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The Leadership Tightrope: Balancing Employee Empowerment and Providing Direction

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Leadership Tightrope

- Practice Profile:
 - Private group
 - Eugene, OR
 - 2.75 MD FTEs – 4 docs; 3 surgeons
 - 23 staff
 - 9 technicians
 - 1 primary location
 - 1 satellite that one MD visits every 2 wks
 - 3 half days of surgery per week



Leadership Tightrope

- Balancing Employee Empowerment with Providing Direction
 - Why worry about it?
 - Want good employees
 - Want to lead in a place that I'd want to work in
 - Have business goals to accomplish
 - Want to be successful in helping others
 - PATIENTS, DOCTORS, AND COWORKERS



Leadership Tightrope

- Theory X
 - carrot and stick
- Theory Y
 - Employees:
 - Motivated internally & positively
 - Have energy
 - Desire to do good work
 - Want to be challenged
 - Care about making a difference
 - Crave responsibility
 - Take pride in their work



Leadership Tightrope

- Balance goals
 - Positive culture
 - Employees making good decisions
 - *All within an efficient workflow

Ultimately

- Collaborative culture
- Win-win
- Mutually beneficial atmosphere



Leadership Tightrope

- Balance challenges
 - Business culture ↔ business success
 - Building up employees ↔ maximizing profit
 - Patients with highest quality of care ↔ accuracy, efficiency
 - Promoting careers ↔ happy patients
 - Room to go the extra mile ↔ constraints on what that can look like



Leadership Tightrope

- Hospitality industry study
 - *Service quality measured by customer satisfaction had no direct relationship to employees' satisfaction with service quality being provided.* (Ping, Murrmann & Perdue, 2010)
 - Employees felt the service was high quality if they felt they had satisfied the customer
 - Room to go the extra mile → while staying efficient



Leadership Tightrope

- Balance challenge
 - Work-related empowerment →
 - Affecting change,
 - Increasing effectiveness
- Hospital industry study
 - Organizational change is what makes workers feel the least confident and least empowered in their work. (Rankinen, Suominen, Kuokkanen, Kukkurainen & Doran)



Leadership Tightrope

- Empowerment Keys
 - Protocols → standards, efficiency
 - Communication → high level understanding
 - Trust → decisions in line with strategic goals



Leadership Tightrope

- Employees want:
 - A degree of autonomy
 - Sense of accomplishment
 - To bring value to organization
 - Employer encouragement
 - Their voices heard
 - To be treated fairly
 - Personal security
 - To trust their employer



Leadership Tightrope

- Building trust
 - Be honest
 - Be communicative
 - Follow through
 - Be consistent
 - Be ethical



Leadership Tightrope

- Keys to good balance
 - Communication
 - Sharing business development knowledge
 - Improves outcomes
 - Increases security and confidence
 - Empowers employees to assist and benefit practice



Leadership Tightrope

- Empowerment is necessary
 - Healthcare providers
 - Do their work without direct supervision
 - Have the most impact on the patient



Leadership Tightrope

- *Empowerment doesn't have a direct relationship with job satisfaction as a rule* (Ping, 2010)
- Empowerment also brings feelings of :
 - More pressure
 - Sense of being overworked with responsibility



Leadership Tightrope

- Our methods toward our culture:
 - *Commitment to it*
 - *Living it*
- 1) *Monitoring business actions in line with our culture*
 - *Patient wait times*
 - *Everyone is aware and helping to meet the on-time appointment goal*
 - *Completely revamped our clinic flow*



Leadership Tightrope

- 2) Our reactions to events are in line with culture
 - *Everyone pitching in when shorthanded*
 - *Thanking each other*
 - *Each staff meeting we congratulate staff on their ideas implemented*
 - *Providing ongoing feedback*
 - *Catching early deviations for correction*



Leadership Tightrope

3) Allocating scarce resources

- *investing in new technology to continue to provide the best care*



Leadership Tightrope

4) Ensuring rewards/motivations are consistent with culture

- *profit sharing*
- *promoting employee ownership*
- *making their lives better*
- *not just the bottom line for owners only*



Leadership Tightrope

5) HR decisions reflecting culture

- *new staff should assimilate into culture*
- *policies promote culture*
- *performance reviews include*
 - *individual production data*
 - *counseling for improvement*
 - *individual goal setting*



Leadership Tightrope

- Empowerment tools
 - Strategic planning
 - Communication pipeline
 - Positive reinforcement
 - Active listening
 - Mentoring
 - Personal career support



Leadership Tightrope

- Empowered employees = Competitive advantage
 - Using knowledge to further goals
 - Confidently providing excellent patient service
 - Positive atmosphere



Leadership Tightrope

- Core of empowerment
 - *“Commit to helping people become everything they are capable of being.”* (Osland, Kolb, Rubin & Turner, 2008)
 - Lead by example
 - Employees then do the same in their sphere of influence



Leadership Tightrope

- Empowerment - Direction
- Maintaining the balance:
 - Choose employees well
 - Communicate clearly
 - Distribute work fairly

Leading to a positive and informative culture



Leadership Tightrope

- *Empowerment is evidenced by organizational members who are inspired and motivated to make meaningful contributions and who have confidence that their contributions will be recognized and valued.* (Larkin, et al, 2008)



Leadership Tightrope

- Empowerment

—A gift of great worth and altruism.



Leadership Tightrope

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