



Six Guidelines to Engage Surgeons on Clinical Services Improvements

Making service line changes in your operating room can achieve improved results, such as higher levels of surgeon satisfaction and care quality.

taking an existing composition and adapting it to a new and different set of instruments and vocals while maintaining its core structure. Making service line changes in your operating room is a similar process. You may have an operating room that currently works well, but

How often have you heard a new version of one of your favorite songs and thought, "That really gives it new life." That's a new musical arrangement. It's the process of

you can improve it by changing its processes around new staff, instruments, or procedures, while seeking to achieve improved results, such as higher levels of surgeon satisfaction and care quality.

One way to have an impact is to consider how staffing specialized clinical services in your operating room can help reduce costs, increase efficiencies, and improve patient care. Specialized clinical services can also positively impact operating room communications, processes, and even care outcomes; however, a successful evaluation of these services needs to include surgeon support and acceptance.

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No single plan for surgeon engagement can address all hospitals, but the following six guidelines provide general advice on how best to engage surgeons to earn their support.

DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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to share ideas with stakeholders. Not only will communication support surgeon engagement, but surgeon input will be vital in ensuring everyone's needs and goals are met. Communication strategies can include:

- o **Early Engagement:** Speak with surgeons as early as possible, even before the planning process, to achieve surgeon engagement. Ask if they have suggestions on improving efficiencies or quality of care, and how you can help implement those initiatives. Early surgeon engagement will help establish trust, which can assist in reducing future pushback and roadblocks.
- o **Be Available:** Spend time with surgeons and operating room staff members throughout the day when possible to demonstrate that you are available to discuss their needs. Ask them how they are doing and if they need anything. You can also request hospital leadership to engage with surgeons, such as during rounds, to show their support and

that they are listening to surgeon needs.

- o **Offer Multiple Communication Options:** Providing multiple ways for surgeons to communicate will better foster engagement. Examples include group presentations, one-on-one meetings, webinars, and emails. These opportunities should be scheduled at varying times and repeated if needed to encourage the most participation. Surgeons' schedules are already hectic, so providing a flexible communication plan will be more accommodating.

TEAM UP FOR ENGAGEMENT

Surgeon engagement will be more successful if you are supported by personnel from various segments of the hospital. This team should be comprised of key staff members, such as representatives from:

- o Senior management
- o Medical leadership
- o Operations
- o Human resources

These champions will frequently promote your initiatives and inspire others, especially surgeons, by discussing how service line changes will benefit them specifically, such as:

- o Increased surgeon satisfaction
- o Increased patient satisfaction
- o Increased efficiencies
- o Improved communications
- o Reduced costs

SHOW THE DATA

Use data to prove how service line changes can enhance operating room efficiencies and surgeon experiences. Data should align with and support your objectives, demonstrate issues, and identify where improvements can be implemented. Your documentation should include summary data to support high level reviews, as well as provide all data to allow reviewers to drill down into the details.

Operating room key performance indicators include:

- Case cancellation rate
- Contribution margin per operating room hour
- First case start time accuracy
- Postanesthesia care unit admission
- Preadmission screening
- Prediction bias
- Staffing costs
- Subsequent case start time accuracy
- Turnover times

You can also consider providing data on how your surgeons perform against each other and how your operating room compares to local and national facilities. This information allows all operating room staff members to better benchmark themselves against others in the industry and identify ways to improve processes.

Presenting accurate, detailed data to surgeons will demonstrate how changes can positively affect the performance of the

operating room, and, ultimately, physician satisfaction. Additionally, data provides a foundation on which to build actionable plans for introducing operating room quality improvements.

SET DEADLINES

Surgeons and other stakeholders will be more likely to support your plan if you provide clear, concise milestones and a fully defined timeline.

Communication is vital to achieving surgeon engagement, but at some point you will need to begin the planning process.

Establish clear deadlines for the end of the communication phase and provide frequent notification of this deadline to surgeons. After the deadline has passed, move forward with establishing your plan and do not accept any additional input. Explain to surgeons who attempt to provide input after the deadline that you offered ample time for suggestions or concerns, but you are no longer able to incorporate their information. Adhering to the deadline during this phase will establish the importance of your plan's milestones and will result in less pushback once the implementation process has started.

PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Surgeons and other stakeholders will be more likely to support your plan if you provide clear, concise milestones and a fully defined timeline. Your plan's steps should be measurable and easily benchmarked. As you succeed in reaching a milestone, no matter how small,

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post your progress. An early success will help stakeholders realize that the project's scope is manageable and less intimidating, and it will bolster the project's momentum. If possible, show milestone achievements with visual data to provide additional credibility.

CELEBRATE YOUR RESULTS

Frequently inform stakeholders of the ongoing success of service line changes after the implementation phase. Visual, defensible data will best demonstrate the improvements the new program has achieved and will ensure supporters and surgeons know that their contributions helped enhance the operating room experience for both surgeons and patients. Additionally, a positive surgeon engagement strategy and a successfully implemented program will help you and your

surgeons work together more effectively on future program improvements.

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