Process and Structure of Systems Transformation

June 14, 2010

System Transformation is Hard

- Navigating a diverse set of stakeholders towards design and implementation of an initiative with great consequences depends more on effective process management than it does on good ideas.
- Most of these efforts don’t progress, and eventually run out of support, or energy.
The Recipe for Success

1. Leadership
2. Process Management
3. Coalition of Support
4. Timing
5. Sustainability and Spread

Leadership

leadership means an engaged and informed executive sponsor who can generate enthusiasm and provide support when needed

and

a hands-on project leader who manages the actual process with content knowledge, and process skill, and who inspires confidence
Leadership

- Effective leaders:
  - bring the right people to the table
  - listen
  - inspire
  - build support
  - know when to continue, and when to compromise
  - make things happen, i.e., they make decisions and "call the question" to solidify support; they "close"

- If process participants don’t feel capably led, such that their participation doesn’t produce value for them, they will leave.

Process Management

- Effective process management is critical to success.
- It requires a balance of:
  - a goal orientation ("to what end?")
  - discipline
  - perseverance
  - listening
  - consensus building
  - closing

- Process management doesn’t end at implementation. Process participants will also leave over time if not engaged.
Process Management

- Basic process management requirements:
  1. Select an experienced, knowledgeable and effective leader to manage the process
  2. Develop a clear agreement on purpose, expected outcome and timeline
  3. Give stakeholders a meaningful role, and make decision-making authority clear
  4. Ratify and document every decision and communicate often
  5. Summarize and distribute every action item from every stakeholder and work group meeting, and follow up to make sure each is addressed and on the agenda for the next meeting – even when not acted upon

- Basic process management requirements (cont’d):
  6. Remind people of the timeline and manage to it, making adjustments as necessary.
     - balance taking time to do something well and build needed support with the need to sustain momentum and show results
  7. Generate enthusiasm and foster good will
     - remind people of the work’s importance and innovation
     - recognize progress and celebrate success
     - thank people for their contributions
Coalition of Support

- Conduct a 360 assessment at the outset:
  - Whose support is necessary for the initiative to succeed?
  - Who is likely to support the effort, whether or not their support is required to achieve success?
  - Who is likely to oppose the effort because of perceived loss, political interest or philosophical beliefs and can potentially halt the initiative or redirect it?
  - Who is likely to be disinterested and won't engage?

- Develop a stakeholder strategy that focuses on:
  - Acquiring, building and sustaining support from those whose support is required
  - Engaging those who are likely to be in opposition and have influence, focusing on areas for compromise and agreement

- Include the voices of those who are less critical, but recognize that they are less critical to success.

- Keep stakeholders engaged over time by:
  - Assigning them tasks that contribute to the effort
  - Bringing them policy questions and problems for consideration and for recommendations
Timing

- Regardless of the topic, “the timing” has to be right for major change initiatives.
- While investing resources when the environment is not ready may be a questionable strategy, new windows can sometimes suddenly open.
  - e.g., payment reform in MA
- It is also sometimes possible to help open windows of opportunity, rather than wait passively.
  - e.g., payment reform in RI

Sustainability and Spread

Six key steps to move to universal adoption.

1) Continued engagement of the champions – especially the payer champions and internal leader(s) at practice sites and state agency
   - ongoing outreach to engage in performance review and policy decisions (negate the threat of distraction)
   - public recognition and other celebrations of success of
     • the overall initiative
     • the roles of the individual stakeholders
   - integrate changes into on-going processes so no longer viewed as “one off”
     • Retain change expert to monitor/guide processes over time
2) Credible, independent validation of success relative to costs and quality metrics
   - Each stakeholder will want to compare results against their own expectations

3) Critical assessment of what didn’t work, why, and application to the model to be spread.
   - The evaluation, and direct experience, won’t demonstrate success on all dimensions.
   - Payers and practices will want to know why efforts fell short, and be presented with a credible plan for future success.

4) Recognition that what worked as a pilot might not be feasible when taken to scale – and what that means for future efficacy
   - Most pilots entail customized, manual payment interventions, reporting and/or intensive practice transformation support.
   - These strategies may not always be feasible for operational and financial reasons at a larger scale.
   - Changes need to be assessed against the likelihood that they will diminish the efficacy of the initiative.
Sustainability and Spread

5) Openness to phased spread, with reassessment and further refinement, as necessary
   - Single step transition from pilot to universal adoption may not be feasible for many reasons.
   - Waves of implementation by region, primary care specialty, or primary care organization type are all options to be considered.

6) Provide continual reinforcement of desired change through permanent payment reform
   - You get what you pay for

Importance of Cultural Environment

- The specific process and structures you build must grow out of your particular cultural environment.
- The general principles and areas of consideration presented are universal; how you address them is not.
- Use ideas from others as inspiration to develop what will work for you.