

Commercial considerations linked to improving care standards.

Introduction



The care sector is rapidly changing and as it evolves it produces more and more challenges in balancing the need for quality care and commercial sustainability. Those people that work within the sector are expected to wear many hats and be proficient in many areas. Recent developments mean that the governing bodies have higher expectations and yet funding gaps begin to impede progress and development.

The recent introduction of the Fundamental Standards has meant that care managers have to re-evaluate the way in which they organise, monitor and provide care. The Fundamental Standards were created with the intention of improving the standards of care and have set a minimum standard that quality of care can not fall below.

The care provided by an organisation is their business offering and it is the area that those looking to use the service will place a huge amount of importance upon. It is therefore logical that business development overlaps with service development, yet in a lot of cases this logic is not applied to the care environment.

"The beneficial effects of positive practice environments on organisation performance in general, and health service delivery, health worker performance, patient outcomes and innovation in particular, are well documented"

WHPA 2008

If standards within a care setting are high and the service users receive a caring supportive environment, this will have a huge impact on the external perception of the organisation, increase the potential for a waiting list of service users and reduce the chance of vacant beds, which in turn effects the finances. If a care provider is financially viable, which relates to one of the CQC's regulations (Regulation 13: Finances), there would be funds available to invest in the staff and the service users, improve reputation and increase profitability, continuing the positive cycle.

How does a care manager begin to create and refine this positive cycle?

Situation



The sector is currently steeped in uncertainty. The recent spending review empowering local authorities with the option of increasing council tax and generating extra funds to be injected into the local authority funded care and the scheduled Better Care Fund coming into fruition are both positive steps towards bridging the funding gaps.

Councils will be given even more powers over decision making in their local areas. They will be able to add 2% on council tax to pay towards social care in their areas, if they wish. Gov 2015.

However, simultaneously came the news of the largest care provider in Britain voicing huge concerns over their future of their organisation, citing lack of trained staff and staff retention as key issues. National Minimum Wage increase and court rulings relating to paying staff for traveling time will further impact on lots of care providers across the industry. With an industry operating on such small margins and such high demands from both clients and regulators, these type of changes, however small, could have a significant impact.

Beyond the commercial considerations, a care manager is expected to create an environment that is safe and caring whilst maintaining care records in order to prove that they are achieving the appropriate standards. Care providers are not only selling a service, but fundamentally offering trust born from compassion and competence. To garner someone's trust is a huge task. If the standards of care are evidently low, this task becomes nearly impossible. However if the standards of care are clearly visible and the environment is warm and welcoming, then it instantly becomes inviting and possibly more crucially in these times of uncertainty, the services become marketable.

A care manager needs to be conscious of the external perception of their organisation in order to attempt to match the needs of potential clients. The manager also needs to be supported by a competent team of staff in order to make the necessary improvements and continual refinements to the service offered.

Key issues



- Through progression from carer to care manager there is little or most of the time, no structured commercial awareness training.
- Lack of awareness and understanding of how to utilise modern technology to improve efficiencies and margins.
- Staff training can be viewed as a tick box exercise.
- Poor staff retention is commonplace within the industry.
- Lack of synergy between business development and service development as standard, increasingly feeling forced to work down to a cost rather than up to a standard.

Practical Questions



- How does the level of care offered internally affect the external perception of the organisation?
- How do you improve your staffs work ethics, morale and motivation?
- How do you reduce staff turnover and increase retention levels?
- How do you maintain your customer base?
- How do you surpass industry standards?
- When should you attract new service users?

