

Looking Ahead for Building a Strong Team in Nursing

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Abstract

Team building is an essential aspect of any health organisation from the perspective of whole organisation down to level of shift teams that perform variety of functions on daily basis. With the demand of integration of multidisciplinary approach in health care, nurses are challenged to work closely with each other to manage patient care. An effective nurse leader guides team members for collaborative effort to deliver satisfactory healthcare services. Teamwork improves morale and organisational productivity by working towards attainment of organisational goal. During new team formation, individuals have to develop trust and fellowship among the team. Nursing care provided by a strong team delivers higher quality of patient care. Nurses functioning as members of healthy team report higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout. So, a nurse manager should build a strong team, which can strongly portrait nurses' role in health care system by improving patient care.

Team building is a vital modality of any health organization for providing appropriate care from the perspective of the whole organisation down to the level of shift teams that function daily. With the demand of integration of multidisciplinary approach in health care, nurses are challenged to integrate multidisciplinary approach and work effectively for efficient patient care. As a manager or nurse leader, she/he has to do best at every level for nurse satisfaction, care quality, patient satisfaction etc. The whole motive is to achieve the organisational vision and objectives with a strong team approach.

Meaning: Team building is a management technique used for improving the efficiency and performance of the individuals in the group through various activities. It involves a lot of skills, analysis and observation for forming a strong and capable team within the health care setting.

Stages of Building

Following stages are involved in creating a strong nursing team.

1. *Division of task:* Tasks within the team need to be divided as per the calibre of the individuals to achieve the goal.
2. *Communication:* There should be good communication among the team members. There should not be any communication barrier among them.
3. *Collaboration:* The goal can be achieved by good collaboration within the organisation

through everyone's contribution.

4. *Conflict resolution:* The conflict which arise within the team needs to be resolved timely and amicably, otherwise it may hamper in achieving the organisational goal.
5. *Support:* The team leader should support the individuals in all aspects, so that he/she can give her best for the organization towards achieving the organisational goal.

Team Building Process

As a nurse manger when we formulate a strong team to accomplish any task, following steps need to be followed to complete the task (Fig 1).

Step 1: Identify the need for team building

First analyse the requirement of a team for completing a particular task. Afterwards find out the purpose of the work to be performed, required skills for the job and its complexity before forming a team.

Step 2: Define objectives and required set of skills

Find out the organisational objectives and skills needed to fulfil it. The objective needs to be defined as per the task, towards achievement of organisational objective.

Step 3: Consider team roles

The nurse manager considers various aspects, i.e. interactions among the individuals, their roles and responsibilities, strengths and weaknesses, composition and suitability of the possible team members. As a manager we have to ensure that, everyone is being assigned their role as per their calibre so that we can elicit the best

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Fig 1: Steps to build strong team

out of them.

Step-4: Determine a team building strategy

The manager must be assured about the objectives, roles, responsibilities, duration, and availability of resources, training, flow of information, feedback and building trust in the team. Based on the above information received the strategy needs to be made so that the goal or objective can be achieved smoothly.

Step 5: Develop a team of individuals

At this stage, the individuals join hands to form a team. Each member is made familiar with his roles and responsibilities within the team. While choosing individuals for the team, all should be aware of the objectives of the task so that they can work together as a team.

Step 6: Establish and communicate the rules

The rules regarding the reporting of team members, meeting schedules, and decision making within the team are discussed. The individuals are encouraged to ask questions and give their views to develop open and healthy communication within the team.

Step 7: Identify individual's strengths

Various team-building exercises are conducted to bring out the strengths of the individuals. It also helps in familiarising the team members with each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Step 8: Be a part of the team

Manager needs to get involved with the team as a member and not as a boss. Making the individ-

uals realise their importance in the team and treating each member equal is necessary. The team members should see their manager as their team leader, mentor and role model.

Step 9: Monitor performance

Once work is in progress, time to time check the productivity and performance of the team as a whole. In this way we can know, where we are and where we want to be.

Step 10: Schedule meetings

Hold purposeful meetings from time to time to discuss team performance, task-related problems and discuss the future course of action. This give ground for the team members to communicate their issues.

Step 11: Dissolve the team

The manager needs to evaluate the results and reward the individuals on their contribution and achievement. Finally, the team is dispersed on the fulfilment of the objective for which it was formed.

Building Effective Nursing Team in Health Care

Understand team boundaries – Team members rely on each other to carry out and complete the work, with different tasks allocated to different members. Good team building happens where all team members understand, believe in and work towards the shared purpose of caring and working for patients. Every team member must realise they have to work within their team to complete the task.

