Becoming a Better Decision-Maker

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Critical Leadership Competency For Nurse Managers

Expert decision-making skills.

Decision-making is often thought to be synonymous with management and is one of the criteria on which management expertise is judged.
Camillus (2008) warns that decision-making in complex environments will only become more difficult in the future, despite gathering additional data, defining issues more clearly, and breaking dilemmas down into smaller problems.

That’s because problems faced by organizational leaders are often “wicked”-meaning that they have multiple causes, are tough to describe, and there is no right answer.

Goals for Today!

- Have fun!
- Increased self-awareness about how you make decisions.
- Identify strategies you can use to become a better decision maker.
Decision making is a complex, cognitive process which requires choosing a course of action.

Think for a minute about the last major decision you made………..
How often do you make decisions by trial and error?

Improving Critical Thinking Skills
Characteristics of Successful Thinkers

- Energy - action oriented
- Courage - willingness to take risks
- Sensitivity
- Creativity - innovative
- Good track record
- Self aware

Why the Critical Thinking Movement?

- Serious decline in the ability of young adults to problem solve/ do inferential reasoning.
- Education historically taught facts, not how to think!

Specific Obstacles to Intellectual Development

- Inability to concentrate & impatience with complexity
- A misconception about self
- A misconception about truth
- Confusion about values
- The habit of basing beliefs on feelings and not on truth or science
- Acceptance of irrationality and mediocrity in themselves
Why is Critical Thinking Especially Important to Nurses?

- Information becomes obsolete quickly
- Complexity of the profession
- Limited # of hours for theory and clinical in education
- Information overload
- Conflicting responsibilities and obligations to others

(Marquis & Huston, 2009)

There is a direct relationship between teaching and learning.

Fostering Critical Thinking

"All too often we are giving our young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow plants. We are stuffing their heads with the products of earlier innovation rather than teaching them how to innovate. We think of the mind as a storehouse to be filled when we should be thinking of it as an instrument to be used."

-John W. Gardner
How can managers assist staff to be better critical thinkers?

Types of Decision-Making
1- Recurrent and routine problem solving
2- Satisficing
3- Maximizing or optimal mode

Comparison of Economic & Administrative Man
- **Economic Man**
  1. makes decisions in rational manner
  2. complete knowledge of problem or situation
  3. considers all alternatives
  4. systematic ordering of alternatives
  5. selects maximizing choice
  (Marquis and Huston, 2009)

- **Administrative Man**
  1. knowledge is fragmented
  2. impossible to accurately predict future consequences
  3. considers multiple alternatives, but not all
  4. makes decisions that are good enough
  5. final choice is satisficing
Frequent Errors Made in Decision-Making

Some people make decisions too quickly and fail to use any type of systematic examination of the problem or its alternatives for solution. Instead, they rely on discrete, often unconscious processes known as heuristics. Heuristics refers to using a ‘trial and error’ or ‘rules of thumb’ approach to problem solving.
There has been an earthquake. You are the only trained health care provider, trapped in an office building with 50 other individuals. There is no electricity or water supply. Many of the people trapped with you have burns, soft tissue wounds, and fractures. Rescuers can not reach you for three days.

ASSIGNMENT:
What three things would you most want to have with you to meet the needs of the situation?

Frequent Errors Made in Decision-Making

- No clear objective or goal for decision.

Frequent Errors Made in Decision-Making (cont.)

- Faulty data gathering.
Facts can be misleading if they are presented in a seductive manner, if they are taken out of context, or if they are past-oriented.

Acquiring information always involves people, and no tool or mechanism is infallible to human error. Girard (2005) suggests that an individual often must ask “why” five times to get to the root of a situation or problem.
Identify a poor decision you made recently because of faulty data gathering…….

Did this occur because necessary information was intentionally or unintentionally withheld from you?

Frequent Errors Made in Decision-Making (cont.)

Failure to use science, logic, and empirical evidence in making decisions.

How are imperatives for evidence-based practice impacting nursing care?
Prevost and Salyer (2010) suggest that many practicing nurses feel they do not have the time, access, or expertise needed to search and analyze the research literature to answer clinical questions.

Strategies to Promote Evidence-Based Best Practice by Your Nursing Staff

- Implement and evaluate nationally sanctioned clinical practice guidelines.
- Question and challenge nursing traditions, and promote a spirit of risk taking.
- Dispel myths and traditions not supported by evidence.
- Collaborate with other nurses locally and globally.
- Interact with other disciplines to bring nursing evidence to the table.

Frequent Errors Made in Decision Making (cont.)

Unclear communication often leads to decision making errors.
Is Your Communication As Clear As It Should Be?

Frequent Errors Made in Decision Making (cont.)

- Too much time spent identifying the problem.

Frequent Errors Made in Decision Making (cont.)

