## Managing Performance
### Performance Standards and Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask Yourself</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe that caring communication is impossible today because of the pressures you and your team are under?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe that patients’ demands are largely unrealistic?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you avoid confronting problem employees?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that most people are doing a decent enough job?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe that, when it comes to caring communication, people have it or they don’t?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe that negative people should be confronted when they are interfering with patient and/or coworker satisfaction?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you often communicate your vision of excellent caring communication?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you exemplify caring communication in your own interactions with patients and coworkers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you set and communicate ambitious performance expectations to those who report to you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you monitor employee performance on a regular basis and intervene when you see substandard behavior?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Scoring

If you answered NO to any of the first five questions and YES to any of the last five questions, accountability is likely to be a strength of yours. If you answered YES to any of the first five and NO to any of the last five, you are likely to have problems ensuring that your team meets HIGH expectations.

**This set of tools** helps you to set clear explicit expectations, provide performance feedback (both positive and negative) and confront problem employees who don’t, even after coaching, proceed to meet your high standards.
Think this thorough and make this a personal statement. Be clear and explicit. This commitment statement should be one that you repeat often. It is your personal bottom line and why you are going to persist in expecting excellent performance.

Your Statement of Commitment: Your Personal Bottom Line and Broken Record

- What are you committed to achieving related to caring communication and the patient experience?
- Explain why
- Express a pinch of empathy
- Restate your commitment

Example

- **State your commitment:** I am excited about our pursuit of caring communication. I want/expect every one of us to move to a higher level of excellence and really adopt everyday routines that will not just satisfy, but that will IMPRESS our patients and families.
- **Explain why.** Our patients and families deserve it. They come to us with a lot of anxiety. They rely on us and trust us. We need to earn their trust and maintain it by providing not only quality clinical care but also caring, compassionate service consistently.
- **Express a pinch of empathy:** I realize we’re under a lot of pressure and that often there are demanding people with unreasonable expectations, and this tries our patience.
- **Restate your unflinching commitment:** Still, I expect all of us to make a concerted effort to institute impressive practices as your everyday routine. I expect us to work together on how to handle the tough situations with professionalism and kindness. I am confident we can get to a legendary level of caring communication, but focusing on this and helping each other make it happen.
Eliminate the Gray Area

Thinking of communication behaviors, fill in under “gray area” the behaviors that currently are “gray”— that you have mixed feelings about and/or that cause you to feel frustrated or lose sleep. It might help to think about specific employees whose behavior you consider marginal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable Performance</th>
<th>Gray Area</th>
<th>Acceptable Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Frequent rudeness</td>
<td>● Occasional rudeness</td>
<td>● Always polite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are going to give mixed messages if you allow communication behaviors to remain in the gray area. Think about those in the gray area, talk with people about them, and decide whether you ARE or are NOT going to tolerate those behaviors. If you wobble back and forth, your mixed message is going to have the effect of weakening a high standard. Only when you resolve your own mixed feelings will you be able to talk with people effectively about the need to improve their performance.
Process to Establish New (Higher or Different) Expectations

1. Schedule a time to meet with the employee displaying a problem behavior. This meeting will be similar to a performance appraisal meeting, so the same guidelines apply: privacy, adequate time for discussion, etc.

2. Prior to the meeting, provide the employee with the new performance expectations in writing so he or she can be prepared for the discussion.

3. Begin the discussion by giving the employee positive feedback on his/her job performance. Even with “marginal” employees, there should be some positive behavior that you have observed: “John, I’ve noticed how hard you’ve been trying to move quickly through your tasks.” “Ann, I’m really pleased to hear you identifying yourself on the phone.”

4. Review and clarify why you are raising performance expectations.

5. Introduce and discuss the new performance expectations. Ask the employee for his/her reaction to the written expectations. “Are there any that seem unrealistic or inappropriate?” Help the employee anticipate possible difficulties in fulfilling the expectations. Encourage the employee to identify specific situations that might be problematic.

6. Help the employee think through ways to handle these tough situations, so s/he will be able to fulfill the expectation in difficult situations, i.e., how to remember to greet visitors with a pleasant tone and a smile even though three phone lines are ringing; how to calm an angry person even though you already have a headache, etc. For some employees, this step may take more than one meeting. Remember that the purpose of this meeting is to help move employees from “good” to “excellent” and some may need coaching.

7. Tell the employee that they should think about the expectations as they work over the next few days, and that you are available to give support in incorporating each expectation into the job.

8. Document the discussion in writing.

Example: Your receptionist Mickey, answers the phone in a friendly, helpful manner. She says cheerfully, “Hiya, what can I do for ya t’day?” Now that you’re becoming more aware of the behaviors that constitute excellent service, you wish she would sound more professional, saying something like, “Good morning, Radiology. This is Mickey Robbins. How may I help you?”

When you offer Mickey feedback during performance coaching, she responds, “Wait a minute. It says on my job description to be friendly and helpful and that’s what I am”. And she’s right. You realize that you need to communicate a change in your expectations now that you’ve moved “Hiya, what can I do for ya t’day” out of the gray area into the realm of the unacceptable. Lay out in detail your new behavioral expectations.
Add new performance expectations to the position of receptionist to move toward great service.

