

Multisector Casebook in Health Administration, Leadership, and Management

James A. Johnson
Central Michigan University

Scott D. Musch
Cambia Health Solutions, Inc.

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CASE CONTRIBUTOR Kathleen M. Reville

Situation



Susan Spencer, the human resources director for the Center for Human Services (CHS), was reviewing the most recent employee satisfaction survey results and was worried. The results, gathered every two years, continued to show a frustration with communication among CHS's largest workforce, those who provide direct service to individuals with disabilities. These staff felt that they weren't getting the information they needed and felt disconnected from the organization. These results were troubling because the organization had recently invested a substantial amount of money in its communication efforts including doubling the size of staff, upgrading technology, and increasing printed collateral. Why wasn't this information reaching these staff members?

Background



CHS is a nonprofit, full-service health and human services agency that has experienced profound growth over the last 10 years, growing from an \$8 million budget to a \$150+ million budget. This rapid growth was the result of the acquisitions of other nonprofit agencies, each of which continued to function independently. This culture of independence created silos, with each affiliate organization struggling to understand its role within the larger whole. A new internal communication strategy must be developed for CHS that will enable it to communicate effectively throughout all levels of the organization.

CHS employs 3400 staff members who represent a variety of clinical and professional arenas. The services provided by CHS include residential care for adults with developmental disabilities, pediatric long-term and subacute care, mental health and substance abuse services, day habilitation and adult day health programs, residential programs, and schools for behaviorally challenged children.

The majority of staff is represented by individuals who speak English as a second language and who have not advanced beyond a high school degree. Many of these staff do not own computers and do not have access to email. These staff, known as direct service professionals (DSPs), are also a target for union activity, which has increased within the health and human services sector and for which CHS is a target. If this workforce is to be happily engaged at CHS, they must be aware of the important work of the organization and their role in the accomplishment of this work.

Next Steps



Susan must work quickly with the Communications Office to develop a strategy to reach the DSP workforce. She has an ample budget, but must find ways to reach audiences of varying levels of sophistication and reading ability.