

## Strengthen Alignment with Your Outsourced Hospitalist Group to Prepare for a Changing Healthcare World

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As hospitalists become increasingly central to the clinical, financial and operational success of their facilities, hospital management must think through their expectations for their hospitalist service in order to promote alignment with the goals and mission of their hospital. This is equally important whether the hospital employs its own hospitalist practice (either directly or indirectly through a foundation) or chooses to outsource to an in-

dependent practice. Amidst the search for the model of employment for their hospitalists, many hospitals continue to reach the conclusion that alignment with an outsourced hospitalist group is more economical, more flexible and easier to work with than with an employed group. Team-oriented and interdisciplinary by nature, a good outsourced hospitalist practice will measure its success by how effectively it is able to meet the goals and objectives of the hospital.

Building alignment with a hospitalist practice group requires a plan that is actionable, accountable and agreeable to all stakeholders. Facilities should consider implementing the following strategies:

1. Establish clear goals for your hospitalists. Whether or not your relationship with your outsourced hospitalists is a contractual one, there should be a commitment to meet goals that are mutually agreed to be realistic and achievable. The challenge for the hospital-

ist practice is to pursue many goals simultaneously and meet them consistently.

2. A hospitalist group must attend constantly to the needs of three core constituencies: a) patients, of course, come first; b) the facility expects loyalty, engagement and involvement; and c) the practice group partners count on teamwork and dedication to each other's success and satisfaction.
3. All hospitalists must be trained and educated on the practice management aspects of hospital medicine. There are many avenues for hospitalists to improve their skills not only clinically, but also in communication, organization and leadership. The hospital executive team should expect all hospitalists in their facility to receive training from their group leaders in these important non-clinical skills.
4. The practice group that can demonstrate true clinical lead-

ership is the group most likely to show alignment with hospital goals. The practice group must possess leadership skills that are clear to your administrative and medical staff. And not just the practice group leaders; all members of the provider team should be expected to demonstrate clinical leadership every day.

5. Hospitalists should be expected to convey an attitude of “willing accountability.” You know it when you see it. When this attitude is on display the practice is viewed as a true value-added partner and a source of solutions inside the hospital. Without it, they’re just another vendor. An attitude of “willing accountability” inevitably leads to stronger relationships and better alignment between the hospitalists and hospital administration.
6. The hospitalists should view themselves as integral to the hospital’s success. The success of your facility rests with your hospitalist group, and the

hospitalists must understand both the opportunity and the responsibility this entails. The hospital’s reputation for excellence and quality depends on the hospitalists being vested in the success of the hospital.

7. The hospitalist group’s commitment to align with the goals of the hospital must be more than a mindset. It is a series of routine daily actions that become woven into the fabric of the practice group culture. To put alignment into action, each provider needs to carry with him or her a very clear idea of what the facility’s goals really are, and his/her own individual role in helping to achieve those goals.
8. The hospitalist group must show that it is ready, willing and able to customize its operations to meet the goals of the hospital. Does the group possess the tools, systems and resources that enable it to execute a customized, facility-specific game plan for your hospital? Together with the facility,

the practice should develop the game plan that can be executed consistently and efficiently.

9. The surest way for a hospitalist group to demonstrate value is by delivering quality care efficiently. Conveying this message to the hospitalist group in a way that achieves buy-in to the goals of your hospital will translate into a stable and productive relationship with your outsourced hospitalists.

Achieving optimum hospitalist-facility alignment will be invaluable as healthcare reform begins to impact the inpatient delivery system. When outsourced hospitalist groups truly internalize and embrace the goals of their hospitals, they produce better performance measures, clinical outcomes, patient satisfaction, and improve the bottom line.

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