



BCSLS “Under the Microscope” Enewsletter, June 2023

Workplace Culture: An Influential Factor on Laboratory Quality

Joanne Isber, MBA, MLT, MLS | Program Director, Interior Health Pathology and Laboratory Medicine |
CSMLS Instructor, Quality Systems

The way we think about laboratory quality in the overall health care environment has shifted, both in significance and meaning. What was once considered quality practice in our labs has evolved over time and been heavily influenced by workplace culture.

Workplace culture is shaped from employee attitudes, beliefs, and personal perceptions, in contrast to the principles, practices or strategy of an organization and largely determines how successfully professionals work together to achieve desired organizational outcomes. As management guru Peter Drucker famously said, “culture eats strategy for breakfast.”

A positive work culture is seen as forward-thinking, identifying gaps and initiating continuous improvement solutions that enhance and develop the over-arching environment for individual staff and the organization. Whereas, a negative work culture stimulates a breakdown of cohesive partnerships and cooperation across the system making it ever more challenging to meet objectives and goals.

So, how does workplace culture influence laboratory quality?

Internal factors that influence laboratory workplace culture can include organizational mission, vision and values along with employee engagement, departmental workloads and leadership models. However, labs are now experiencing quality shifts generated by external factors driven by socio-economics, physical environments, population demographics and above all else, the extraordinary workforce deficit.

Historically, laboratory compliance to complex accreditation standards have been the focus or face of quality. Today, workplace culture is shifting that focus and stressing the value of progressive strategies that incorporate solutions to generate workflow efficiency and employee work-life balance. Physical workspaces that meet appropriate ergonomics and safety; schedules that consider lifestyle balance for all age demographics; education and training that strengthen employee professional growth are now a requirement for positive workplace culture.

How does this impact lab strategy and planning?



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Laboratory service expectations are at an all time high and the pressures on employees are abundantly evident. Basic quality system elements that laboratory professionals hold in high regard are being overlooked and are cultivating a less than desirable workplace culture. It is time to turn workplace environments around and reframe the core principles of quality. This means rethinking workflow, routine practices and taking the time to methodically plan and execute improvement initiatives to garner the highest value.

Going forward, the ambiguity surrounding laboratory service delivery will no doubt intensify. Human resource deficits are redirecting how labs respond to service requirements with new out-of-the-box service models and the expanded use of digital health technology or new instrument platforms will require skilled change management. In today’s environment, workplace culture is the one facet and core value of quality that cannot be ignored. What we are learning is to engage staff, foster advanced teamwork, form partnerships, enhance communications and ultimately to remember that lab quality is not driven solely from policies and procedures or accreditation compliance....the root of quality is built around people.

References

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