

Insight

Tips for Sustaining Leadership Involvement in Your QI Project

When it comes to sustaining change, many of the critical elements required in leading change—creating urgency, having a vision and strategy, removing obstacles, solidifying gains—are all still required. But one key element to make sure change sticks and gets anchored to a culture is to nurture a coalition of formal and informal leaders that support the ongoing improvement effort.

“Sustainability doesn't just happen on its own,” says NICHQ Improvement Advisor Amanda Norton. “It takes proactive planning and a bit of agility to make sure the hard work and outcomes are not lost.”

Here are four tips for sustaining the involvement of your guiding coalition of leaders.

1. **Hand-off some personal ownership.** It might seem counter-intuitive when trying to sustain change, but transferring leadership of the initiative over to others ensures that the changes get embedded in the culture and don't solely rest on the shoulders of the original project lead.
2. **Continue communicating.** Communication becomes even more important once a systems change has been successfully implemented. Make sure to update the message and keep it relevant. Instead of communicating about how to make change, the message should be about the successes that are resulting from the change and why it is important to keep supporting the new way of doing things.
3. **Grow the core guiding team.** Individual's priorities change, work assignments change and organizational turnover is constant. Avoid losing momentum for your change efforts by having a recruiter's hat on and thinking who can join the guiding team and support its success.
4. **Maintain data collection.** While data collection needs may change some, abandoning data collection efforts, or failing to review the data as a team routinely, will surely lead to un-sustained gains.

“We often assume because we worked so hard, focused so intently and accomplished such success we would NEVER resort back to the old way—this simply isn't true,” says Norton. “Little obstacles to sustainability will pop up as time goes on. Without a plan these hiccups could lead to a complete loss of your gains.”

NICHQ is ready to help your organization advance its improvement agenda. Contact us at communications@nichq.org.