

Culture of Continuous Improvement

Better HR Policies and Procedures can lead to quality improvement through a culture of continuous improvement.

HR policies and procedures are derived from the strategic business objectives and reflect the culture of the organization. Though important, neither advanced technology nor best practices alone help in attaining quality improvement in organizations. The most important thing for an organization for enhancing its credibility is to adopt culture of continuous improvement. What then is this culture of continuous improvement? George Halvorson, the CEO and Chairman of Kaiser Permanente, a large non-profit hospital in U.S.A. discusses in this article, how by instilling a culture of continuous improvement it could receive 5-star ratings in seven out of eight regions.

A culture of continuous improvement is wherein individuals grow, learn and contribute to the overall goals of the organization. Through ongoing communication, information sharing, and adopting appropriate assessments and rewards, individual employees and groups can achieve personal and organizational goals.

Some of the measures adopted by Halvorson in his hospital are:

1. If his employees know a way to do something better, they would take the initiative to point it out. When a nurse in the North West region insisted for replacing the old obsolete method with an automated, error-free insulin drip calculator, it was implemented by taking her suggestions.
2. They work on a strong sense of 'us', staying unified culture.
3. They know that small improvements compound

Kaiser Permanente, by adopting a culture of continuous improvement, had the lowest number of pressure ulcers (less than 1%) and received top quality scores in 29 categories.

Quality improvement focuses on the improvement of a company's quality of products and services to survive in highly competitive markets. In order to achieve excellence in quality, all the employees and top management of a company should be committed to the concept of quality. A culture of continuous improvement helps organizations to improve their quality to a great extent.

Source: George Halvorson. 2013, "The Culture to Cultivate", Harvard Business Review, July 2013

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