Motivating Nursing Personnel
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Nursing Superintendents and in-charges of hospitals find that their jobs are becoming more and more difficult. Some of their most serious problems arise in personnel management. Nursing managers who report that their employees lack diligence or resist supervisor or have low morale are now earnestly seeking means for improving the quality of service to patients. Their problems are not unique, they are found in almost every large organization.

Psychology though does not have all the answers to personnel administration problems. However, knowledge of psychology increases a nurse manager's ability to direct large group of staff, as motivation is an important force in determining work behavior.

Motivation is a behaviourial concept. It is concerned with a goal-oriented behavior. Motivation is defined as an individual's desire to do something based on a need. The problem with motivating people is that they are not always clear on what their needs are. They often don't know what they don't know and when they are not motivated, they don't care about what they don't know. Another problem is that of employee's indifference because of ill-planned reward system, supervisory goof-ups etc. individual gets distanced from the organization and stops feeling like an insider. This results in an apathetic manifestation in an individual.

A nurse manager who complains that no matter what she does, she does not satisfy her employee is aware of the hierarchy of motivation but does not know how to use it effectively. We cannot satisfy the need of men, for once a need at one level is satisfied; another higher order need comes into being. The problem however is that it is easier said than done because effective motivation would require larger and bigger effort on management part to put a lot of bits & pieces together and it is unbelievably fragile mass.

This is no reason to despair however for there are ways and ways unlimited to get people to do things which would lead to more efforts or rather extra efforts from their side. This definitely needs a closer understanding of human self and an innovativeness and determined approach from everyone concerned.

One of the first attempts to profile individual needs has been done by Abraham Maslow in his theory on the hierarchy of needs. FIVE NEED LEVELS: Physiological (relating to his need for foods, sex & other basic requirements), Safety (relating to his need for shelter, security etc.), Social (the need for friends, family etc.), Esteem (relating to his need for recognition & respect), finally his self-actualization reflecting need for achieving greater things. Needs at bottom of the list in general must be satisfied before those above them have much influence on human behavior. In the world of nursing administration, very few people are likely to be moved primarily by physiological or self fulfillment needs. Most staff/employees will be moved by ego, social and safety needs.

Let us consider how motivation affects three different nursing staff - Nurse 'A' is primarily moved by safety need, Nurse 'B' is primarily moved by social needs and Nurse 'C' is primarily moved by ego needs.

(a) If a nurse manager offers Nurse 'A' who is newly appointed motivated by safety needs a challenging and difficult job, her insecurity will make her feel threatened hence she will seek to avoid the challenging job. Now what nurse manager would do to make clear that her assignment is familiar one and there are mentors to help her and thus this job offers no threat.

(b) If manager offers nurse 'B' who is motivated by social needs a difficult and challenging job, 'B' likely to be worried about the effect of this job on her popularity. Here, nurse manager may need to make clear to 'B' that this work will provide her more recognition from her colleagues.

(c) When the nurse manager approaches nurse 'C' motivated by ego needs with difficult and chal-
lenging assignment, this nurse will respond positively and vigorously because that is her nature. If the nurse manager makes the job appear easy to do, she is likely to be repelled as she will regard this below her egocentric view of herself.

Once understood that motivation is a force in people, one can make use of that force to get work done well. The performance level of human depends on (i) The ability to do certain work (ii) level of motivation. These factors are to be multiplied rather than added. This can be expressed as:

Performance = Ability x Motivation

Thus performance level would be high if both these factors are high. If a worker is very capable of doing certain things but otherwise is not willing to do the work, his performance level would not be high. The ability to do the work is governed by education and training while motivation can be affected by the factors governing human behaviour in the organization.

Motivation is something that encourages action or feeling. To motivate means to encourage & inspire.

A few steps to motivate others: give recognition to your people, give them respect; make work interesting; throw challenges; be a good listener; help but don’t do for others what they should do for themselves. Some of the de-motivators are: unfair & negative criticism; humiliation in public; rewarding the non performer which can be demotivating for the performer; lack of direction, measurable objectives & priorities; complaisance; low self esteem; negative self talk; hypocrisy; office politics; unfair treatment, poor standards, frequent changes, responsibility without authority. Every individual irrespective of whether she he is working with a large organization or with a small one has stroke hunger & stroke defined as an unit of existence, need to be recognized, the need to feel that one exists, the need to feel that one is important. Stroke is something that we all look forward to from others around us, especially from our leaders, our manager, our mentors. But it is unbelievably in short supply in this world. Nurse managers tend to ignore this immensely potent means of motivation by taking people for granted and taking their efforts for granted. Small token of appreciation for your people can change the way they look at you, your department or say their organization.

Motivation is all about finding out the need inside a person which if satisfied will make them exert high level of efforts. Once identified, all a good nursing manager needs to do is satisfy it and see her people performing at higher level of productivity. Understanding these individual needs is the success mantra of understanding the process of motivation.

All of us need to take such initiatives and make other feel that they exist, that they are important. Once we understand that motivation is a force in people and we can make use of this force to get hospital work done well.

References:

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