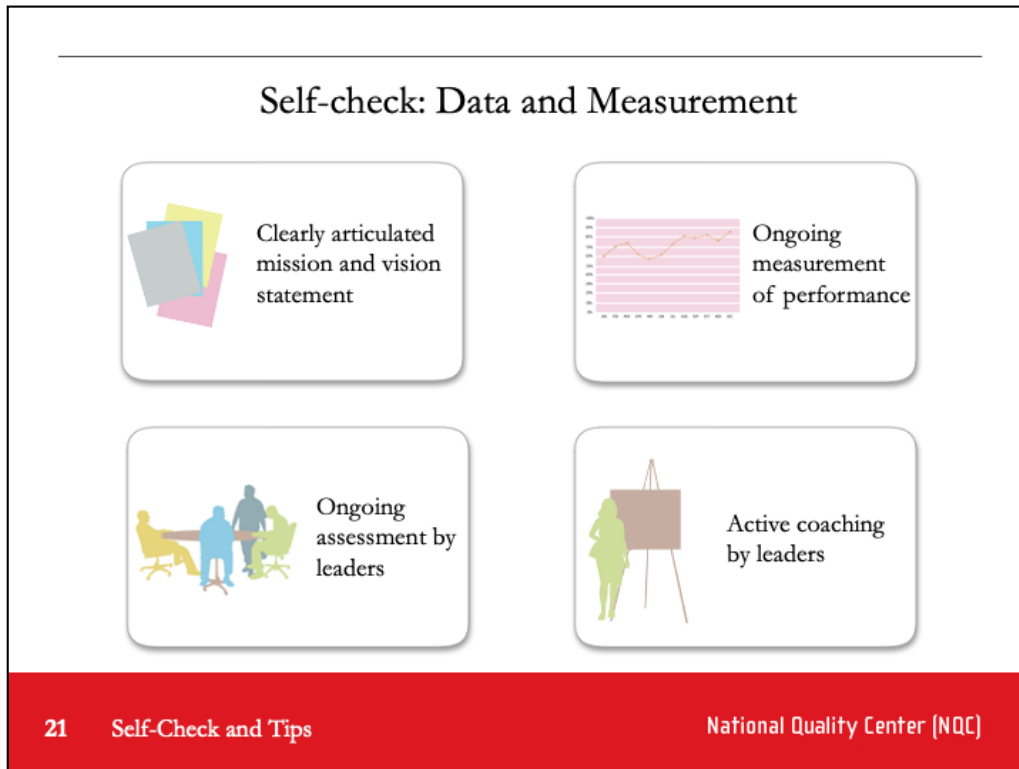
Is it A – You contribute to quality skills?
B – You contribute to quality infrastructure?
C – You contribute to quality at every step of the process, or…
D – All of the above.

The correct response is D, all of the above.

Self-check: Data and Measurement

Clearly articulated mission and vision statement

Ongoing measurement of performance

Ongoing assessment by leaders

Active coaching by leaders

Next, we will review some organizational self-assessments. You can use these as guides to see where your organization's strengths lie. The first is in regards to data and measurement.

Organizations with strong capabilities in data and measurement have clearly articulated mission and vision statements with ongoing measurement of performance that links to the mission and the vision. They have ongoing assessment by leaders of quantitative performance measures and a clear method for leaders to use to prioritize and select processes on which to focus and improve. It's also imperative to have active coaching by leaders of performance improvement teams.

Self-check: Systems Thinking

- Ongoing feedback from leadership to staff on the organization's performance
- Ongoing dialogue between leaders and staff on the organization's performance relative to its mission and vision
- A method for leaders and staff to compare the organization's performance with that of competitors

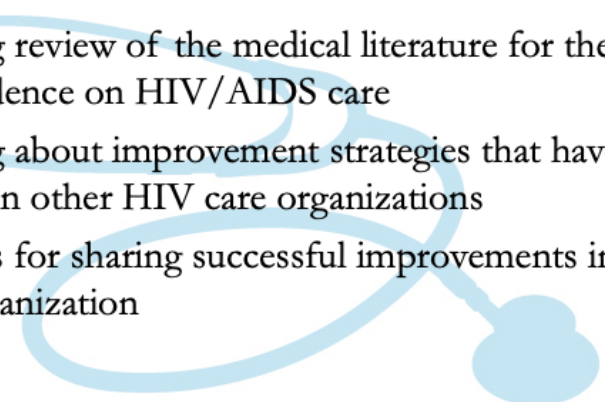22   Self-Check and Tips   National Quality Center (NQC)

Let's continue with your self assessment. Now we want to do a self check regarding Systems Thinking.

