



BUILDING TALENT & PURPOSE ACROSS YOUR TEAM



HOW TO CREATE AN ENABLED, ENGAGED &
WILLING WORKFORCE

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

2. It starts with the Consumer

3. Acknowledging Diversity within your Workforce

4. Valuing your Workforce

5. Training and Information Delivery

6. Governance Systems

7. Want more like this?

Introduction

How do you create an engaged, able and willing workforce that delivers outstanding care and support?

The CDCS team works collaboratively with organisations, staff and stakeholders to constructively address identified issues and promote ownership of the solutions.

Over the many years that we have been working with community care services, we have recognised that there are five common problem areas that service providers face; whilst this is particularly true for organisations operating in rural and remote areas and those whose workforce or client base are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, it also resonates with many mainstream services.

The five big challenges are:

- Compliance against standards and regulations.
- Customer service - Engaging with consumers and meeting expectations.
- Appropriate information and resources for staff and consumers; and a clear communication strategy (internal and external).
- Relevant and appropriate training for staff and support for carers.
- Governance – being strategic, effective and sustainable.

This eBook will look into these issues and the possible solutions you can implement to improve your workforce.



DISCLAIMER

This resource is intended as a guide only. Your organisation may use different methods or resources than those mentioned in this guide.

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It starts with the Consumer

A workforce exists to meet the needs of the end user.

Whenever we consider our workforce; when we look at supporting them to not only do their job well, but to exceed expectations, we need to keep the end consumer at the forefront. After all these are the people we seek to serve.

Dignity in Service

Consumers are all individuals with personal histories, likes and dislikes and other preferences and it is crucial that all consumers are treated with dignity and respect.



We need to ensure that our interactions recognise the individuality of each person. As frontline staff are key communicators in this area, it is they who need to learn the likes and dislikes of each consumer. They are the ones who need to recognise the unique make up of each person they care for and try to meet their support needs in a way that supports dignity and choice. Whilst some staff members instinctively understand how to do this, some will need to be taught or mentored in this area.

Dignity of Risk

It is also important for all staff to acknowledge, and not confuse, a consumer's needs with those of other stakeholders, such as the Government or support organisations such as health professionals, allied health specialists, or respite services. Yes, there are regulatory requirements to be met – but be clear about what you are doing, and why, when it comes to actual *service delivery*. Always seek to keep the individual needs, goals and ideals of the consumer in mind.

Be sensitive to what 'quality' is for an individual consumer and appreciate that 'dignity of risk' is not just a '*sometimes*' approach; it needs to be a part of your workplace culture.

Good workplace culture should include an appreciation of risk and empathy and respect for people's choices, with appropriate training on how to assess and manage risk in a balanced way.

It is the responsibility of the organisational leadership to ensure mentoring or training is an integral part of staff and team development and to build capacity within their workforce.

Acknowledging Diversity within your Workforce

As providers, we experience diversity within our workforce, across many levels. In a rural or remote context, this often means indigenous and non indigenous people working together. We encounter diversity in culture, language, (English) literacy and numeracy, as well as diversity in 'expectation' from both sides on how care and services are provided, and what defines 'quality'.



More and more we are finding that the direct care staff workforce is being filled by individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including many from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background (CALD). This is occurring not only in mainstream settings, but in rural and remote services due to the lack of qualified local staff.

With this level of diversity within your workforce, in addition to the diversity within your client group, your staff need to be capable of providing safe and respectful care and services of a high quality.

Staff and organisations that value individuality and diversity and who can actively support consumers to exercise choice will be the ones that people (consumers, carers and their families) will turn to.

In a cross-cultural context where language and cultural settings are different, extra effort is needed to know and engage with consumers. This will involve additional time, understanding and resources.

Valuing your Workforce

How is your organisation viewed by the people using your services? What do you offer them?

You may think that people identify your business as your logo or slogan, and outwardly yes, that is how people may 'see' you. However, it is your workforce who are your 'face'. They are your connection with your consumers, and as much as we are moving towards a digital age, faces and relationships matter.

If your staff are your face, how are you investing in them?



It is your staffs' ability to engage with consumers and deliver quality services and support that help make a great organisation in the eyes of consumers. But how do your staff know what to do and how to provide quality care?

Communicate your Organisational Purpose

Firstly, it is critical that the purpose of the organisation is clear and well communicated:

- do your staff understand what your organisation or service's purpose is?
- do the staff 'know' what their role is?
- are roles and processes (the *what* and *how*) well understood?
- does everyone in the service know who the consumers are?
- are your communication and reporting lines (both internal and external) clear?

This knowledge is foundational to supporting your staff in providing quality outputs.

Help your staff to understand what your purpose is. Maybe you have a statement around this that you can discuss.

Does your organisation pride itself on timeliness or perhaps flexibility? Are you boutique or value focussed? Helping your staff to understand your purpose or mission allows them to better promote this to your consumer base.

Involve Staff in the Change Process

Have you involved your staff in service development and change?

