

10 Ways to Engage Your Docs Effectively

Getting physician buy-in is one of the biggest challenges healthcare executives face in the transition to value-based care. Here are the keys to success.



1



Show that you value your MD's time. Your presence in the clinical setting can have a big impact: schedule a meeting in the physician's lounge, stop by the ED, cath lab, or ICU, or attend a medical staff meeting. These actions offer insight into decisions made at the point of care and enhance your understanding of what your physicians do on a daily basis. It also demonstrates your willingness to get out of your comfort zone to build collegial ties with clinical staff.

2



Invite physicians to financial meetings. Many physicians have demonstrated an interest in the financial complexities of their institutions. Reward this interest. It will deepen their understanding of billing and accounts receivable as well as give them a real perspective on concepts like budget balancing and variance. It can also open their eyes to the potentially dire consequences of unrestricted spending.

3



Involve physicians prudently. Physicians like efficiency; time is one of their most precious commodities. Not every initiative requires physician input—linens, food, and other non-medical areas probably don't. Get physician involvement only when necessary. When MD input is required, provide scientific and financial evidence at the onset of the clinical initiative. Failure to do so may lead to a lack of buy-in no matter how acceptable the proposal may be.

4



Create a culture where executives and MDs are partners devoted to quality and safety. Doctors should be partners not customers. Because the doctor's instinct is to put patient care first, shared purpose that emphasizes high-value care encourages physician buy-in. Create a culture in which doctors share responsibility for the outcomes of the institution. The focus should be on collaborating to achieve a goal, not calling out individuals when things go wrong.

5



Communicate candidly. A lack of candid communication makes physicians less likely to work on hospital improvement processes. Highly charged issues that have the potential to be divisive can actually bolster physician engagement when the facts are discussed proactively.

6



Speak a common language. Focus on clinical outcomes. Doctors gravitate toward biological systems, not macroeconomics. When it comes to a new product or process, physicians are more interested in how it improves the quality of care delivered, impacts clinical outcomes, or decreases wasted time. Emphasize these metrics—not cost—when presenting alternative clinical items for approval.

7



Recognize the challenges faced by doctors. Becoming a physician is an arduous process. Actively showing appreciation for that process conveys a level of respect that resonates with most doctors and increases the likelihood of willing collaboration.

8



Make physicians aware of the cost impact of their decisions. For all of their education, physicians are often uninformed about the cost of procedures, supplies, drugs, and lab tests. Finance leads know this inside out—from the charge price to reimbursement. Share this data! Put the intelligence in their hands by generating individual and comparison reports that show variation in device use. Highlighting physicians who achieve the same or better outcomes builds a case for standard utilization strategies that lower costs overall. Making these reports public feeds into the competitive nature of MDs, who generally want to be viewed favorably by their peers.

9



Reward collaboration and inspire teamwork through incentive-based programs. Linking annual reviews of physician performance to contract renewal or maintenance of admitting privileges is one tactic. Another relies on the notion of financial loss: MDs are more likely to alter behavior when failure to do so threatens the loss of 1% of their income. Both approaches can be effective, but at their core must be linked to rewarding behavior that improves patient care, not just reduces costs. Non-financial rewards like positive feedback and respect from colleagues are also powerful tools.

10



Identify a Physician Champion. Finding an MD who is willing to be an influencer with colleagues on behalf of the financial side of the business creates a sense of knowledge-sharing among peers rather than appearing to further mandates from administration. However, not all physicians are well-suited to this role. Select someone who is highly respected not only for clinical acumen but also for diplomacy and a willingness to listen. A champion should be a likeable team player who can implement practice pattern changes effectively. The right champion can remove communication barriers and achieve a level of collaboration not attainable through other methods.