

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

FOR

LANDMARK HOSPITAL

TEMA, GHANA



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MASTERS IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE

Executive Summary

Project Scope

This is a report on the research into the internal communication challenges at Landmark Hospital. Stephen Apeaning Abu Jr. discusses in this report, the structural, cultural and leadership set up at Landmark as they promote or hinder effective internal communication. Based on the findings from research methods used, I have provided adequate recommendations that could improve on the challenges when implemented by Landmark Hospital.

Background

Stephen Apeaning Abu Jr. conducted this research in fulfillment of a requirement to qualify for a Master of Arts in Strategic Communication at the Westminster College. This master's program offers a hands-on, client-based practical research experience for students who are supervised by experienced professors. Landmark Hospital is early in its growth since its establishment two years ago and is still developing both internal and external communication infrastructures. This project is meant to contribute to such development.

Methods

In researching the challenges of internal communication at Landmark Hospital, I used a mixed method of data collection. I sent out survey questions and later conducted interviews with respondents who were employees and staff at Landmark Hospital. I relied heavily on the course textbook, and other online resources through Giovale Library at Westminster College for secondary research.

Findings

The following were among the main sentiments expressed by the respondents to the survey and the interviews:

- Staff desire frequent staff meetings which are not currently held regularly.
- Interpersonal relationships amongst staff are not promoted to the level that is appreciated by staff.
- There is currently no known plan for acknowledging and rewarding exceptional efforts of staff at Landmark.

- 30% of respondents to the survey felt they frequently experience communication barriers pertaining to the culture of the organization.
- 60% of those interviewed found the organizational culture to be below average.
- 60% of respondents said there has not been regular staff meetings held at Landmark.
- 80% of respondents believed staff training sessions would help them learn new skills, keep them abreast with emerging technology and trends in the health care space, and improve their work performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, I recommend that:

- Leadership should clearly define and enhance the existing bureaucratic organizational structure to promote flow of communication. See Appendix A
- Leadership should prescribe and highly specify a formal communication system for the organization.
- Leadership should ensure all staff members are aware of established communication channels.
- Leadership should organize regular, scheduled, and publicized staff meetings.
- Leadership should create an “Ideal Managerial Climate” to ensure “supportiveness, trust, openness, emphasis on high-performance goals and participative decision making” (Cheney et al. pg. 95).
- Management should set up a reward system to recognize individual staff members’ above average performance and incentivize desired behaviors.

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Introduction

Landmark Hospital is a specialist and general practice healthcare facility located in Tema, Ghana. Established under two years ago, the center is strategically located in the fast-growing middle-class area of Community 18, with very easy access off the Accra-Tema Motorway.

The Hospital has first class facilities including a laboratory, scans, and X-ray center. With highly trained doctors and nurses, Landmark is situated to provide one of the best health services to its customers in this area. It is therefore critical that both the technical and supporting staff have the best internal communication strategy, commensurate with the service the hospital is providing. This is how the full impact of the hospital can be optimized.

Problem

Landmark Hospital was established barely a year and a half ago. As such, management is still getting structures, culture and leadership systems entrenched among the stakeholders. This has resulted in many internal communication problems, including lack of regular and consistent meetings and trainings. There is very little follow-up on tasks assigned to management and staff to accomplish.

Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to unearth the possible communication problems through primary research; and through secondary research make recommendations to management for solutions.

Research Methods and Process

I distributed the survey through social media, email and printout copies to staff at Landmark Hospital to get to know the challenges they face with internal communication. The survey collected data on two main aspects:

1. Specific demographic information (gender)
2. Effective Communication

After the survey was conducted, I held a one-on-one interview session with members of staff to get in-depth details on the challenges they face with regards to internal communication.

Limitations of Research

Since survey questions and responses were less informative, interview sessions were held to get more information and a better understanding of the challenges

faced at the hospital with regards to communication. With many staff members, it was difficult scheduling appropriate times to hold these interviews. I addressed this challenge by writing the interview questions out, providing adequate answer space, and getting staff who were unable to meet in person to write out their response to each question. I encouraged them to be as elaborate as possible even though this process inhibited me from asking follow-up questions for further details and clarification.

