



mhca's e-Newsletter

Hardwiring Excellence through Evidence-Based Leadership

A Guest Article from Huron Managing Director Craig Deao

Pop quiz: If five frogs are on a lily pad and one decides to jump, how many frogs are left on the lily pad? The correct answer is five because *deciding* and *jumping* are different verbs! Healthcare organizations often declare their decision to deliver better care or improve value; but when it comes to executing, they have difficulty taking the leap. Healthcare organizations need more than a good strategy to deliver results. To enable execution, healthcare leaders should adopt an Evidenced-Based Leadership framework that aligns goals, behaviors, and processes.

Aligned Goals

In many organizations, there's a profound gap between how the organization is evaluated by its key stakeholders and the way the leaders are evaluated in their annual performance discussions. Too often, an organization's balanced scorecard shows results that would earn it a C or D letter grade, and yet more than 90% of the leaders exceeded their expectations. That's misalignment. And it often occurs because we

conflate competencies as being the same as outcomes. Organizations that employ an evidence-based approach to leadership:

- Cascade their organizational goals to each leader, narrowly sculpting the goals so that they truly reflect the key work product for which that individual is accountable;
- Chunk the year into achievable 90-day plans; and,
- Dedicate time each month to helping remove barriers and inspire innovation.

The result is a “no surprise” end of year evaluation where the summed results of the leaders match the organization's performance. An objective evaluation system begets a culture of accountability, replacing the culture of optionality present in many organizations. And yet, accountability without training is cruelty! As an organization increases individual accountability, they must also make a similar investment in the ability of those leaders to be successful. After all, so many leaders in healthcare moved up the ranks, going from buddy to boss at some point. They may not have had the opportunity to learn the 80 years of management evidence proving better ways to hire and retain employees, deliver excellent service, and achieve their targets. Strong organizations have strong approaches to leadership development.

Aligned Behaviors

Ask an employee why they are expected to do certain behaviors and too often they will respond, “because my boss said to do it.” Ultimately, they don't understand the implications of the work they're doing or the reason the practice was developed in the first place. At best, that creates compliance, but the goal should be commitment. Organizations that employ an evidence-based approach to leadership:

- Identify a handful of non-negotiable, evidenced-based behaviors that are expected of each leader and employee;
- Do a great job engaging their team in the pursuit of purposeful, meaningful, worthwhile work; and,
- Have a consistent, respectful, and uplifting approach to re-recruiting high performers, developing middle performers, and coaching those with a pattern of underperformance.

Aligned Processes

Culture eats process improvement for lunch. But together, they're unbeatable. Organizations that employ an evidence-based approach to leadership:

- Know that it's not about hiring and retaining only A+ people, but also about creating and continually refining A+ systems and processes;
- Have a culture in which people know they have two jobs: to do their work, and to improve their work; and,

- Continually seek out and spotlight the “positive deviants” who are uniquely effective within the organization despite facing the same challenges and constraints as their peers.

Making improvements is easy. Sustaining the gains is hard. The key is adopting an Evidenced-Based Leadership framework that harmonizes alignment of goals, behaviors, and processes so that every employee and everyone we serve can receive a consistently positive experience.

Want to learn more? Craig Deao will be presenting our opening keynote session at the Spring Conference in Charleston, South Carolina, on Wednesday, May 12, at 8:30 am ET. If you are unable to attend in person, you can attend virtually, but you must [register to receive the link](#).

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