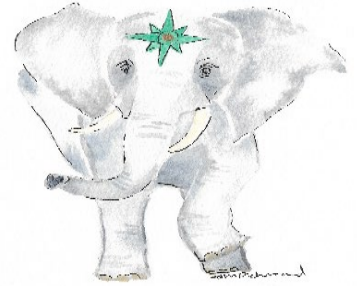


9 Elements of a Person-Centered System: Leadership

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Creating a person-centered system or organization begins and ends with engaged and knowledgeable leaders who are in both formal and informal decision-making roles. While it is important to focus on organization leaders with decision-making authority, we must be mindful of those in informal leadership roles—such as influential employees or people receiving supports—and how their response to change efforts impact the desired results. Gandhi advised us that you must be the change that you want to see, but transformational change requires leaders to both model the change they want to see but also to create the foundation necessary to support and perpetuate the change. Leaders must:

- Understand and use the 9 Elements of a Person-Centered System as a framework:
 - To clearly set out the goals and components of person-centered practice
 - To listen to what is happening at all levels of the organization.
 - To actively align practice with the vision and mission
- Create and sustain positive pressure for change:
 - Expect and manage resistance.
 - Support and acknowledge positive changes made by people doing the day-to-day work.
 - Sustain momentum.
- Create and sustain a robust learning culture built on trauma informed practices.
- Ensure that if and when leadership changes that replacements are recruited who understand the vision and mission.



For the 9 Elements of a Person-Centered System to become a framework for listening and action, they must be used and embedded in practice. The effort begins with assessment. The assessment can be done by comparing each element against current practice or by using the [self-assessment provided by NCAPPS](#). For those elements that are skills or practices, one way to structure the assessment is to think about where people are on a continuum of exposure, competence, habit, and embedded practice.

- **Exposure:** People know that a skill or practice exists, and they can describe it in vague terms.
- **Competence:** People know how to make use of the skill or practice, but do not use it routinely.
- **Habit:** Skill or practice is used whenever it is helpful.
- **Embedded practice:** It is the standard process or practice used within the organization.

The work of leaders is not done until the skills and practices are embedded. Where there are opportunities to embed practice, leadership needs to decide if there is sufficient commitment and sufficient resources to take advantage of those opportunities.

Leadership must gain and maintain support for the mission and vision (and the changes needed) from the governing or appointing authority. Leaders must recognize there is no change without loss and there is no real change without resistance. Loss may be felt when organizations close some programs or cease to offer others. There may be a shift in investment or commitment from traditional services. Those who are opposed to the change may malign the change or lobby for its reversal. There have been instances where those efforts have been successful and the leaders leading the change are removed.

Change can be poorly implemented or ignored. It is important for leaders to know what is going on firsthand rather than having it filtered by several layers of informants. If any of those informants are resistant to the change, the information may be presented in ways to maintain the status quo and undermine the change effort.

In one example the authors recall, the coordinating agency and the service provider colluded to keep and increase the numbers being served by the provider. They did this by suggesting to families that services could be lost if more individualized opportunities were put into place and those receiving supports would be poorly served. This information created a wave of resistance, which was reported to those responsible for implementing policy. Without receiving information directly from those invested in the change, with clear data, the effort was unsuccessful. As leaders, it is useful to develop "listening posts" where there is a direct connection with stakeholders at all levels. Town hall meetings, visits to

departments within the organization, and brown bag luncheons are just some examples of how to create opportunities to be visible and available to those impacted by the change initiative.

Successful transformational change is complex. As Rosabeth Moss-Kanter, a Harvard School of Business professor points out in her book *Challenge of Organizational Change: How Companies Experience It and Leaders Guide It (2003)*: “Everyone loves inspiring beginnings and happy endings. It’s just the middle that involves hard work. Everything looks like failure in the middle.” It involves giving up old practices, developing new skills, changes in routines and additional work in the beginning. It requires involvement and investment with all those impacted by the change. Kanter also tells us: “Change is disturbing when it is done to us, exhilarating when it is done by us.” To help address resistance, it requires that we include those affected by the change. As leaders, there must be opportunities for people to receive information concerning the change and be able to share their thoughts and be involved prior to the change occurs. Leaders must also be aware if they are not getting any resistance, it is highly likely there is no real change occurring. In this case, people are continuing to operate as before with a mindset that ignoring the change will make it go away.

There is an array of reasons why people resist and each of them requires a tailored response. A structure to address resistance needs to be part of the change management strategy and leaders need to consistently support those affected by the change by providing information needed to secure their buy-in. Success stories will help support this buy-in. Leaders need to create positive pressure for change. There will always be people who are resistant and skeptical. We see them as disappointed optimists and need to build trust with these people. However, they should not be the sole focus of our efforts. Those looking forward to the changes, as well as those unsure of the changes, need the support of leadership. By nurturing these groups, the change will gain momentum and they, in turn, can help move those disappointed optimists forward.

Those who are responsible for reviewing and monitoring compliance with system requirements can be instrumental in addressing resistance to change efforts. If these performance review functions continue to support traditional measure that largely focus on health and safety and process measurements, then resistance is reinforced when a shift to person-centeredness is attempted. Reviewers and regulators must be skilled in identifying the connection between health and happiness, safety, and satisfaction. As one colleague, Mary Lou Bourne, describes it: “It is not a matter of either/or, but rather, both/and.” Person-centered plans must reflect this connection and be approved based on these criteria. This shifts the outcomes and goals identified in the plans to those that are desired by the person and the goals and strategies that accommodate health and safety needs. Measurements and data collection need to be more than scope, frequency, and duration of efforts. They must also address quality and satisfaction of the person receiving the service and support. If

the quality monitoring standards and approaches do not create the positive pressure to change, then there is no motivation to change for those who are monitored.

Sustaining Momentum

When the single motivation is compliance, or good appearance, engagement is not rooted in commitment and understanding, resulting in superficial changes. There may be a strong initial effort. However, the test is whether the effort is sustained. Will support continue when the organization is faced with making changes to its operational structure, practice, or organizational cultures? If those invested in the change see that their efforts are not supported by leadership, they will stop trying to make changes. In situations where leadership is invested in the change, leaders serve as role models and demonstrate the changes they want other employees of the organization to make. Resistance is expected and addressed. There is a used and useful change management strategy. Everyone is moving toward the new mindset and practices. This engages the organization as a whole and creates a learning culture to identify what is working and not working to better support those using services and supports, as well as those providing services and supports.

Sustaining momentum requires seeing that efforts are paying off. Changes can be bolstered through what are best described as “short-term wins.” Highlighting such wins provides opportunities to move forward. Those who are making the changes are recognized for their accomplishments. Internal champions are identified and able to support others in making the desired changes in practice.

Changes in leadership are inevitable. Reasons such as retirement, resignations for other positions, mergers or acquisitions or changes in political leadership may have an impact on sustaining the changes implemented. To make it likely that changes in leadership do not result in changes in practice or commitment, there needs to be careful succession planning. You need knowledgeable and competent internal advocates in positions of influence. You need those who hire replacements to have a commitment to the change. We are seeking changes in practice but also changes in culture. We need to not just see changes on the surface, but we need to see changes embedded in the culture. Changing organizational culture in a transformational way requires continuous work that is the focus of everyone in the organizational structure. An organizational culture took years to take root and may take years to change. To be successful, leaders need to look at this as a long-term investment. It is an evolution in how services and supports are designed, developed, and implemented. It will require an alignment across interacting systems and departments and partnerships that may not currently exist. An intentional learning community needs to be created to continue to refresh and reinforce the skills and practice that comprise the change.

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