Research Findings

Leadership

John Rost has found more than 220 definitions of leadership (Cheney et al. p. 183). The multiple interpretations for what leadership is, allows an organization to apply its principles in diverse ways to achieve different goals. In consequence of this, some of the survey responses to leadership inquiries had undertones that fell heavily into the categories of culture and structure. That notwithstanding, here are the main leadership issues the primary research revealed:

- Lack of direction on setting meeting and training schedules with 60% of survey respondents making this confirmation.
- Unfairness in resolving issues among employees. "Leadership tend to pitch staff against each other," an interviewee reported. Another interviewee stated, "staff that have no relationship with leadership are always in a disadvantaged situation."
- Lack of interest from leadership in staff daily routine work, thereby creating a weak and slow communication process at the hospital.
- Nonexistent performance reviews, resulting in some staff members feeling unsure of leadership approval of their achievement at work progress.

Culture

Every organization requires a positive work environment to foster creativity and innovation. "Other writers conclude that a corporate culture focused on social integration, motivation, and commitment would help organizations achieve an innovative spirit and, as a consequence, productivity and competitive advantage" (Cheney et al. p. 86). The main agent in setting and maintaining the cultural tone of the organization is leadership. Lars Hyland confirms this in his article *Leading by Example For A Powerful Workplace Culture*:

Workplace culture is inextricably intertwined with productivity and performance and can truly make or break organization..... A renewed

focus on employee engagement and wellbeing in the wake of the pandemic has led many organizations to cast a critical eye over their workplace culture, and the same theme comes up time and time again – leadership.

The following are the views of Landmark staff in connection with leadership roles in establishing the culture of the hospital:

- 30% of respondents to the survey felt they frequently experience communication barriers pertaining to the culture of the organization.
- 60% of those interviewed found the organizational culture to be below average.
- Some staff members express feelings of intimidation.
- Some respondents felt there is blaming and finger pointing at one another when things do not go as expected.
- There is no motivational or reward system in place for those who excel in their job.

Structure

According to Cheney et al., “the two most basic dimensions of any organization” are “structure and process” (Cheney et al. p. 17). They defined company structure as “the framework that gives the organization a shape not just this moment but also over time.” Here we are looking at various departments and the charts that shows their leadership. It also includes “those aspects of an organization that are pre-specified for a given situation” and may include the format for agenda for meetings which pre-inform participants about topics to be discussed (Cheney et al. p. 18). Having job description, salary structure, and processes for recruitment and expansion of business all predetermined confirms Bob McPhee’s explanation that structure “often becomes a substitute for spontaneous or unplanned communication” (Cheney et al. p. 18).

The respondents of the survey and interviews shared their understanding of what a company structure is, and the extent they find it developed at Landmark Hospital:

- 50% of respondents to the survey prefer effective structures and processes.
- 20% prefer that regular performance reviews are conducted and communicated.

- A greater sample of respondents believes that the above leads to positive outcomes, helps staff enjoy their work, delivers high standards while remaining less stressed.
- About 60% of respondents bemoaned that staff meetings are hardly held or organized and in sharing their opinions on the need for staff meetings, they said it helps in addressing problems they face in a timely manner, while giving room for corrections and modifications where necessary.
- Even though no training sessions are held, according to over 80% of respondents, staff believe that training sessions would help them learn new skills, keep them abreast with emerging technology and traits in the health care space, and improve their work performance.
- They also cited feedback delay, delayed communication, and stagnation of information as barriers that tend to have an impact on their work. “Some of the biggest reasons why employees are dissatisfied with their jobs relates to internal communication challenges: Managers who don't provide enough information, constant changes that aren't sufficiently communicated to employees, or people in different roles who focus solely on their own objectives, and ignore overall priorities.
- In the interview session, the greater number of respondents was of the view that current structure does not promote a free flow of information.
- On staff meetings, even though respondents believe that it helps with communication and keeps staff up to task, it is organized occasionally and there is no consistency.
- On training, a greater sample agreed there has not been any trainings organized.

Recommendations

Having been at Landmark as a patient and a researcher, I was able to make a great deal of observations. The general environment for patients, and the approach by staff to patients seem excellent. Given the fact that the hospital is new and developing, I make these recommendations, which, I believe when implemented by leadership, will go a long way in resolving most of the issues identified above and promote a conducive environment for staff to give their best at work.

Leadership

Leadership needs to be prompt in its communication with staff and also create an avenue where everyone feels wanted and communicates. “Ideally, a direct line should be in place in which employees can make suggestions, share their problems, and talk about their day” (Lockley).

- Leadership should be open and available to all and not just a select few.

- Leadership should go beyond discussing work with and be interested in their personal state to help staff members grow as individuals especially shy and less confident staff.
- Efficient and effective communication needs to be promoted amongst staff.