How well are leaders and staff communicating on the organization's performance?

Does each understand the complexity faced by the other?

Do you have a way to compare your performance to other programs?

Self-check: Developing Changes

- Ongoing review of the medical literature for the best evidence on HIV/AIDS care
- Learning about improvement strategies that have worked in other HIV care organizations
- Methods for sharing successful improvements in your organization

23   Self-Check and Tips   National Quality Center (NQC)

When assessing developing changes, ask yourself these questions:

•Do we know about the best evidence for HIV care?

•Do we know what the effective improvements are that have been made by other HIV care programs?

•How well are we doing at disseminating this information within our own organization?

Self-Check: Testing and Making Changes

- Training for staff and leaders in performance improvement
- A culture that supports learning and experimentation around quality

How about testing and making changes? Ask yourself the following.

Do we do enough training?

Do we support experimentation?

Self-check: Cooperation

- Ongoing cross-functional teams
- Ad-hoc cross-functional teams
- Reward systems that recognize successful team work
- Process-based, not discipline-based, staff meetings

Finally, do we use teams well– both formal and ad-hoc?

Do we reward teamwork?

Do we bring people together, at staff meetings, for example, in ways that support cross-functional cooperation?

Real World Tips: Motivating Staff to Engage in Quality Improvement

- Training bulletin board
- Discuss key quality concepts during every staff meeting
- Participate in improvement project team meetings
- Reward team progress
- Attend consumer meetings
- Have an open door policy

As you can see from the previous slides, there are many facets to how a successful leader roots the quality concept in an organization. It's not an easy task at all but consider the alternative and the necessity for it becomes more clear.

As promised, we want to provide some tips to help you motivate staff to engage in quality improvement. There are several easy steps you can take that can make a big difference in creating enthusiasm towards quality improvement.

Create a training bulletin board that highlights one quality tool per month.

Discuss key quality concepts during every staff meeting.

Occasionally participate in improvement project team meetings to answer questions and provide input.

Reward team progress. You might do this by throwing a 'quality lunch' for the next team meeting.

You could attend consumer meetings to discuss quality.

A very simple tip is to just have an open door policy for employees who want to discuss their ideas on quality improvement.

Key Points

- Leaders need to support and be actively involved in the quality program
- They need to build their organization's abilities in response to the goal of quality
- Quality-focused organizations need:
    - Skills with data analysis and measurement
    - Ideals that focus on systems rather than individuals
    - Vision to generate ideas for change
    - Flexibility to test ideas and make changes
    - Cooperation to allow for individual contribution towards a common goal

In summary, organizations that commit to quality need to have certain skills, and the leaders of the organization need to make sure the organization gets these skills. They do this by being actively involved in the quality program.

In some cases, leaders transmit these skills by the actions they take and the behavior they model.

In other cases, leaders transmit these skills through the organizational infrastructure they build.

Last Words From a Quality Leader

"The problem now is very clear: The buck stops not with the workforce, but with governance and senior leadership. The improvements will happen because of senior leadership, or not at all."

Don Berwick

Don Berwick said it best when he made this statement. "The problem now is very clear: The buck stops not with the workforce, but with governance and senior leadership. The improvements will happen because of senior leadership, or not at all."

Resources

- Berwick, Donald M. MD, MPP, and Thomas W. Nolan, "Physicians as Leaders in Improving Health Care: A New Series in the Annals of Internal Medicine." Ann Intern Med. 1998;128:289-292
- Clemmer, Terry P. MD et. al., "Cooperation: The Foundation of Improvement." Ann Intern Med. 1998;128: 004-1009.
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- Caldwell, C. "Mentoring: The Evolving Role of Senior Leaders in a TQM Environment." Quality Management in Health Care. 1993. Vol 1. No 2. pp. 13-21.
- Reinertsen, James, Michael Pew and Thomas W. Nolan. "Executive Review of Improvement Projects: A Primer for CEOs and other Senior Leaders." Can be accessed at http://www.ihi.org/IHI/Topics/LeadingSystemImprovement/Leadership/Tools/ExecutiveReviewofProjectsIHI+Tool.htm
- Kotter, John P. Leading Change. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

Many sources were used in the creation of this Tutorial. If you would like to learn more about improving your leadership skills in driving quality improvement, you may want to take a few notes here on some of these other valuable resources. You can also contact the National Quality Center for more help via email at www.NationalQualityCenter.org.

The Quality Academy

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