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Why Frontline Managers are Essential to Achieving Productivity Gains

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“Management without daily monitoring is not management” – Ron Hughes, Staffing and Productivity Advisor

The productivity game is won or lost with your frontline managers. Do they have the daily real-time management skills, tools and analytics to stay on track with performance targets? Have managers been provided with the necessary training? Do they understand why they're responsible for their departments' outcomes?

While most healthcare organizations have developed and implemented a productivity reporting and monitoring system, we find the processes for managing staffing to volume across the organization are often uneven, with varied and suboptimal results. While inpatient nursing units are usually more sophisticated than ancillary and support departments, these units can see improvement on a flexible hour-by-hour basis as patients leave and new patients are admitted.

Short Interval Time Management provides the rigor and philosophy required to implement and sustain labor-cost reduction, operational process improvement and frontline leadership development. Managing performance in shorter time intervals is not typical in medium and smaller healthcare organizations. Using the shift-to-shift or day-to-day approach allows departments that face swings in the workload demand through the day/week to develop a more flexible, fluid workforce to match staff to work. With the implementation of daily shift management tools and biweekly performance trackers, the organization's productivity and efficiency will be elevated.

To fully realize the benefits of Short Interval Time Management, the concept of fixed departments must be challenged. Core, minimum, and base staffing requirements must be examined as a part of the performance improvement analysis. The workforce should not remain the same for an entire year if workload requirements fluctuate. The concept of a fixed/variable department needs to be considered; departments should revisit staffing four times each year.

Successful implementation of Short Interval Time Management requires a multi-disciplinary approach and holistic perspective. Management of daily service deliverables, patient and

provider satisfaction, staff workplace environment, and labor productivity must be balanced alongside a keen focus on labor costs.

Short Interval Time Management requires that performance expectations be established ahead of time so the ratio of forecasted to actual work completed can be closely monitored at various intervals. Success places responsibilities and accountability on every management level – from department managers to the C-suite.

Training and coaching frontline managers, while providing them with timely and accurate data and tools, will enable your managers to drive and sustain productivity gains throughout your organization.