Creating A Positive Workplace Culture

Management should endeavor to create the environment that promotes a positive workplace to allow employees to work freely and happily. The following are suggested recommendations:

- Leadership must support communication and collaborative flow among staff. With the right strategy in place, company “culture can become much more resilient, innovative, and adoptable” (Hyland 2021)
- Management must establish and maintain regular communication between upper and lower-level staff. There must be frequent flow of updates from CEO and other top management to the junior staff.
- Senior management should listen to feedback from staff at all levels and implement the necessary actions promptly.
- Management should ensure frequent performance management, check-ins, and open discussions on how to implement company’s objectives effectively.
- Human Resource Manager should be on top of employee engagement in the form of annual employee surveys, pulse surveys, focus groups, stay interviews, and open and frank communication across the organization. This will help management identify problems before they become a crisis and get out of hand.
- Leadership should create “Ideal Managerial Climate” to ensure “supportiveness, trust, openness, emphasis on high-performance goals and participative decision making” (Cheney et al. p. 95).
- Staff meetings should be held a bit more frequently than is done now. Meetings could be done virtually so individuals whose shifts may have ended can participate, or during shift transition when departing staff could remain and incoming staff could come in slightly earlier to accommodate the meeting time.
- Management should set up a reward system to reward individual staff members that perform exceptionally in their duties. It could be in the form of hanging portraits of well-performed staff on the wall monthly, gifts or cash. Management should make the selection criteria known and open to all staff members.

Structure

Although Landmark is newly established and comparatively small, it is imperative that effective structure and processes are put in place from the beginning. “But I tell entrepreneurs all the time that providing structure for your business from the outset will make you more effective as you grow” (Kloefkorn, 2014)

- Leadership should clearly define and enhance the existing bureaucratic organizational structure to promote flow of communication. See Appendix A
- Leadership should prescribe and highly specify formal communication – characterized by rules, regulations and norms with the staff knowing what is going to happen before it does – the pattern becomes a ritual (Cheney et al. p. 23).
- Leadership should organize regular, scheduled, and publicized staff meetings.
- Supervisors should conduct at least bi-annual staff appraisals and performance reviews. See Appendix B
- Trainings should be organized in areas where staff may be deficient.

Conclusion

Landmark Hospital has a unique opportunity, as a newly established hospital, to build on its strengths – a beautiful facility, great location and skilled employees – to create an environment conducive to attract and retain the best employees for many years. This research work identified the need to improve in the areas of structure, culture, and leadership to enable the hospital to achieve the above stated goal. The recommended solutions, when implemented by leadership of Landmark, will go a long way to enhance the work climate for all of its employees.

RESOURCES

Cheney, G., Christensen, L. T. Zorn Jr., T. E. and Ganesh S. (2011) *Organizational Communication in an Age of Globalization* (2nd edition) Waveland Press Inc.

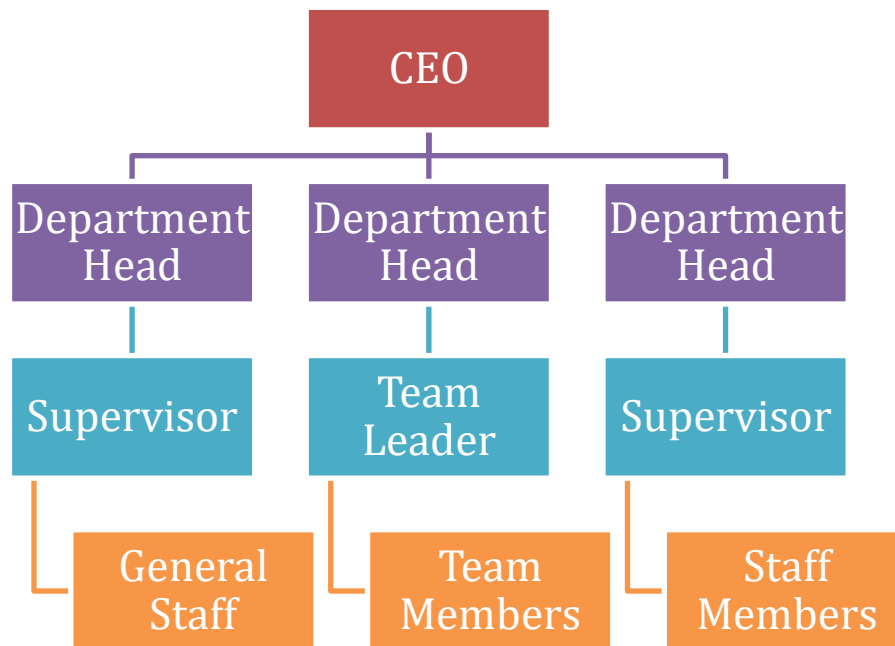
Hyland, L. (2021) Leading By Example For a Powerful Workplace Culture. Retrieve from <https://eds-s-ebshost-com.ezproxy.westminstercollege.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&id=9a2c81e2-952a-49e3-bf04-827f65dc0147%40redis>

