

TOP TEN LIST

TEN BEST WAYS TO DO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT BADLY

With apologies to David Letterman, and thanks for editorial assistance to Elizabeth Kirby and for their insights to the following contributors:

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R.S. Kirby, April 2005

Top Ten List: Ten Best Ways To Do Quality Improvement Badly

Number 10

Take it from the top, down

Establish a spare, modest budget for your Quality Improvement activities, one that includes no resources for IT or medical records. Be sure, however, to budget sufficient funds for the VP for nursing to attend at least two national conferences.

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Number 9

Humpty-dumpty sat on a wall

Tell all of the staff members participating in the QI project that their jobs are on the line if the initiative is not successful.

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Number 8

For the greater glory of all?

Make sure that it is clearly understood that the QI project will benefit the doctors in your clinic, but the staff nurses will do all the work.

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Addendum to Number 8

The best and most innovative ideas for QI are being developed in other organizations and industries. Cherry-pick from successes outside of health care, then shoehorn their methods to fit your situation and context.

If the QI process fails, tell your administrators it was impossible to make the round pegs fit square holes.

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Number 7

If at first you don't fricassee, should you fry, fry a hen?

If the first QI project is not a success, QI is a failure in your hospital and should never be tried again.

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Number 6

Cart before the horse

Focus only on those activities that are cost-effective, but define cost-effectiveness only after the conclusion of the project.

Corollary: Always select QI projects before completing studies to determine what isn't working.

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Number 5

The train don't run on that track no more

Change the focus of the initiative before it has been implemented, but after most staff have been trained.

Corollary: If QI Plan A is too expensive, switch to Plan B. Creating the appearance of TQM is more important than actually practicing it.

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Number 4

Once upon a time

Base your benchmarks on anecdotal evidence.

Corollary: if this isn't satisfactory, balance the perfect with the good. So . . .

Wait until you have 'perfect' data to begin your QI project.

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Number 3

All numbers are created equal

Data are always accurate and reliable. Take no special pains to ensure that the data necessary to monitor and evaluate the QI project are collected properly.

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Number 2

It's my way, or the highway

Don't implement QI as a process – just decide on the solution yourself and tell staff that you will give them a better performance review if they do it your way.

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Number 1

“We've always done it this way!”

The best way to do QI badly is to do no QI at all.