Be clear about the team purpose – The common purpose is what binds team members together. Team leaders should talk about the team purpose at every opportunity, in particular how it links to the individual purpose of each team member. In great organisations there is an alignment between individual and team purpose.

Team dynamics – Appoint a respected and strong leader for the team. Then recruit as per requirement of new staff. Consider changes in the design or delivery of the clinical pathway.

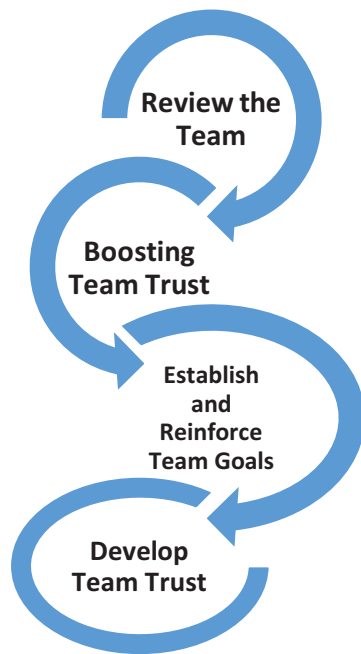


Fig 2: steps to uphold team work.

Advantages of Teamwork in Nursing

Teamwork is the result of shared sense of responsibility and accountability for patient care and patient safety.

A lack of teamwork can have awful consequences in healthcare, and may lead to medical errors.

Strong teamwork in nursing leads to better patient outcomes, better coordinated care, fewer errors, and higher job satisfaction for nurses.

Better job satisfaction means lower levels of nurse burn-out and better staff retention.

Uphold Teamwork in Nursing

Communication, trust, collaboration, and respect among the team-members are key aspects of a strong team. Encouraging each of these characteristics helps improve teamwork in nursing. If a team is lacking strength in any one area, the other areas may also suffer. A nursing unit with poor trust between its staff members will be less likely to collaborate. To uphold the team work in nursing after building a strong team, the nurse manager needs to keep in mind following points (Fig 2).

Review the Team: Review nursing team building time to time, by this each team member understand the requirements of team work, uphold the principles of team building, purpose of team etc.

Boosting Team Trust: Boosting trust within a team can help collaboration. A good way to do this is to help members get to know each other.

Establish and Reinforce Team Goals: Knowing

common goals is essential for a team to work effectively. It helps to have a benchmark result for the team to work toward achieving. If the team reaches the goal, they earn a reward. Visible reminders, such as a calendar with all fall-free days marked, or a graph with patient satisfaction scores, can help keep the team motivated.

Recognise Team Efforts: Receiving recognition for great teamwork helps nurses stay committed to collaborating with others. It's always encouraging to know that good work is appreciated.

Strategies to Help Build a Strong Nursing Team

Nursing standards focus on providing holistic care, meaning that the patients' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are considered. Strong teamwork is important for facilitating effective holistic nursing care. Nurses collaborate with many types of healthcare professionals including physicians, therapists, dietitians, and social workers.

- Don't rush for conclusion – Take time and try to understand others, personality. Start with small act, such as having lunch or coffee with a couple of co-workers. Then, build the relationships from there.
- Promote clear and consistent communication – Good communication is the foundation of any solid and successful team. Whether it's written or verbal, always strive to be clear and understandable as you communicate with your co-workers. Encourage them to reach out for clarification if needed.
- Encourage both openness and trust - Allow staff to open to you for communication. There should be no ground for gossip. Maintain confidentiality.
- Make sure roles are clearly defined – Make sure that roles are clearly defined and that each person knows their job and how to do it. Again, it all goes back to clear communication.
- Resolve conflicts – Deal with conflicts in time, because ignoring conflicts will end up for even bigger arguments in the future. Later lead to tensions that can impair the quality of nurses' work.
- Learn from mistakes and remember that no one is perfect – Every nurse is going to make a mistake at some point in their career. Rather than punishing or shaming them for their slip-up, seek to understand why it happened. More importantly, look for ways so that the team can avoid repeating the error in the future.
- Share both success and failure and recognise

team member's effort – Show your team this in action by sharing both their triumphs and failures. Recognise team effort even though it may be smaller contribution.

Conclusions

After building a strong team, the team members will provide care that results in high quality patient care and maximal patient outcomes. So, management should be permanently people-oriented and not task-oriented when planning team building activities. So, health care institutions should aim at providing best patient care by adopting wide-team based culture with certain values, principles and strategies.

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