Lockley, S. K. 10 Internal Communication Challenges: How To Master Them with an Employee App. Retrieved from https://staffbase.com/blog/10-communication-challenges-and-how-to-master-them-with-your-own-branded-employee-app/?utm_device=c&utm_term=&utm_campaign=google+%7C+us+%7C+dsa+content+blog&utm_source=google&utm_medium=ppc&hsa_acc=3601820080&hsa_cam=13272570160&hsa_grp=125348167800&hsa_ad=524213174301&hsa_src=g&hsa_tgt=dsa-940597040618&hsa_kw=&hsa_adp=&hsa_mt=&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_ver=3&gclid=Cj0KCQiAnaenBhCUARIsABEee8Xry6nTCFLfqrGbKZcgjSXE-HwSgqB3eFbGOg5S7BWgWhl86GJ8POgaAuDBEALw_wcB

Kloefkorn S. (2014) Why organizational structure is so important for small businesses. Retrieved from <https://www.bizjournals.com/phoenix/blog/business/2014/06/why-organizational-structure-is-so-important-for.html>

Appendix A

Rigid Bureaucracy Structure



As the organization grows, Rigid Bureaucracy may become the best organizational structure to be put in place to manage the flow of communication. *Please note: titles above given as a general idea.*

KEY ELEMENTS OF BUREAUCRACY – According to Max Weber as found in Cheney et al (p. 31):

- A fixed division of labor (that is, specializations are specified as jobs, positions or roles).
- A clearly defined hierarchy of positions, each with its own sphere of competence.
- Job applicants selected on the basis of technical qualifications.
- Employees remunerated (paid) by fixed salaries.
- Promotion granted according to seniority and/or achievement and dependent on the judgment of superiors.
- Separation of day-to-day workers from higher authorities through the creation of management or administration.
- Separation of work from home and family life.
- Written rules governing the performance of duties and behavior at work.

<p>4. TEAM ORIENTATION</p> <p>- Demonstrates enthusiasm towards team members.</p> <p>- Demonstrates team membership skills, which have contributed immensely to the achievement of organizational goals.</p>	<p>Give your comments for your assessment.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <input style="width: 40px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text" value="5"/> Outstanding </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <input style="width: 40px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text" value="4"/> Above Standard </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <input style="width: 40px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text" value="3"/> Standard </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <input style="width: 40px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text" value="2"/> Below Standard </div> </div> <p>Comments:</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;"> RATING: <input style="width: 50px; height: 25px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/> </div>
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SUMMARY OF RATINGS:

(19-20 pts) Outstanding/Excellent
 Performance consistently exceeds requirements.

(16-18 pts) Above Standard
 Performance consistently meets and often exceeds requirements.

(12-15 pts) Standard Expected
 Performance consistently meets and occasionally exceeds requirements.

(8-12 pts) Below Standard
 Performance generally does not meet requirements of the position.

Appraiser's Comments on overall assessment:

Overall Rating:

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After a careful review of the facts above, you have earned the following rating.
 (Please indicate overall rating i.e. either A, B, C, D in the Box provided.)

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT /DEVELOPMENT PLANS (REVIEW STAGE)

To help you improve your performance effectiveness on the job, complete the following with a supervisor. State the plan (what to do and when), to bring the employee to the desired level.

