



Compliance News

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The Integrity Decision

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Integrity is the quality of being honest. Vocabulary.com states “Having integrity means doing the right thing in a reliable way. It's a personality trait that we admire, since it means a person has a moral compass that doesn't waver. It literally means having ‘wholeness’ of character, just as an *integer* is a ‘whole number’ with no fractions.”

The definition above described integrity as a whole number with no fractions. We need to be careful about our decisions and understand what leads us to make poor decisions and what helps us make good ones. Most people would agree that integrity is important to them, especially if the action—or inaction—of an individual resulted in harm to them or others they care about.

Segmenting our lives and behaviors eventually catches up with us. We are either honest in our decisions and actions or we are not. For example, if we know about an issue but were not a participant in the issue, our silence could make us as guilty as those who were engaged in the wrongdoing. Segmenting our lives and choices is often a result that comes from rationalizing.

Rationalization is a slippery slope that often results in making poor decisions. Rationalizing tends to be the temptation to waver from doing what is right. It often causes us to look for the easy way out of a situation and to convince ourselves or others that somehow the end justifies the means to excuse an action or inaction.

Emotions also play an intricate part in our decision-making process. We need to use caution when making decisions while experiencing fear, frustration, or fatigue. When we are experiencing strong emotions or we are fatigued, it's best to “push the pause button” to help us gain perspective and use our HEADs: Halt, Evaluate, Act, and Defuse.

Remaining knowledgeable about requirements is also helpful in our decision-making process. If we understand what the expectations are and the consequences to ourselves and others when standards are not maintained, then we will have greater resolve to uphold those standards, regardless of the potential consequence of becoming unpopular for doing the right thing.

"Men acquire a particular quality by constantly acting in a particular way."

— Aristotle

Compliance and ethics professionals are a resource available to our workforce to help us make good decisions. There are situations that any one of us could encounter that require us to withstand pressures to do what is wrong, including keeping our silence. When faced with these situations, it's best for us to reach out to others to help us with the tough decisions. When we become fearful of potential retaliation or a hostile work environment, there is a tendency to want to clam up to remain safe, but this can result in tremendous consequences to the individual making that decision, to the organization's mission, and to the customer or consumer. Maintaining "the whole truth and nothing but the truth" is important and can impact others as well as ourselves. J.C. Ryle says it this way, "Never be guilty of sacrificing *any portion* of truth on the altar of peace."

New Psychosocial Harm Guidance on 14 F-tags

(NF) IHCA Mary Jane Carothers

Nursing facility administrators should review S&C Memo, State Operations Manual (SOM) Surveyor Guidance Revisions Related to Psychosocial Harm in Nursing Homes (S&C: 16-15-NH). The memo includes:

- F329 Draft Revision: CMS has revised guidance to surveyors in Appendix PP of the SOM under F329 to enhance ease of use for surveyors and to include language related to how unnecessary use of medications may cause psychosocial harm to residents.
- Psychosocial Outcome Severity Guide: CMS has revised language in the Psychosocial Outcome Severity Guide in Appendix P of the SOM.
- Revisions to Selected F tags: CMS has added language to selected F tags to emphasize the risk of psychosocial harm associated with noncompliance with specific regulations.

Mary Jane Carothers, IHCA VP, Quality Improvement & Clinical Affairs, recommends that member nursing facilities download this S&C Letter and review this revision of survey protocol so that they understand the expectations of surveyors as it relates to potential psychosocial harm in these additional categories.

If you have questions, contact Mary Jane Carothers at the Iowa Health Care Association.

How to Get Your People as Committed to Their Work As You Are

By Denise Boudreau-Scott

A recent conversation I had with an executive made it clear how frustrated he was with his team. “No one steps up to the plate. I ask for a volunteer to take on a project and no one offers to help.” It had been going on for months and finally he realized that while he was working day and night his team was running out the door at 5 PM like Cinderella at the stroke of midnight.

