

CREATE A DATA CULTURE: Engaging Your Staff

Purpose: Your staff are a crucial part of your program and its success. They are also core to the quality of your data. As you know, staff turnover impacts your ability to keep clients, and training new staff takes a lot of time and money, so it is important to retain staff. These are some of our favorite tips for creating a culture where staff are actively involved and understand the power of high-quality data.

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◀ Gamification ▶

- ◆ Using aspects of gaming (rewards, competition, and prizes) to keep staff motivated and engaged.
- ◆ Has been shown to increase engagement, motivation, and productivity!
- ◆ Using leader boards, badges, point systems, levels or challenges¹.
 - ▲ For example, use “levels” to organize staff training, or
 - ▲ Assign points to tasks or trainings and assign staff to earn # points per month
- ◆ Should be used to bring *friendly competition*, not resentment. To avoid undue pressure or shame, hold prize drawings, or let people opt in/out. Examples:
 - ▲ Set a data entry goal, and reward those who achieve it.
 - ▲ Have a drawing of the names of staff who complete at least 90% of their goal visits by the end of the month.
- ◆ Monthly/quarterly, draw for a prize like a coffee card or two hours of paid time off.
- ◆ Consider prizes that promote self-care, and do not cause more work (like time off without coverage of work).

Cultivate a Culture of Communication

Establish Trust

- Be a person who communicates clearly, and is responsive
- Demonstrate this regularly by being clear and transparent, and following through

Follow Through

Demonstrate you are actively listening and care by following up in writing, holding people accountable, and doing what you say you are going to do

Actively Listen

- Use language that shows you are listening
- Give your full attention
- Ask questions
- Repeat back to clarify you understand

Regular Check-Ins

- Establish regular (weekly or monthly) 1-on-1 check-ins with each staff member
- Follow up with each person about their questions and concerns to show you listened and are acting

Explain Why

- When you ask someone to do something, take the time to explain why you need them to do it
- When you can't do something, explain why
- Be transparent whenever possible

Learn Comm Styles

- Learn each person's communication style by asking and observing
- When possible, use the communication style that works best for each person
- Learn your own style of communication

Stay Consistent

- When you have a communication process that works, keep it consistent
- People will know what to expect and fall into a routine with fewer reminders needed

Be Transparent

- Let people know how and why decisions were made
- Let people know when you are still working on something
- Give people the context they need to understand

Be Thoughtful

- Be thoughtful in both your kudos and your constructive feedback
- Be authentic in your communication—you are a human working with other humans

Identify Introverts

- Look for those staff who are shy, less engaged, or introverts and reach out
- Genuinely show you value their input
- Provide introvert-friendly means of gathering input

Suggestion Box

- Have an anonymous “Suggestion Box” available so everyone feels they have an opportunity to share an idea or concern
- Be responsive to the suggestions you get

Celebrate Successes

- Give meaning to the team's work by celebrating successes together
- Track successes in a way that allows you to share and celebrate them regularly, even small successes

Sources

1. “How Gamification in the Workplace Impacts Employee Productivity” (2018). The Medium.com
2. “Lean – Holding Precious What it is to be Human” (2015). Corinna Baldouf. Finding-marbles.com

Sources

3. “Does Respect for Humanity Mean the Same as Respect for People?” (2016). Michael Balle. Lean.org.

Suggested Resource

- “Start with Why” TED Talk by Simon Sinek

🔧 Create a Data Culture

To create a data culture for your program means not to just add it to the top of other duties; it means weaving data into norms and daily processes. See other [Create a Data Culture](#) empower Tools for more details and ideas.

- + Include data-related tasks in **job descriptions** and ask questions about data-related skills during interviews
- + Include data in your **news and announcements** to staff and clients, and include data-related discussions in meetings (like discussing patterns or goals)
- + Include questions about data collection, data entry, your database, etc. in **supervision and staff surveys**
- + Provide **professional development** opportunities to learn more about data, like training in Excel, data analysis or data visualization
- + Make sure data is woven into training (including how to read charts and tables) to send a message that the collection and use of high quality data is **important** to your program/organization
- + Make sure staff at all levels have **access to data** in a way they can see the impact of their work. Example: use **dashboards** with graphs and figures to show a snapshot of clients now, and their change over time

♥ Make the Work Meaningful

- 1 Include staff of every level in **decision making**
- 2 Be sure staff know the **mission and vision** for the organization, and your program. Help them clearly see **how they contribute** to the mission.
- 3 When possible, **have staff help shape** the mission and/or vision, and/or establish program goals.
- 4 **Share data** regularly so all can see what the program and organization are doing. Help staff see how their contributions matter and contribute to successes.
- 5 Regularly **solicit input** and take the input seriously. Implement a staff survey; ask about things you are prepared to hear and can act upon (changes you can really make).
- 6 **Get to know** your staff, including their talents, needs, motivations, goals and communication styles (see [Improve Your Workflow: Communication Tips and Tools](#) emPower Tool).
- 7 Have staff **share their tips and tricks** for their jobs and ask for their input on improving processes (see the [Improve Your Workflow](#) emPower Tools).
- 8 Communicate **big picture information** with staff; give the opportunity to see annual reports and newsletters.
- 9 **Recognize successes** together, big and small.

≧ Microsuccesses ≦

- ✓ One of the hardest things about working in a service-oriented role is that it is hard to see change happening. Sometimes it seems clients are taking a step backwards, or we are not making a difference.
- ✓ This can wear on staff, and may contribute to the notorious turnover rates in our field.
- ✓ One antidote is to help staff learn to see the small, incremental signs of evolution in a client's life. We call them "microsuccesses".
 - Example: client makes scary phone call on their own, or baby finally nails that one elusive activity
- ✓ Have staff collect and share microsuccesses when they see them, to help them recognize and label these moments. This reinforces their hard work with clients!
- ✓ It's best to record successes the same day as the visit. This helps ensure it is recorded, and more accurate.
- ✓ Have staff submit microsuccesses in an easy way, where stories can be quickly collected and shared during meetings. Bonus: you will have a compilation of stories at reporting time!
- ✓ **Quickly collect stories via:**
 - Coded case notes (see [Collect Meaningful Data: Collecting Qualitative Data](#) emPower Tool)
 - #Slack channel and/or Google Drive (see [Improve Your Workflow: Collaboration Tips and Tools, & Communication Tips and Tools](#) emPower Tools)

H/T to the hardworking folks at Denise Louie Education Center for inspiring this!

Holding Precious What it Means to be Human

- One of the primary tenets of the **Lean Management** system (see the [Improve Your Workflow](#) emPower Tools) is **Respect for People**.
- This has also been translated to "Holding precious what it means to be human:"
"We're humans, we fail and make mistakes all the time. And that's okay. We also have the ability to be kind, to learn and to work together to accomplish greatness. In its creators' minds the saying also contained the imperative to invest in people as well as for everyone to improve."
- This is a reminder that we are not robots, and our clients are not robots. We are people supporting other people.
- Rather than holding onto a capitalist view of our value coming from our productivity, process improvement is about creating an environment where people can be creative and display their creativity (see the [Improve your Workflow](#) emPower Tools).
- According to this philosophy³, humans need:
 - **Clear line of sight:** Understanding of the purpose of their work and how it connects to their values
 - **Good team:** A team where each member feels both confident and that they can be themselves
 - **Supportive immediate boss:** People work best for for people who are fair, show them how to do things, and take their opinions into account
 - **Intuitive work environment:** A work environment they can trust, and where they can work without too much disruption
 - **Stability and space to grow:** Stable working conditions and opportunities for initiative and development