<p>Main Strong Points:</p> <p>This can further be improved by: (list what to do by when)</p>	<p>Main areas for improvement are:</p> <p>This can be done by: (list what to do by when)</p>
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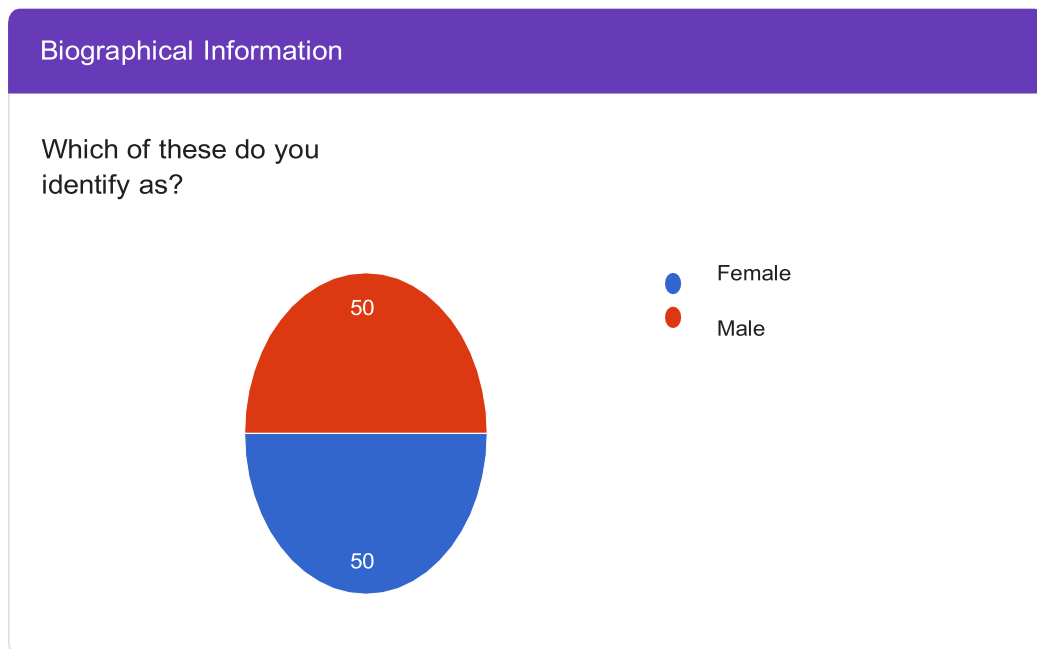
<p>Employee's Comments</p> <p>1. Have you had consistent feedback from your superior (both formal and informal) during the year? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:</p> <p>2. Are these reviews consistent with set objectives in your job description? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:</p> <p>3. Have the appraisal reviews by your superior been fair? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:</p> <p>Comments by the employee on the overall evaluation of performance: </p>	
<p>Employee Signature:</p>	<p>Date:</p>
<p>Director's Signature:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

Appendix C

10 responses

Accepting responses

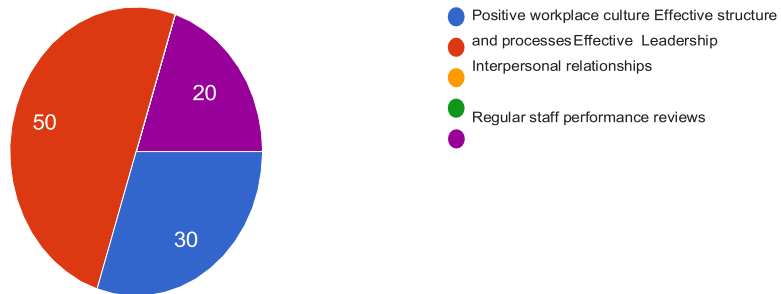
Summary Question Individual



Effective Communication

Which of the following is most important for you when performing your job?

10 responses



It easy work flow

It will encourage staffs to do more to achieve a common goal

Effective structure and processes ensure smooth working atmosphere and clearly defined boundaries to ensure positive outcomes.

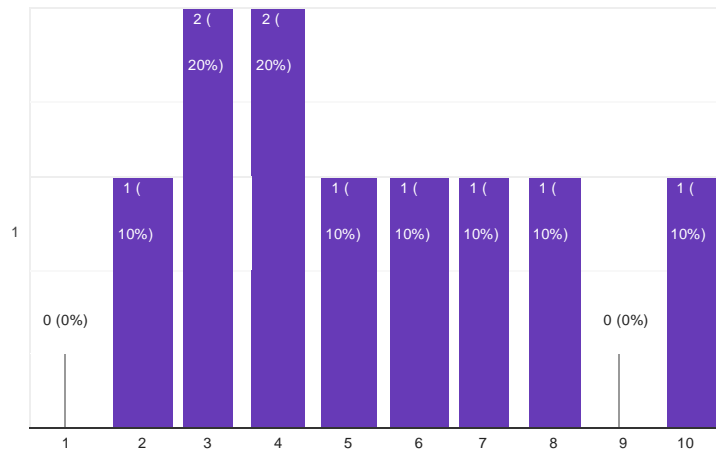
It allows me to perform my task without interference...