Fed up with it all he inquired, “How do I get them to be as committed to their work as I am?”

The holy grail of all leadership questions!

In Good Company

This CEO isn’t alone. Recently I asked readers of my blog to share with me some of their frustrations. One wrote, “We are very frustrated with our nursing assistants not engaging with residents. What I mean is, not wanting to spend some quality time getting to know about the person they are taking care of. There are some who are just not interested.”

In her message this writer acknowledged, “Yes, everyone is busy and stressed.” Yet she didn’t think it should be used as an excuse.

The easiest, and therefore most common, answer is that education will fix the problem.

We assume sensitivity training will do the trick. Even better, some fancy customer service training will definitely cure all. But rarely do these flash in the pan programs make a significant dent in the true problem: Some people just don’t seem to care.

Whether you are talking about leading thousands in an entire company or supervising a dozen in one department, the question is probably one that you have struggled with: How do you get people as committed to their work as you are?

It really comes down to one thing: how well you support your employees. How good of a job do you do? On the surface it’s an easy question to answer, “Of course I support my employees, after all they’re our greatest asset.”

But are you willing to take a hard look at the truth?

After speaking with tens of thousands of staff members, I would be willing to bet that if I asked the nursing assistants in the scenario above if they felt that their supervisors knew something about them as a person, the answer would be a resounding, “No.” Then it should come as no surprise that they in turn don’t really feel obligated to know something personal about the residents they are serving.

Employees are as committed to their work as you are to them

Maybe it's not the writer's fault. Maybe as the administrator she's doing a great job of getting to know her team members and supporting them. But what about the others on her leadership team?

Almost thirty years ago I had a dream of working in aging services. I thought I landed the greatest job in the history of mankind when I was hired to work as a per diem dietary aide in a nursing home in Long Island, NY. My first couple of days on the job I was full of excitement and ambition. Then day three hit. It was 5:00 PM and dinner was being served in the dining room that was filled with sixty residents with various levels of need.

I had just served three ladies at one table their dinner when their tablemate, Miss Anna came slowly walking over. She was struggling. Instinctively I lent her a hand and put my arm in her arm to guide her around the maze of chairs and walkers that were blocking her way. Just then, my boss Gail, the Director of Dining, approached me. "Denise that is not your job; you are here to serve the residents food, not help them to the table."

Later that evening we had a staff meeting in the breakroom. Gail announced, "I want to remind everyone that when we are in the dining room, it's our job to serve the food. We are not to be assisting residents to their table or at the table. That's nursing's job."

Was she right? Technically. Was she committed to me and, in turn, encouraging my commitment to the job? Hardly.

I spent the rest of my working days there slapping food on tables and, after my mishap, barely interacting with residents. I went from feeling like I'd make a significant difference in people's lives to the person described in the email above. The one who is "not engaging with residents".

Picking up the Rock

Getting people committed to their work takes your willingness as a leader to face the facts. The fact is that in subtle, and not so subtle, ways you are probably discouraging employees from being as committed as you are.

A person interviewed for Jim Collin's book "Good to Great" describes it as, "When you turn over rocks and look at all the squiggly things underneath, you can either put the rock down, or you can say, 'My job is to turn over the rocks and look at the squiggly things', even if what you see can scare the hell out of you."

When's the last time you picked up the rock and:

- looked at your satisfaction or engagement scores without a defensive stance?
- asked employees for their feedback and listened with an open mind?
- conducted focus groups led by a neutral party?

Looking at the squiggly things that are lurking behind each of these questions awakens you to what you, and your leadership team, can be doing differently as leaders to create a committed workforce.

It's the first step in creating a team that is as committed as you are: Knowing that things can, and need to be, different. When people aren't stepping up to the plate, when they just don't seem to care, when they are running out the door at 5:00 PM, chances are they are reflecting what they are feeling: A lack of commitment from the organization.

Commit to them and they'll commit to you.

