

Effective Leaders: The Top 10% of Community Based Care Providers Have Them

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It should come as no surprise that the top 10% of community based care providers as measured by customer satisfaction, also have the highest staff retention, and best clinical and financial performance. (*2009 National Survey of Resident and Family Satisfaction, MyInnerview Inc.*)

Experience and research clearly show the following cause-and-effect links:



A successful facility begins with effective leaders—or said another way, “leaders that lead.” Candidly, what the community based care profession has historically lacked is (and I don’t think I’m going out on a limb here) *good, effective leadership*.

However, history is changing. In the past 8 years, I have seen a dramatic improvement in leadership for many providers. AHCA/NCAL along with state associations has promoted *quality* and specifically the *Quality First Initiative*. However, *quality* remains a nebulous word especially when you are “up to your ankles with alligators in the swamp”—an appropriate metaphor when facing the daily realities of being short staffed and with state surveyors looking over your shoulder.

Here are seven leadership standards as identified by the nationally recognized *Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award* and what effective leaders are doing—specifically—to be part of the top 10% of successful providers.

Leadership Standard	Specifically--What Effective Community Based Care Leaders Are Doing
1. Understand Your Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify not just traditional customers (residents and families) but all key stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Understand their needs <input type="checkbox"/> Design your entire organization to specifically meet the needs of your key stakeholders. Do this and you will never fail.
2. Keep score	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Build a “balanced scorecard” measuring not just easy to measure financial outcomes, but measure success in all five of these categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People: Cultivate a culture that positions your facility as legitimately, an employer where employees would recommend to their friend as a place to work 2. Service: Create a customer experience that gains loyalty and positive referrals 3. Care: Develop, deploy and measure effective care delivery systems with clear, measurable standards and processes based on best practices. 4. Growth: Grow either in terms of occupancy or additional services or innovative new ways to serve your customers. If you are not growing, you are dying. 5. Finance: Achieve exceptional financial performance. No margin, no mission.
3. Review Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct Monthly Business Reviews where your leadership team formally meets, reviews results, holds each other accountable, gets real about what needs to be done, documents their agreement and next steps. <input type="checkbox"/> The leader of a organization or facility should meet privately in 1-on-1 discussions with each direct report on a regular basis to make sure they are aligned on the same priority goals and are making progress on those goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Recognize and reward good performance. I’m not taking about just financial rewards. Praise and public recognition—if sincere—goes a long way.

4. Align processes & systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Look carefully at your core processes—how work gets done. Are there breakdowns in communication? Are things too complicated? Are there delays as you wait for decisions? Do you have departments not working together—and in fact—working against each other? <input type="checkbox"/> If you recognize any of the symptoms in the previous bullet point, you are misaligned, or said another way: “You are perfectly aligned to get the results you are getting.” I hope you are happy with your results. If not, get aligned.
5. Engage employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> “Employees are #1.” That sounds like heresy. Isn’t the customer #1? Candidly, the top 10% of providers take care of their employees first. If the needs of the employees are met, then and only then, can you effectively meet the needs of customers. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage your staff. The principle here is: “No involvement, no commitment.” It’s a fundamental law of human nature that your staff will give you their best effort if you treat them like people—not objects. Create ways to involve and “engage” your staff so they are part of the solution.
6. Focus on strategic priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Agree on the top 4 or 5 strategic priorities of your organization. <input type="checkbox"/> Align your most important goals with those strategies <input type="checkbox"/> The principle of effectiveness here is: “Put first things first.” Strategy is about saying “no” to things of lesser importance. If you don’t have the ability to say “no,” then “yes” becomes irrelevant.
7. Develop leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The best way to build a leadership team is not to take them to the mountains and sing “Kum-ba-yah,” but to have them agree on your organization or facility mission, vision, values, strategic objectives, scorecard, goals, and action plans. <input type="checkbox"/> Model leadership by holding yourselves accountable for results and applying all 7 of these leadership standards.

The top 10% of provider leadership teams are aligned on all seven of these leadership standards. Success doesn’t come from magic pixie dust.

Successful providers happen by design—not by accident. It is a choice—a leadership choice. How will you choose?

Our purpose is to help leaders execute strategy. Hundreds of long-term care companies are using the Focus & Execute web tool to drive strategic planning/execution.

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