Selecting Quality Improvement Team Members[1]

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The success of any quality improvement (QI) project will come down to the quality of the team members working on it. For a QI project team to be effective, it is essential to select the right team members with the right skills. It is not the number of people, but rather how well they function and work together, that makes a team successful. QI team members must respect each other, and share common goals, vision, agendas, and timelines to be successful.

QI teams work best when each team member has a good disposition toward making the improvement. A person's disposition is defined as inherent qualities of mind and characteristics[2] or an attitude and mood which is demonstrated often through the individual's behaviors,[3] or a tendency to act in a specified way. Some dispositions are better suited to effectively pursuing QI in teams. Knowledge and skills are also critically important. The Tuckman Model discussed in a 2013 article by Armbruster and Moran,[4] shows four stages of team development and ways to get to the desired "performing stage" by motivating team members; selecting team members with most of the rights skills, knowledge, and dispositions can help move a team more quickly to the performing stage.

Use the accompanying worksheet to compare candidates on the characteristics listed below and select team members. If teams are being selected for introductory QI projects or trainings, potential team members can be rated based on observations from other teams or projects they have worked on, even if they were not QI projects. These characteristics should be used as guidelines for assembling effective teams, not as a mandatory list of "qualifications."

For QI teams that will be taking on enterprise-wide QI projects that have more visibility and consequence for the organization, experienced QI practitioners are needed. In such instances, each team should include people who collectively possess all of the characteristics listed in this tool.

[φ] The Public Health Foundation, Washington, DC

[§] The District of Columbia Department of Health

[2] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/disposition

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disposition

[4] Armbruster, S. and Moran J. The 4 stages of team development, *PEX Process Excellence Network Newsletter,* 07/15/2013. Web. 3/31/2014. http://www.processexcellencenetwork.com/lean-six-sigma-business-transformation/articles/observing-the-four-stages-of-teamwork/

Team Member Selection Characteristics

Knowledge of the problem
1. Brings to the table some direct experience with one or more aspects of the problem
2. Understands the context in which the problem persists
3. Engages in multi-dimensional thinking that embraces diverse perspective of organizational leaders, customers, politicians, labor unions, middle management, etc.
4. Understands the consequences of failing to solve the problem

Effective team player
5. Fits in and flows with the team dynamics
6. Committed to the team and the problem at hand
7. Treats others respectfully and supportively
8. Shows commitment to the team and the problem to be solved

Reliability
9. Documents discussions and team meetings in order to monitor and reflect on progress
10. Completes team assignments on time and to a high standard

Effective communication
11. Listens actively
12. Ensures that communication is clear and accurate
13. Shares openly, willingly, and constructively
14. Is more invested in listening and understanding than telling and controlling

Flexibility
15. Demonstrates acceptance of alternate points of view and approaches
16. Is more committed to reaching an optimal solution than staying with the status quo
17. Recognizes and adjusts for different paces and levels of learning in each team and team member

Effective problem solving
18. Carefully considers the WHO, WHAT, WHEN and WHERE of the team's work
19. Can follow a defined process to guide activities and behaviors
20. Arrives at the best solution by "Trusting the Process" and "Following the Process"
21. Uses critical thinking; evaluates ways of thinking about problems rather than simply adopting and perpetuating myths
22. Devotes time to solving problems rather than expending time and energy responding "in the moment" as problems emerge
23. Creates an environment where proactive solutions take precedence over reactive solutions
24. Requires written documentation of a well-defined process; ensures that high-value processes are driven by flow charts and logic models
25. Allows data to drive decisions; prefers taking actions that are supported by fact rather than speculation

Enfranchises and engages others
26. Keeps sponsors and facilitators aware of progress
27. Seeks input and support from key stakeholders
28. Ensures that solutions and recommendations do not come as a "surprise"
29. Provides a forum to receive input from experts as well as interested people in the organization, even if they are not on the current QI team
30. Anticipates opposition to QI work and is prepared to explain why input was adopted, adapted, or disregarded

Practices continuous improvement
31. Seeks opportunities to *learn* QI tools and methods
32. Seeks opportunities to *apply* QI tools and methods
33. Seeks opportunities to *teach* QI tools and methods
34. Sees QI as a lifestyle in which people maintain optimism and have the attitude of serving the team