- Not considering enough alternatives.
Generally, the greater the number of alternatives that can be generated, the greater the chance that the final decision will be sound.

Remember that other people in your life will try to make their priorities your priorities—don’t let them rush your decision-making when it matters.

Frequent Errors Made in Decision-Making (cont.)

Lack of self-awareness.
Remember that self-perceptions are not always entirely accurate.

Sometimes it takes awhile to become the person you want to be.

Frequent Errors Made in Decision-Making (cont.)

◆ Refusal to act.
It is not enough to gather adequate information, think logically, select from among many alternatives, and be aware of the influence of one’s values. In the final analysis, one must act.
It may help the reluctant decision-maker to remember that decisions, although often having long-term consequences and far-reaching effects, are not cast in stone.

There are few mistakes which are unrecoverable.

Frequent Errors Made in Decision-Making (cont.)

Using outcome only for evaluation.
Frequent Errors Made in Decision-Making (cont.)

- Not assessing or ignoring the quality of the decision making that is required.

Not everything worth doing, needs to be done to the highest possible standard.

Decision-Making Variables

If we all use the same decision-making or problem-solving model and are given the same information, will we all reach the same decision? Why or why not?
Ways of Thinking:
Are you a frog or a bat?
Source- Deering, Dilts, & Russell
Alpha Leadership (2002)

Innovation and Creativity:
Critical Aspects of Problem-Solving
and Decision-Making

What is Your Risk Quotient in
Decision-Making?
New research suggests that gender also plays a role in how individuals make decisions.

Strategies for Becoming a Better Decision-Maker

Strategy 1: Develop a Global Perspective or Mindset in Decision-Making
The World Is Getting Smaller!

Sample GLOBAL Health Threats
- AIDS
- HIV
- Avian Flu
- Drug Resistant TB
- Polio
- West Nile Virus

The eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) form a blueprint for health for all the world’s countries.
Target Date for MDG Achievement

2015

Many professional nursing issues are also global issues.

The nursing shortage will continue to be a significant global health care problem.
Nurse migration will also continue to be a global issue of concern.

The benefit of a global mindset is that it allows managers to proactively identify and respond to emerging global healthcare and nursing trends which potentially impact national, regional, or even local healthcare planning.

Strategy 2:
Be Aware of How Power Impacts Decision Making
Not only do the preferences of the powerful influence decisions of the less powerful, but the powerful also inhibit the preferences of the less powerful.

Strategy 3:
Use a Systematic Decision-Making Process Whenever Possible
Example: Nursing Process: A Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Model

1. Assess
2. Diagnose
3. Plan
4. Implement
5. Evaluate

Example: The IDEALS Model
(Facione, 2006)

- Identify the problem. — “What’s the real question we’re facing here?”
- Define the context. — “What are the facts and circumstances that frame this problem?”
- Enumerate choices. — “What are our most plausible three or four options?”
- Analyze options. — “What is our best course of action, all things considered?”
- List reasons explicitly. — “Let’s be clear: Why we are making this particular choice?”
- Self-correct. — “Okay, let’s look at it again. What did we miss?”

Strategy 4:
Use Clinical Decision Support (CDS) When It Is Available

- Defined broadly as “a clinical system, application or process that helps health professionals make clinical decisions to enhance patient care” (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society, 2008, para 1).
Example: Computerized Provider Order Entry (CPOE)

- A promising technology that allows providers to enter orders into a computer and to access the latest information on best practices.

Use commercially purchased expert networks — communities of top thinkers, managers, and scientists—to help make decisions (Saint Amand, 2008).

Strategy 5:

Strategy 6:
Use quantitative decision making tools when appropriate to make better and more objective decisions... such as pareto analysis, paired comparison analysis, grid analysis, decision trees, force field analysis, and cost-benefit analysis.
Strategy 7:
But….. don’t forget the importance of intuition as a decision-making tool.

Andrews (2006, para 1) suggests that “one of the critical skills separating good leaders from great leaders is the conscious use of intuition in daily decision making. Great leaders actively call on their intuition to enhance decision making, whereas less effective leaders tend to rely too heavily on traditional approaches.”
Recognition-Primed Decision (RPD): Model for Intuitive Decision-Making

Strategy 8: Develop “Whole Brain” Thinking Skills…….

Right Brain Vs. Left Brain Dominance
Critical Thinking Question of the Day

Is it easier for the left brain to train the right or for the right brain to train the left?

Strategy 9: Create Teams to Help Make Critical Decisions

The healthcare team is increasingly characterized by highly educated, multidisciplinary experts. This complicates, not eases teamwork.
Nurse managers need to create teams of experts, not expert teams…. to assist in decision-making.

Strategy 10: Practice Makes Perfect

“In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.”

Theodore Roosevelt

The successful nurse executive has the ability to make good decisions consistently.

—Thomas R. Clancy
References


References