



CREATIVE
HEALTH CARE
MANAGEMENT

CHCM News

Transforming Care. Strengthening Results

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Morale Building for Managers

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Route to:

- Department Heads
- Education Department

One of the toughest jobs in health care today is front-line manager. Nurse managers, in particular, stand at a vortex of change, experiencing an unending swirl of forces pulling and pushing them to respond to powerful demands of stakeholders throughout the complex health care system. They are expected to recruit and retain enough nurses to care for an unpredictable volume of patient days, while at the same time keeping salary expenses down, morale up and physicians happy. Oh...and yes, Press Ganey or Picker scores in the 95th to 99th percentile, please.

During the 90's the audit accounting firms, besides reducing RN ratios to cut salary expenses, left a legacy of multiple unit assignments to front line managers. I personally don't believe that expanding managers' scope of responsibility from one to three or four units really saved any money, since it became necessary to create assistant nurse managers, often one for every shift. Of course, when the units are very small or very similar, it can make sense to combine them under one strong leader. But what often happened was large, complex units were combined and often assigned to inexperienced nurse managers who didn't have even basic management skills, let alone leadership

skills. Thankfully, the folly of that particular fad is being recognized and many hospitals are going back to one manager per unit. But it did serious damage to leadership skill building in the meanwhile.

Nurse managers, more than anyone else, directly impact the morale of the staff...which directly impacts the quality of care on a unit. We all tend to forget how important the nurse manager is to the staff nurse. Not only as a person with great power over schedules and assignments, but also as a role model, mentor and career coach. Demoralized nurse managers have a profoundly negative impact on how a unit operates, how staff treat each other and how patients are treated on that unit.

In the same way, nurse executives (and their direct reports) have a strong impact on the morale of the nurse manager. Again, they act as model, mentor and coach. One of the most important lessons nursing, especially those of us in leadership roles, must learn, is to discern what is ours to own and what is not. There are many problems in the health care system. We did not create them, nor can we solve them. No matter how convenient it is to look at nursing, with its large

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Creative Health Care Management

Creating the Conditions for Caring: Leading with Creativity and Courage

Highlights from CHCM's
Annual Client Conference
Susan Edstrom and Mary Koloroutis

On April 14 and 15, 2003, Creative Health Care Management consultants, clients and colleagues gathered in Minneapolis, MN to discuss the Conditions of Caring.

*This refreshed and renewed the spirit.
I obtained ideas to take back to my
organization and know that what I do
each day makes a difference.**

Kevin Cashman, leadership consultant and author, provided an electrifying look at leadership in his keynote presentation "Leadership from the Inside Out – Become a Leader for Life." Kevin challenged participants to move from managing their lives to leading their lives. He described managers as those who enhance or improve what is already there while leaders develop bridges to what could be. The key question leaders need to constantly ask is "what is the bridge that takes us into the unknown?" If you are interested in learning more, call CHCM and order the CD of Kevin's presentation.

*...really got to the essence of leadership.
Great examples and stories ...
wanted to hear even more.**

The World Café Leadership Summit was an attendee favorite. Hallie, an elderly patient, (portrayed by Annette Billings, RN from St. Francis Health Center, Topeka, KS) described her health care experience which did not always exemplify caring. Then, participants gathered in groups of 7-8 per table to discuss the question "If caring matters, if we are prepared to get tough and get smart on caring, what will it take to make it visible and expected in our organization?" Participants discussed this question from the perspective of leaders, staff, physicians and systems. Table facilitators recorded discussions and summarized points into practical, doable ideas.

*Helped me to focus on what is important.
I enjoyed the hearing the many voices of attendees. This
was a great refueling experience for me!**

**Feedback shared by CHCM Client Conference 2003 attendees*

Other conference highlights included:

Mourine Evans and Linda Talley of Children's Hospital National Medical Center, Washington, DC on "Lifting up Intentional Caring as a Condition for Patient Safety".

Helen Chin, and Rob Dierdon of the Centre for the Development of Nursing Policy and Practice, UK and Betsy Cambron from the Hospice of Louisville, KY on "Contemporary Approaches to Reflective Practice– an International Perspective."

Marie Manthey on "Leadership for a New Era."

*This was just what I needed--
to be with "thinking" people.
I have been to other conferences this past year,
but none gave me what this one did --
in addition to excellent content,
it really allowed me to think
and dialogue with other leaders.**

This is *the* conference to attend – it inspires and provides concrete practical ideas for implementing back at the workplace. Next year's Client Conference is scheduled for March 29 and 30, 2004. Watch *CHCM News* and www.chcm.com for details.

Learn more about Creative Health Care Management

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departments and high costs, as the culprit in our current health care crisis, the fact remains that nursing is a labor intensive yet vital part of a health care system that may be imploding on itself right now for all we know. I think it is very important for us to accept the fact that nursing didn't create the problems and nothing nursing does will solve the problems.

Conversely, we must own our responses to these problems. Managing our responses to life and work circumstances is the opposite of victim thinking. Self-management is the key to maintaining personal and professional balance in this time of constant white-water. The following are key areas where leaders at all levels need to be modeling healthy self-management behaviors:

- * **Manage your relationships.** Nurse executives need to model the ability to communicate openly about sensitive and difficult issues, to exhibit appropriate 'functional' trust and to respect everyone regardless of status, race, gender etc.
- * **Manage your response to problems.** Some problems you can solve, some you can't. Deciding how to respond to those you can't solve is a powerful manifestation of self-management. Often the wisest choice you can make is to live with problems you can't solve without letting them spoil your work experience.
- * **Manage your time.** This is especially important for nurse executives, because the modeling you do here will ultimately 'trickle down' through the nurse manager to the staff nurse. If you are constantly allowing yourself to be buffeted by other's demands and are unable to exercise even 'little choices', you will manifest a 'victim-like' mentality about time use. A couple of time management tricks are:

--- Establish office hours. Block off in advance 1-2 hours a couple times a week when the staff knows (be sure to announce it) they can find you in the office if they need to touch base with you. In between visits, you will find this is a great time for paperwork!

--- Take half an hour each day for yourself. Again, block off this time in advance. Visit a unit. Grab a

cup of coffee in the coffee shop (with a newspaper). Go for walk around the block. Buy yourself an ice-cream cone. Don't just think about it. Just do it.

It has been my experience that these 'little choices' have a powerful effect on how much control we feel we have over our most valuable resource -- our time. If any members of this list have other tips about how to manage your time, pass them on to me and I'll share them with the list.

This article was originally shared with friends of CHCM via email. If you would like to receive periodic email essays from Marie Manthey and other CHCM consultants, please contact Marie Manthey at mmanthey@chcm.com.

Darcy Sherman Receives CHCM Mentoring Award

Darcy Sherman Justice, MS, RN, BC – Manager of the Professional Nurse Internship and RN Mentor Education Programs at Avera McKennan, Sioux Falls, SD has been named the 12th annual CHCM award recipient. Darcy was described by Deb Soholt, Director of Women's Health and Professional Integration at Avera, as a candidate who has a vision for professional nursing practice, which she believes can be attained by influencing one nurse at a time. Darcy challenges nurses to step out of their comfort zone and risk achieving a high standard of professionalism.