Considerations

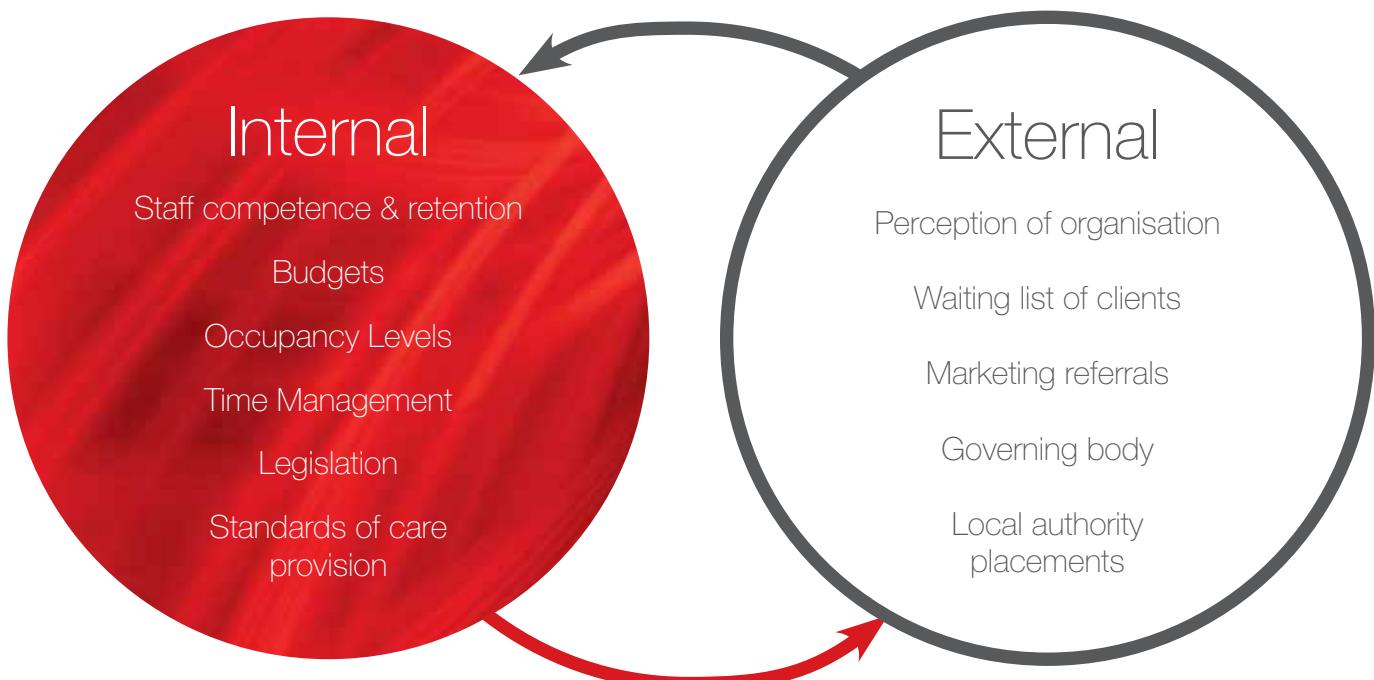


A care manager needs to put systems and processes in place that allow them time to step back and constantly review the commercial performance of the business as well as managing the quality of care provided. But daily pressures often distract from this approach. Staff will require a manager's time, especially inexperienced staff that require lots of supervision. Normally the business owner will have a sense of commercial practises, but can't always be on hand to make decisions and have an input.

The implications of making care staff more commercially minded and personally invested in the business will have a huge impact on many areas of the organisation. It would allow the employees to buy into the company objectives and improve efficiencies. In the modern environment, where care is more holistic and person centred approach requires more resources, companies have to focus more on efficiency and productivity gains in order to operate and remain successful as margins tighten.

We recognize that funding talent programs in today's economy has been challenging for many organizations, but as a professional service, we offer our clients one product: the talent and expertise of our people. If we didn't invest in the development of our professionals, it would be akin to a manufacturer not upgrading equipment, yet still expecting improved productivity.
O'Brien. 2014

Time management is a huge factor within this process as care of individuals requires focus, concentration and flexibility. If staff become more efficient and competent within their roles, they will require less supervision and guidance, therefore freeing up managers time to concentrate on improving the offering, so the development of a care setting rests on the abilities and therefore the training of the staff.



Conclusion



The foundations for a positive environment for your service users are embedded in the staff team. If the staff team have an understanding of the wider company objectives and the quality required, then the process becomes far more efficient. The CQC recently produced a review entitled *'The state of health care and adult social care in England'*, in which they state that a high standard of staff training and development is present in all the care settings that received an outstanding CQC inspection report.

Investing resources into your staff will allow them to feel valued and realise the importance of achieving higher standards. Reducing the risks of accidents and litigation will protect the reputation of the organisation. Investing in your staff's abilities to carry out day to day functions with a view of the wider aims and ethos of the organisation will encourage standards to rise and create more time for managers to manage as supervision requirements reduce.

A sensible point for a care manager to start to create positive momentum within a care environment would be to improve the awareness, engagement and knowledge of staff through training. Staff training is a crucial element of a successful care organisation, equalling in importance with budgets or occupancy levels and inextricably linked with external factors.

Well trained staff will be more aware within the work place and will identify areas of risk and therefore reduce the likelihood of accidents. Individual members of staff are more likely to dedicate themselves to a friendly safe working environment, have a greater sense of job satisfaction and therefore staff retention levels will improve. Dedicated and attentive staff will create a greater audit trail and drive innovative ideas throughout the business.

A combination of these factors will have a direct result on users of your service, customer satisfaction will improve and this will directly affect the marketability of the entire organisation.

When your workforce is efficient, you will be able to achieve an excellent return on investment and this will also allow you time to review your organisational objectives. Once the staff are performing their duties competently, the manager could look at both creating more efficient processes internally and increasing the external messages and marketing of the service. The two (internal and external) factors are linked, each benefitting the other and will only happen if managed appropriately.

Care settings are working towards different business objectives, therefore each individual setting will require different training solutions to work best with your staff, environment, business objectives and most importantly, clientele. As training is a powerful foundation to enable an organisation to work, partnering with a training provider such as Redcrier who can tailor make solutions to meet your individual requirements whilst having the flexibility of a range of courses under one roof and multiple methods of delivery is essential.

Sponsorship

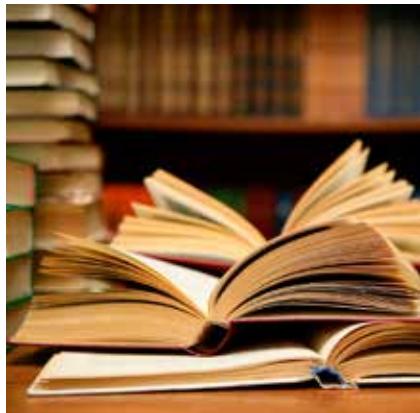


This white paper has been sponsored by Redcrier Training Solutions, who have supported the care industry with accredited training systems for 16 years. Redcrier is currently one of the largest independent training suppliers within England and Wales. Driven by family values, the organisation uses a holistic view of the care setting to analyse the challenges that a care manager faces in order to complete staff training. Currently working alongside thousands of care settings through England and Wales, Redcrier Training Solutions understand that no two care settings are the same. By appreciating the diverse nature of the industry and with years of extensive research to draw on, Redcrier can design bespoke workforce development plans to help you meet organisational objectives and utilise training packages that offer the best solution.

Redcrier will work with you so that the return on investment from training your staff will strengthen the business model, will give you cost assurance, high standards of training and, most importantly, improvements in care provision.

"It has been my experience that Redcrier Training provides excellent service and have been more than willing to accommodate requests we have made of them. Nothing has been too much trouble and they are always quick to respond to any queries that I may have. As our business is expanding Redcrier have met with me and explained how they can support us with our training needs. I would like to thank Redcrier for their continued support and professionalism." Cream Care.

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