Forum Strategy – Being The CEO framework; Pillar 4 – Further Reading
Enabling Improvement and Innovation at Scale

The seven pillars of improvement at scale

Forum Strategy's seminal framework for developing improvement at scale - through narrative, capacity, collective commitment, data, process and project management, innovation, and data (you will need your course/member login to access this article): https://forumstrategy.org/project/7-pillars-of-improvement-at-scale-key-questions-for-boards-and-exec-teams/

This article includes a range of reflective questions for boards and executive teams overseeing the development of systems of improvement at scale. A useful reflective exercise as you embark upon or consolidate your work on improvement at scale.

Quality improvement in hospital trusts

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has published (12 September) its report – '*Quality improvement in hospital trusts: sharing learning from trusts on a journey of QI*' – which identified several common elements in how the various hospital trusts they reviewed had approached their quality improvement journeys (*source: CQC*):

- *Strategic intent for QI* – an early process where senior leaders explore and clarify the purpose and define the organisational approach to QI.
- *Leadership for QI* – where the strategic plan to adopt QI is supported by unwavering commitment from senior leaders, who model appropriate improvement-focused leadership behaviours and a visible and hands-on approach to QI.
- *Building improvement skills at all levels* – using a systematic framework for building skills, facilitating improvement work and sharing learning.
- *Building a culture of improvement at all levels* – which is modelled by the senior team. The approach engages clinical leaders and empowers and enables all staff to make effective and sustainable improvements.
- *Putting the patient at the centre of QI* – the QI journey sharpens the focus on delivering high-quality patient care and aligning improvement activity to outcomes and experience for patients.
- *Applying systems thinking in QI activity* – which results in improvement beyond organisational or functional boundaries, with impact from improvement activity seen across health, social careand wider systems.

The key findings from the CQC's work in this area are summarised below:

- The QI journey has to start at the top of the organisation, with board members and senior leaders jointly setting out the vision to provide the highest possible quality of care.
- The most important determinant of quality of care is leadership. The trusts involved in this research have a strategic plan for QI, which is supported with unwavering commitment from the senior leaders, who model appropriate improvement-focused leadership behaviours and a visible, hands-on approach.
- These trusts use a systematic framework to build improvement skills at all levels, to facilitate improvement work and to share learning.

- These trusts build a culture of improvement, which enables all staff to make effective and sustainable improvements.
- The CQC's 'State of Care 2016/17' report stated that "there were improvements for people when providers reached out to local communities and partners, involving patients and the public in shaping services, and collaborating with local groups".
- True improvement comes when QI is anchored in an understanding of the system and its purpose. It comes where all staff and leaders work together to align the component parts of the system, to achieve high-quality patient care across the end-to-end system.

Further details can be found: https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/evaluation/quality-improvement-hospital-trusts-sharing-learning-trusts-journey-qi

Leadership and innovation

This article from PwC's strategy consulting business describes a recent project which aimed to identify the characteristics of the most innovative companies which are also high-performers. These characteristics are summarised below (*source: PwC*):

1. They closely align innovation strategy with business strategy.
2. They create company-wide cultural support for innovation.
3. Their top leadership is highly involved with the innovation programme.
4. They base innovation on direct insights from end-users.
5. They rigorously control project selection early in the innovation process.
6. They excel at each of these first five characteristics and have been able to integrate them to create unique customer experiences that can transform their market.

Further details can be found: https://www.strategy-business.com/feature/What-the-Top-Innovators-Get-Right?gko=e7cf9

Pure accountability

Forum Strategy's founder and CEO, Michael Pain, has published (19 May) a blog – 'Pure accountability: An accountability vacuum? Let's shape a purer, more community-focused alternative' – which considers the correlation between our education system's current high-stakes accountability culture and the fact that our children and young people are suffering from some of the highest levels of anxiety and lowest levels of life satisfaction in the developed world. Michael suggests that, at a time when we all re-evaluating our lives in the context of coronavirus, leaders themselves have a unique opportunity to shape a new, more sophisticated and purer accountability.