Where staff are part of any change process they feel a greater sense of ownership and are invested in a positive outcome. Often people become less reluctant to change when they feel they have a measure of control over it. Just the opportunity to discuss options around the introduction of a new process or timelines can make the difference between staff embracing or resisting the change.

Ensure Staff Understand the Organisational Vision

Thirdly, your team needs a vision and needs to be aware of where the service is going and why. In this time of reform and change, 'being on board' has never been so important.



Your workforce may include people from many different backgrounds and specialties – accountants, case managers, directors, human resource managers and direct care staff. All of these employees are key to quality service delivery.

Capability comes from knowledge;

- knowledge of the organisation,
- knowledge of the client base,
- knowledge of the programmes and
- knowledge of the challenges faced both by the organisation and the client base.

Build capacity within your team and think beyond 'traditional' skills (e.g. hand washing and food safety). Support and develop communication and engagement (soft skills).

The greatest change happens when all staff are involved in, contribute to and have ownership of the change, implementation and monitoring.

All staff can provide valuable input from their individual perspectives on what the changes will mean for them, the consumers and the organisation. They have unique insights that can be beneficial to management in moving the service forward. Care staff often see practical solutions where management

may only see expensive and complex ones.

Cross-train within your team.

As a service provider of quality care, you need to ensure you provide consistency to your consumer base. One way of doing this is to cross-train. This means you don't limit training or corporate knowledge to only one or two people in the organisation. Cross-training your staff will decrease the vulnerability of service delivery. It means there will be a team of people who hold critical information or skills even though they may not be utilised for most of the time. Having a number of people within your organisation who hold these critical skill sets mitigates potential risk to your business, e.g. in the event a key person leaves or is absent.



Continuity of service is critical both for the organisation and the consumers they support. Having a contingency plan will ensure there are adequate staff and/or alternative service delivery options when events occur, such as staff illness, funerals, infrastructure or technology failure, or adverse weather events.

Knowledge and information are important, but equally important is the way it is imparted and your staff engaged.

The following pages look at some training and delivery methods you might choose to use in empowering and developing your workforce.

Training and Information Delivery

What training resources are you using to up-skill your staff?

There are plenty of resources out there to support your staff, but are you using the right ones? Are there clear learning outcomes? Will the information be easily retained?

When reviewing the resources your organisation uses consider the following points.

Are they fit for purpose?

This means checking to see that they actually provide the information that you want to pass on to your team. So many organisations gather a pile of brochures, handbooks or training resources that sit on a bookshelf and are not used because they don't meet the need of the intended audience.

Is the training method tailored to the audiences' literacy level?



There is no use in having resources printed in a person's language if that person is limited to aural language skills e.g. they cannot read their own language.

Are the resources engaging?

Do they promote curiosity to learn more?
Would the person be prompted to read further or watch more of a video? Does it capture and hold the attention of the intended audience?

Are they easy to understand and read? This could cover two areas:

Firstly – can people read them easily? What about those consumers and staff members with vision problems? Are the fonts used clear and easy to read?

Secondly – do the resources utilise plain language to convey their message or are they jargonistic? Avoid the curse of knowledge!

What is the Curse of Knowledge?

Remember that time you tried to explain an abstract concept or idea to a colleague or family member, and they didn't get it, but it was so simple to you? Or perhaps you had a science teacher who was brilliant, but poor at passing on scientific theories in a way that you could understand.

Maybe you, or that science teacher, were suffering from the 'curse of knowledge'.

The curse of knowledge is where you have a set of knowledge that the other person does not have and you have forgotten what it is like to not have that knowledge and how long it took you to gain the knowledge. This leads you to make assumptions about what the other person understands.

*"Once we know something, we find it hard to imagine not knowing it." --
Chip and Dan Heath, Made to Stick*

Consider obtaining resources for those who learn or receive the message better via aural or visual means.

When training and engaging with staff we often fall back to old techniques such as the 'stand and deliver' technique favoured by our old school teachers or college lecturers. Training should incorporate techniques that engage the learner.

Choosing the Correct Delivery Method

In any organisation, there will be a number of individuals who have different learning styles. To ensure that your message is being received correctly you need to consider your delivery method.

Seek input from your staff on how best to deliver training and information to them. For example, rather than one training session with all staff, it may be preferable to have small group sessions where they feel 'safer' and able to ask questions and participate. Perhaps they would prefer to have you train a colleague and that person impart the knowledge or skill to the others.



There are three main learning styles:

auditory, visual and kinaesthetic (or hearing, seeing and doing). Try to use all these methods, as multi-sensory training has been proven to be more effective in the retention of knowledge.

Not all training needs to be accredited either. Accredited training courses have set outcomes that need to be met and sometimes this limits the sort of information that can be discussed in a session. For this reason coordinators or managers shouldn't assume their staff are receiving all the information that they require on a topic, especially around key industry or organisational change.

