

EXCELLENCE THROUGH DISRUPTION

Ensuring a world-class experience during times of renovation and change

INTRODUCTION

There are few guarantees in healthcare, although Change and Renovation are likely among those few certainties. Inevitably, most organizations will encounter periods of construction, renovation, or significant modifications to infrastructure. Sometimes, we can anticipate these disruptions (e.g., planned and accounted for in the budget) and sometimes we must respond in the moment with swiftness (e.g., pipes bursting or outages).

In order to achieve or maintain excellence in the healthcare experience, creating a mindset that construction, renovation, and/or change will have an impact on both the patient and employee experience is an important starting place. Patients and their loved ones can feel inconvenienced. Likewise, the confusion, noise, and disruption can impact staff concentration and stress. As leaders, we must seek to understand the degree of impact that will be felt, create shared commitments that these changes cannot be an excuse for abandoning service excellence or employee morale, and develop a plan to provide the highest degree of communication and support before and during the event.

We have seen such instances cause patient complaints to increase and patient experience scores to decrease temporarily. Yet, we can also attest to times where performance has remained stable or even increased due to the vigilance provided. At the heart of what works best is proactivity, communication, expectation setting, and validation.

While most of the ideas shared in this resource are focused on planned disruption, the principles can be applied quickly to manage through unexpected events as well.

A FRAMEWORK

Engaging high performing employees to build service standards creates tremendous ownership and elevation of the patient experience. Identifying operational, service and excellence opportunities establishes behavioral expectations that can lead to improved and sustained patient experience performance, as well as foster team engagement.

- Seek to fully understand the scope of the change
- Anticipate and/or measure and track the effect on patients and your workforce
- Prepare your employees and physicians for the change
 - Involve patients and employees in planning
 - Notify the change through multiple communication channels (e.g., emails, newsletter, website, signage, letters)



- Prepare the organization to communicate the change
- Find ways to innovate and exceed expectations
- Drive the plan and create accountability, continuing to communicate throughout the event
- Provide leadership support and find ways to exceed expectations
- Create a schedule for frequent Senior Leader Rounding on the areas impacted so that visibility of senior leaders is ensured

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

Case in Point: Academic Medical Center

“We seem to always be constructing something. So, we do our best to get ahead of the plans and communicate. If we are going to be making a lot of noise (e.g., blasting, drilling) we will alert our patients by delivering a letter to their rooms and sharing that this will be happening. We apologize for the inconvenience and assure them that we are striving to improve our services. We also provide them with the number for Patient Relations and invite them to call us.

Many times, we work with the construction teams to know the times the noise will be occurring so we can share that information as well with staff and patients. We have found that this can help set expectations. We always strive to make sure the noise is short-lived.”

Case in Point: Tertiary Medical Center

“We implement leadership rounds to set expectations and share our commitment to invest in building the highest quality healthcare services. Additionally, we give patients letters apologizing and post signage apologizing for the inconvenience.

Our leaders will also sign handwritten notes and provide a \$5 Starbucks gift card to work to exceed expectations, as well as to ensure patients know that we want them to call their nurse in the event the noise is too bothersome. Sometimes headsets and music help.

To support our staff during times of transition, we really focus on senior leadership visibility and rounding, events to continue to motivate them, and recognition.”

Case in Point: Community Hospital

“We see renovation as an investment in our people, our community, and the patients we serve. It is a chance for us to build our innovation muscle internally and engage our staff in solutions. Taking steps like holding an anticipatory round table and coming up with ideas in advance to plan helps us not only to involve our staff, but to take advantage of their unique vantage point. They can typically uncover areas for us to be mindful of what could otherwise be a blind spot.

We also seek to create an expectation that our goal is to heighten service on two fronts: as leaders to serve our employees and as caregivers to serve our patients. Reward and recognition is crucial for both employees and patients (after all, patients chose us despite our planned chaos). We have even taken steps to deliver flowers to patients’ rooms and other ‘extras’ to demonstrate our appreciation.”



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

- Form a special committee with front lines to study and address the noise and process changes
- Post signs reminding staff, patients, and visitors of the renovation and goals of the renovation
- Create a picture or rendering of the new construction
- Consider putting inspirational quotes on temporary walls or barriers
- Ask, “How can I wow our staff during this time?” “How can I wow our patients during this time?”
- Make investments in noise reduction solutions
- Designate periods of “quiet time”
- Provide patients and loved ones with noise kits (ear buds, plugs, etc.)