1. Greet people with “Hello, Department. This is Full Name. How may I help you?” Smile and use a friendly tone.

2. When a person approaches you, tend to the person right away or let him/her or her know within 15 seconds that you’ll be glad to help as soon as possible.

3. Give clear directions and information, being careful not to use technical language or jargon.

4. If you don’t know the answer to a question, say you’ll find out and get back to the person as soon as possible. Let him/her know how long it will take you to find out. And keep your promise.

Sit down with the employee to discuss the new expectations. When you present them, affirm the employee’s previous positive efforts, and at the same time make it clear that you are serious about the new expectations.
Step 1: Describe the specific situation and the employee’s problem behavior — in behavioral terms.

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Step 2: Describe effects or consequences of the behavior for the patient, for the department, for the organization, etc.

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Step 3: Express a pinch of empathy. Show that you realize it’s not easy.

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Step 4: Make an “I expect” statement. Clarify your expectation. What do you want from now on?

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
After clarifying new job-specific expectations, you need to document these in writing for yourself, the employee, and Human Resources, so that the employee cannot justifiably claim to have been unaware. Although documentation takes time and causes many managers anguish, it is an utter necessity if you want to hold people accountable to high standards and prevent tough personnel decisions you make from being overturned later.

**Memo Format for Documenting Raised Standards/New Expectations**

1. **Purpose of Memo**: Describe purpose of memo – summarize the recent discussion in which you communicated or clarified expectations with the employee.
2. **Background**: Summarize the background, such as prior discussions with the employee, incidents or problems leading up to your meeting.
3. **Problem Performance Summary**: Summarize problem performance, including examples, their impact, and the employee’s perception of those same incidents.
4. **Expectations**: Restate your new and clearer expectations in behavioral terms.
5. **Agreements**: Summarize agreements reached: what the employee will do, what you and others will do to help, changes in work methods, monitoring, and feedback the employee can expect.
6. **Optimism**: In closing, share your optimism and confidence in the employee.
7. **Invite response**: Repeat that this memo reflects your understanding of the recent discussion. Invite the employee to respond if s/he was left with a different understanding.
8. **Signature**: Have employee sign a copy to acknowledge receipt of memo.
Memo of Understanding after a Performance Discussion: An Example

To: (Associate’s Name)
From: (Supervisor’s Name)
Re: Summary of understandings reached about performance expectations at our (date) meeting

Here is a summary of our discussion about (describe the issue).

I have reviewed with you the following behaviors that I have observed and their consequences for our customers and services.

The Behavior

- As you escort patients from the reception area to the exam room, you rush, walking way ahead of the patient. You don’t talk to them and you don’t make eye contact.
- I observed you doing this with four patients in a row on November 16th and again with your first patient the morning of the 17th.

The Consequences

- While this behavior might not offend patients, neither does it impress them. This behavior does not create a positive impression of you or our team as warm, welcoming, and caring.
- Children and families may be anxious when they come here. They appreciate it when we ease their way with small talk, call them by name, maintain eye contact, and do and say things to establish and sustain a personal connection as we ease their way through our service.
- By avoiding eye contact, remaining silent, and walking rapidly several feet in front of them, you do not demonstrate the impressive experience that we aim to provide.
- Also, it’s unlikely that you earn the patient’s respect and confidence for your care and professionalism.
Expectations for the Future

When we talked, I made it clear that, from now on, I expect you to consistently demonstrate excellent, caring communication as you escort patients through our halls. Specifically, I expect you to follow this protocol/routine:

- In the reception area, greet people warmly.
- Introduce yourself.
- Ask patients and family members what they prefer to be called, and call them by their preferred name immediately.
- When you are about to lead them to another area, explain what you’re doing and while you’re doing it stay connected to the people. (E.g. “Let me show you the way to ________________.”)
- With direct eye contact, a smile and a guiding hand gesture, walk them to the area. Walk close to them and maintain as much eye contact and positive attention to them as possible.
- If you yourself are providing the next service, when you arrive at the exam room, hold the door open for them and say, “Here we are, (their preferred name).” Then, explain what you’re going to do before moving on with your procedure.
- If you are handing the patient over to someone or working with someone (a physician, a nurse, a tech, or any other coworker), introduce them to this person. Say, “(patient’s preferred name), I want you to meet (coworker’s first name, last name and position). You’ll be in good hands with (coworker).”
- If the patient says “Thank you,” respond with a smile, eye contact, and “My pleasure” or “You’re very welcome.”

Agreement: You agreed to adopt these behaviors as your standard routine.

I explained also that I will support you in your efforts by giving you feedback and whatever coaching you would find helpful.

I’m pleased with the results of our discussion. Now that I’ve been clear about what I expect and now that you have agreed, I feel confident that you will adopt these behaviors in a very effective way. As a result, you will help our practice make our patients feel special and achieve a great patient experience.

This memo reflects my understanding of our discussion. If you think I’ve misrepresented or neglected any points we covered, please let me know. If not, please sign the top copy of this memo and return it to me, showing that you have received it.

Also, if there are other ways I can help you shine in your job, please let me know.

Thanks very much!