Trust in Our Colleagues

A group I am involved in is closing in on the time to end the planning for a major international conference, and e-mails are flying! All of the last-minute details have now risen to priority status, and those priorities are numerous. Whether we are planning a small unit conference or a major international meeting, many details cannot be addressed until very close to the event.

Meanwhile, each of us is trying to conclude many projects so we do not have to work on them while focusing on this conference. As a result, we have the pressure of ongoing work that relates to us as individuals, and that, at least theoretically, does not impact the other members of the planning committee. Simultaneously, we are taking in information, assuming new tasks, finalizing aspects of prior assignments, and trying to act normal!

As is often true of nurses, we also want to engage the other members of the planning group in decisions. I completely support that approach; however, it also occurred to me that the group needs to give each of its members the authority and support to do whatever needs to be done so that whatever is actually done! We often expect individuals to perform various tasks, but sometimes, whether overtly or covertly, we have sent the message of “but check in with me first!” For some decisions, that message is critical, but for others we need to convey that we trust each other’s good judgment and know that an individual is not setting out to sabotage a program by placing opposing speakers next to each other or using different themes for programs, handouts, or Web sites. We need to trust each other to be thinking, proactive people. I am reminded that Patrick Lencioni (2002) said the number one dysfunction of any team is the lack of trust. Is that what is at play in most planning groups? Do we not trust that someone else will make the “right” decision, which often means the decision I would have made? Or are we all so compulsive in our commitment to a solid conference (which is probably a good thing) that we fear not participating in each decision?

Recently, I listened in (OK, it might have actually been eavesdropping) on a conversation about a forthcoming conference. The person in charge was clearly IN CHARGE. As a result, the conversation went from one of animated, overlapping points to one of awaiting direction, even when the reluctant-to-speak person was the one with the information! We could probably maintain enthusiasm and efficiency if we spent the first few minutes of the initial planning session deciding what requires group input, what can be done by an individual, and how to communicate when we need help and when we have moved on. Streamlining the way we share those decisions (e.g., a standard reporting format so we know when key work is finished and who did it so we can take the task out of our mind) would also increase our efficiency and trust. If we did that, we could focus our efforts on the truly critical things we must share together to make a conference effective and convey our trust in our team!

REFERENCE


Patricia S. Yoder-Wise, RN, EdD, NEA-BC, ANEF, FAAN
Editor-in-Chief
psywrn@aol.com

The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.

doi:10.3928/00220124-20160715-01