"This is an opportunity for leaders to take the initiative in creating a parallel and much more intelligent accountability system – at a local level, that doesn't see staff or children's mental health as acceptable collateral but as a priority. There is a window of opportunity here that won't stay open for long."

Michael emphasises that most organisations and sectors in our society thrive through 'pure' accountability, rather than a distorted accountability created by the ever changing targets and goals set by successive governments. As leaders, creating this purer accountability is empowering for those we serve, and enlightening for those who serve – our staff, because it is more aligned with why they work for us. Michael states that this sort of accountability begins with boards, such as academy trust boards, many of whom are already so – including through the following activities:

Regular satisfaction and feedback surveys for parents (with a baseline target of what is considered 'success'). This should be both formative and summative and the targets and subsequent results should be published online, in the public arena;

- Routine surveys of staff, benchmarking results against the highest performing organisations across our society and economy;
- Staff retention rates
- Pupil and parent surveys – including capturing how happy they are, how much they enjoy learning, and what further help and support they need from school
- More sophisticated understanding of destination data – including the number of pupils who go on to be NEETs and those that secure employment, not simply HEI data.

Many trusts and schools are doing some of this, but not routinely, publicly or in a way that is sufficiently engrained within their organisational performance indicators. This is the opportunity.

Further details can be found: https://www.forumstrategy.org/its-time-for-a-purer-more-community-focused-notion-of-accountability/

Developing innovation capacity

This article by the Oxford Review considers how to develop innovation capacity within your organisation. The article suggests that working out what enhances innovation capacity is a critical issue for any organisation; and that a new study has found that there are important connections between: innovation capacity; organisational learning; and organisational culture. Organisational innovationcapacity refers to a single organisation or company's capability to produce and exploit new products, services, systems or processes over periods of time.

The study found that a highly integrative culture tends to welcome new ideas and knowledge from external sources, which enhancing its performance across a range of functions including sourcing, acquiring, internalising and importantly commercialising or finding competitive advantage in the new acquired knowledge. The study also suggested that these types of organisational culture tend to be receptive and open to new ideas and they tend to create strong connections and cultivate co-operative connections between the organisation and its external environment. This promotes the effective use and application of new ideas. Additionally this develops internal expertise and learning and focuses people inside the organisation on capitalising on new ideas both from within and without.

The study also found that the more hierarchical an organisation is, the more there is a clear, bureaucratic adherence to roles in an organisation. These types of organisation are frequently less open to external ideas and practices in a 'not invented here' mentality. The knock-on effect is often that staff rarely reach out for inspiration and ideas and are largely tied up with internal concerns, politics and work. Innovation and change is usually not seen as their job. As a result these hierarchical organisations tend to be significantly less open to innovation and change, both from external and internal sources unless it is promoted through the hierarchy.

Further information can be found: https://www.oxford-review.com/developing-innovation-capacity/

Customer service in government agencies

In this article from McKinsey and Company, the authors suggest that as public expectations rise, government agencies are doubling down on improving service delivery to delight their customers. The article highlights the following key issues (*source: McKinsey and Company*):

- While many governments are moving forward with customer experience (CX) initiatives, across the globe, in general private-sector organisations are a lot better than those in the public sector at providing services.
- Government agencies need to build a holistic view of the customer experience so they can put themselves in their clients' shoes, understand their journeys as they access services, and figure out what really delights or displeases their customers. The challenges can be daunting:
    - A monopolistic mind-set is a pervasive obstacle. When customers don't have a choice, it dramatically removes a major incentive for governments to innovate and improve service. It also hampers agencies' ability to set priorities.
    - Unlike private-sector organisations, government agencies must aim to serve everyone within their mandated mission; they can't just ignore certain customer segments. This bar for fairness often solidifies over time into a principle of providing one-size-fits-all service.
    - Governments often lack the capabilities needed to assess and address gaps in customer experiences. Those with deep analytics skills, as well as human-centred design skills, are often in short supply.
    - The data that agencies rely upon are typically incomplete or sequestered in silos. Thus, agencies often lack a full, timely picture of the customer's overall experience.

Further details can be found: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/the-public-sector-gets-serious-about-customer-experience