Healthcare
The Role of Leadership and Empowerment in SQM/TQM

Sandra Jones
MSM, BSN, CPHQ, CPHRM, LNCC
Director Quality/Risk
Texoma Medical Center
Denison TX

This article will discuss the role of leadership and empowerment in Strategic Quality Management (SQM)/Total Quality Management (TQM) and how some authors and organizational leaders from the past, best address this subject.

"An expression commonly used in Japanese companies is, Total Quality begins with education and ends with education. Any organization hoping for long-term success must adhere to this philosophy, educating and re-educating everyone from the corporate officers and top executives down to hourly employees. These efforts will reap rewards when every employee- alone or with others- is busy studying and improving some part of the organization" (Scholtes, P.R. 1988).

Performance improvement (PI) takes a significant amount of time. Leaders must understand that TQM is not a quick fix. Performance Improvement is a systematic change that requires basic alterations in an organization's attitude and behaviors and cannot be accomplished by next week. Leadership is critically important to societies, thinkers and researchers, who have tried to define it, analyze it and teach it. Definitions of leadership have changed over the years as different viewpoints have become fashionable.

For most managers and leaders, control covers the full range of responsibilities. It includes getting the work accomplished through others. It also includes a continuous process of comparing performance against standards and goals, identifying the reasons for differences, and taking corrective action. In the hospital setting, nursing leadership involves other dimensions of control:

- Formal program evaluation, which may go beyond pure quality assurance, and beyond specific health-care units, and beyond nursing.
- Evaluation of care at the community or regional level, in connection with various health planning activities.
- Basic financial control.
- Control over staff performance in managerial roles.

Ohio State completed large research studies in the 80's on leadership. They found that groups generally perform better under leaders who have equal behaviors in consideration and initiating

structures. Initiating structure refers to the extent to which a leader sets expectations for their employees and holds them accountable. This type of leadership requires adherence to chains of command, standards of performance, and communication channels. This type of leader is described as production-oriented. On the other hand, leaders scoring high in consideration are likely to have job relationships that are characterized by trust, and respect for employees' ideas, feelings and welfare. These leaders also are considered more people-oriented and approachable (Pryor, M.G., White, C.J. & Toombs, L.A. 1998, pg. 9-15).

The higher a manager progresses in an organization, the greater the pressure from above to engage in initiating structure. Initiating structure appears to be generally more effective in larger organizations than in smaller ones. (Brooten D.A. 1984)

Stephen L. Ummel, president and CEO of Lutheran General Health System believes that an organization should not "make a corporate decision on the value of continuous quality improvement until they have gone through an extensive learning process". It is only after education that the organization can make informed reasonable decisions. Leadership's role then should be to understand the underlying principles, which include leadership commitment, definition of quality, understanding systems and processes, customer-supplier relationships and most importantly employee involvement and teamwork. (JCAHO, 1993).

Leaders develop the structure of their practice and interpret their role to others. A leader should initiate actions of many different kinds including planning and organizing work, guiding and evaluating others, calling meetings, mobilizing support systems, risk taking, and confrontation. The leader should use the basic skills of problem solving, critical thinking, and communication to carry out performance improvement effectively.   Teamwork and group development are very important in performance improvement. Tuckman and Jensen identified five stages of group development. Each stage has a characteristic emotional climate, group behaviors, and specific tasks. These include forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. The role of the leader is very important to group dynamics. Different leader actions are appropriate for each of these stages (Tappen R.M. 1986).

Leadership actions should vary depending on the phase of group development. In the forming stage, the group does not need strong leadership, which might hinder group development. The actions of the leader should be aimed at providing support and structure and discouraging dependence. In the storming stage, a leaders action should include confrontation, negotiation, linking, testing for consensus, and encouragement. In the norming stage, the leaders actions should be to step back and act like another member of the group. The leader should become more of a guide keeping the group from getting sidetracked and encouraging the use of consensus in making decisions. In the perfoming stage, leadership should act as a group facilitator. The leader should provide feedback on progress and aid in refocusing on objectives if the group becomes sidetracked. Leadership's role in the adjourning stage should be to encourage sharing of feedback and challenge the group to face the reality that the group is coming to an end. (Tappen R.M. 1986)

Many healthcare providers feel frustrated and disillusioned in their jobs. Many feel that they don't have enough time to do a quality job of caring for their patients. By empowering employees, leaders can give decision-making authority and control to their employees which can lead to better patient

care, greater job satisfaction and lower healthcare costs. Empowerment energizes people who are closest to patients and the technology to look for ways to provide high quality patient care and improve processes. It is the accumulation of ideas, both large and small, that will result in operational efficiencies. It is very important for leaders to understand at a fundamental level, what empowerment is, why it is important, and how its principles can be used in health care organizations. Empowered people see themselves as meaningful, respected and appreciated (Byham, W.C. 1993).

One of my favorite authors on empowerment is William C. Byham. I initially read his first book Zapp! The Lightning of Empowerment, which focused on life in a corporate setting. His second book was an adaptation of the first, but included the health care setting. His books are written in the form of a fairy tale story or fable. The books are easy to read, but the content knocked my socks off. I read this book years ago when I was a Director of Nursing and it changed the way I looked at empowering people. When I developed my first Quality Management class, I included several hour-long lectures around these books. The author gave practical advice and made it fun. (Byham, W.C. 1993).

In summary, as a healthcare quality professional, if you want to improve the way you lead, it is important to understand the concepts and ideas behind great leadership and push yourself to improve your own leadership abilities. One way to do this is by learning about the theories and ideas behind great leadership. By empowering yourself first through knowledge, then through role modeling, it will help you empower others so that the organizational goals can be met.

References:
- Brooten D.A. (1984). *Managerial Leadership in Nursing*. Philadelphia 6-8, 246-249.
- Byham, W.C. (1993). Zapp, *Empowerment in Health Care: How to Improve Patient Care, Increase Job Satisfaction, and lower Health Care Costs.* New York, 1-5.
- *Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (1993). Implementing Quality Improvement: A Hospital Leaders Guide.*
- Scholtes, P. (1988). *The Team Handbook*. Madison WI. 2-1
- Tappen, R.M. (1986). *Nursing Leadership: Concepts and Practice.* Philadelphia. 152-171.

This article previously published in: North Texas Association for Healthcare Quality News (NTAHQ), a member organization of the Texas Association for Healthcare Quality.

Texas Association for Healthcare Quality

www.txquality.org