When training staff, some of the resources or techniques you may want to utilise could be:

- Workbooks (developed in house or purchased)
- Attending face-to-face workshops or forums (great for discussing and brainstorming solutions to challenges)
- Online training
- Listening to podcasts or watching videos
- Activities / case studies / role plays

Also, don't underestimate the value of opportunistic learning. If someone has a question, take the opportunity to up-skill or update that staff member.

Mentoring and Coaching

Many key staff members have undertaken some form of formal learning that supports their job role. However, this should never be considered the end of learning as every work place is different.

You may have accountants and human resource personnel on your staff who have not been exposed to the aged care sector prior to working with your organisation. These individuals will need to be supported in understanding how they fit into the quality outcomes your business has.



While formal training may not be appropriate, coaching in aspects of their role where it impacts on aged care may be worth considering.

Many coordinators and managers working in a rural and remote setting can feel isolated from up to date knowledge and from their peers. The day-to-day work load can also impact on their ability to achieve important outputs of their role.

This is where formal mentoring or coaching programs can assist in moving both the individual and the service forward, as it provides a focused one-on-one opportunity allowing for discussion and providing a sounding board for issues and ideas. This is a great way of bringing key staff up to standard faster.

Accountability and Feedback

One area that is sometimes overlooked when supporting staff in being more effective and efficient in their job is **accountability**.

Staff may receive a solid orientation on both the organisation and their role, but then the information stops there. They are not informed of what outputs they will be measured against, or if they are told, this may not be discussed before the end of a probationary period.

Whose fault is it if no one holds the individual accountable and checks regularly on the outputs of that person? Rather than leaving it to guesswork on the part of the employee or forgetting to measure outputs, have a plan at the commencement of all employment contracts.



Document the expected outputs, discuss these at the start of the person's employment and check back with the employee at regular intervals.

This will allow management and supervisors to know whether a person is a good fit for the organisation, confirm if processes are understood, and be able to redirect staff if they are moving off track, improving the overall productivity of the employee.

Governance Systems

All organisations benefit from staff understanding about, and being supported by, good governance.

Key components that support good organisational governance include:

Defined organisational structure. People need to understand where they fit within your organisation and the lines of accountability. An organisation chart can assist with this.

Position descriptions that are aligned to performance indicators. As discussed previously, having performance indicators is a great way of helping staff to focus on their contribution to key organisational outcomes. Clearly written position descriptions support understanding of the job role you are expecting from your staff.

Policies and procedures that are relevant and accessible. By this we mean that your policies and procedures relate to what is actually happening or you want to happen in your organisation; that they don't just sit on a shelf gathering dust. If you have staff members who have low literacy, ensure that you have catered to their needs - develop easy to read policies and procedures, pictorial policies or create videos describing your policies and procedures.

Strategic plans and service plans that have included staff input from across the service while the plans were in development, implementation and review. Including staff in the development of strategic direction encourages 'buy-in' by staff - they have a vested interest in bringing the plans to fruition and often have some great ideas.

Service-level training plans that are informed by appropriate training needs analyses (TNA's) and implemented effectively. All new aged care staff should have a training needs analysis done against their position description. This allows management to identify any gaps that need to be filled through training, mentoring or coaching. Through compiling the TNA's, you can gain a good idea of where to spend your training budget to the best effect. Don't forget to review staff knowledge and skills on an annual basis to see how much improvement there has been in the workplace and also to identify any new areas that need addressing due to industry changes.

Appropriate succession planning is key to a consistent and ongoing service, regardless of who is 'in the seat' at the time. If you cross-train staff and develop operations manuals for key roles, you can ensure that you are protecting your organisation's ability to provide continuous quality care to consumers.

Embedded consumer input. We, in the aged care and disability sector, can sometimes assume we know what consumers want and how to best meet their needs. The danger of this is that we become disconnected from the end consumer, their often relevant and creative solutions and their real needs and definitions of what quality care is to them. Consultation with the end user is a key area of reference when looking at good governance practices.



What are the key characteristics of good governance?

1. **Accountability** – your organisation can comply with regulations and is accountable to the 'community' and consumers it serves
2. **Transparency** – decision-making processes are clear and documented
3. **Responsiveness** – timely, fair and focussed on continuous improvement by seeking out, listening to and learning from the experience of consumers, their carers and the community
4. **Equitability and inclusiveness** – making sure vulnerable people have a voice
5. **Participatory** - those affected by the decisions have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process
6. **Effectiveness and efficiency** - getting things done and minimising waste

A holistic approach to staff support and development will encourage a dynamic and engaged workforce for your organisation and we wish you the best in moving your team forward.



Want more like this?

CDCS seeks to support and empower community based care organisations to provide the best care they can to their client base.

You'll find regular blog posts on topics of interest to the community care sector on our website www.cdcs.com.au

If you prefer to listen, catch up with Carrie and Kell over on iTunes or Stitcher

the 'Care Directions' podcast

Contact us for more information on creating an organisation that exceeds client expectations.

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