It means everything around your working area will be well organized

Makes my work less stressful.

Enables high standard of work

It gives me sound mind to work without stress



It keep the staff up to speed with happens around the world of health care

Regular meetings and training teaches worker new skills.

Regular meetings will bring problems to the fore for prompt responses and pluses will encourage staff to press on harder for even more positive outcomes.

It will serve as a reference point to discuss errors from previous happenings and the way forward.

You get to be updated

Gives room for corrections and modifications where necessary.

To improve on work performance

To put me on my toes

Very effective

Very as the tend to learn new ways of approaching things

None

Very effective - problems are addressed and encouragement where appropriate.

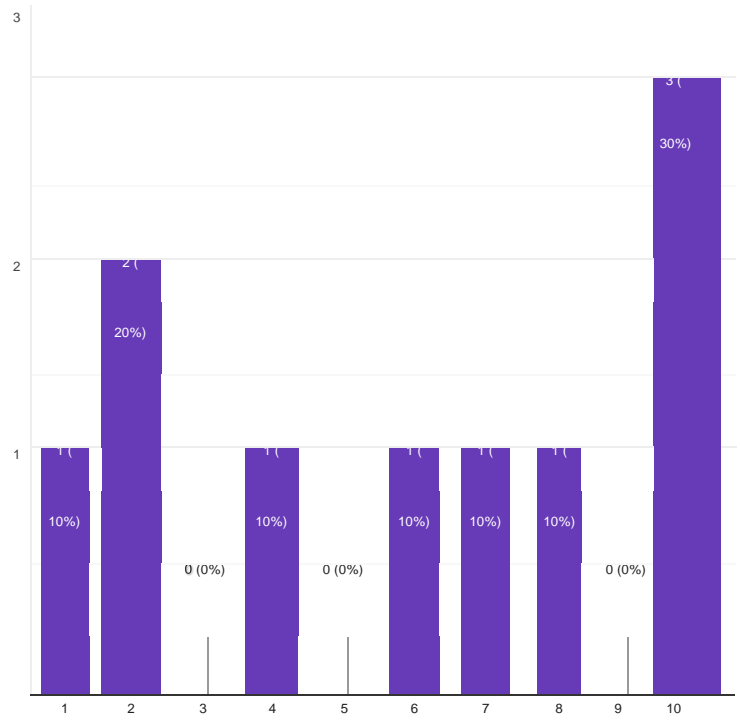
Staff trainings are yet to be conducted.

Effective

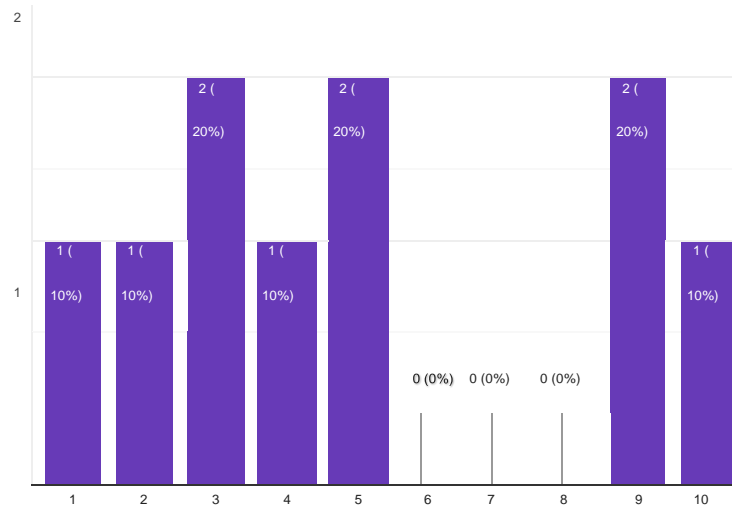
Moderately effective

Not effective

Very effective



- Regular briefing
- No comment
- Very regular meetings.
- Scheduled meetings and CPD Training programs
- Organizing effective enhancing programs
- Regular meetings
- Building interpersonal relationships
- By listening to understand before responding
- Workshops



None
Test
Feedback delay
Indecision
Flow of information
When patients get scared of taking labs
Delayed communication
Gesture or language
Language

Appreciation

