

## **Team Leadership Monthly Activity: Solution Star**

Kevin's Team Leadership message addresses problem solving and the importance of identifying solutions rather than focusing on negativity. When things do not go according to plan, we can either focus on the positive ignoring the negative aspects of the situation or we can change the situation.

While there is nothing wrong with staying positive- it's something we believe is very helpful- we do need to learn to provide solutions to the issues that are causing us to be frustrated, overwhelmed, etc.

We often hear from managers that team members can have a tendency to bring up negative or troublesome situations in team meetings, but are not quick to provide solutions or present solutions at the time of presenting the problem. This is where champions are made; those who take the initiative to *figure it out* for themselves are the embodiment of "teaching a man to fish."

According to an article on Forbes.com, *"When a change is proposed, they want to know why—and they are likely to understand the reasons behind the proposal. Indeed, they're likely to come up with proposals of their own, because they have learned to think like businesspeople rather than like hired hands... They want to win."*

We believe it is the responsibility of the leaders in the practice to give the team the opportunity to learn and acquire the skill of self-sufficient problem solving. We must think in the same terms that we want our team to think; if we as leaders want our teams to be more likely to solve problems on their own, then we have to change the situation and provide the solution to our own problem.

## Instructions

1. Decide on a topic that you'd like to have the team focus on to present solutions for and draw a star on a large poster or whiteboard. Write the topic of focus in the center.
2. Write the topic of focus in the center of the star. Each point can house one problem area or one positive aspect. For each problem area, the team member must also provide a solution or positive aspect. For example, if the topic is New Patient Experience and one of the problem areas is "inconsistent handoff to treatment coordinator," a solution to that problem could be "utilize NP blocks in schedule so that NP Coord is always available for the handoff." Encourage the team to uncover the *reasons* that the problem exists and provide solutions to this rather than something like "more consistent handoff."
3. The team will then write down the things that feel need to be changed or eliminated in one color- red, for example- or one of the colors of the sticky note we provided. The solutions to these will then be written in a different color- green, for example- or the other color sticky note. Take 5-10 minutes here or have the team prepare this in advance.
4. When everyone is finished writing their ideas, have each participant post their sticky notes under the respective aspects on the star. Cluster the likes and dislikes together so that they are easier to understand.
5. Once all the notes have been posted, collaborate to identify how the ideas can enhance the topic/aspect. What can be improved? Can some of the "dislikes" simply be eliminated? Does everyone agree on any of the solutions that have been presented?

Once solutions have been presented and discussed by the team, write down the solutions and eliminations have been agreed upon and be sure that any tasks that need an "owner" have been properly assigned and delegated. At the next team meeting, discuss the topic and evaluate how the changes are going and whether additional changes should be considered.