

How to keep staff motivated, engaged and moving up the career ladder: Can Step Up help?

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Background

Ongoing engagement and motivation of staff is a challenge faced by many managers in public health. Providing clear and achievable career paths can also be difficult when there is limited capacity to provide tangible incentives or rewards. To address these issues, a large nutrition department in NSW Health created a career development and engagement program called 'StepUp'. The program focussed on core competencies aligned with the NSW Health Professionals Industrial Award and provided a matrix of progressive goals for clinician engagement and motivation.

Method

Using an iterative approach with senior staff, a framework was developed which focused on seven modules. These were: clinical experience, professional supervision, student supervision, quality activities, research, teaching and education, and service development. Each module contained clearly articulated goals and milestones based on a points system to measure progress. All clinicians in base grade positions were included in the program. Staff identify StepUP goals and achievements bi-annually and meet regularly with their team leader throughout the year to receive support, direction and progress evaluation.

Results

Since the program was established (early 2011) 24 staff have commenced StepUP. Of the seven staff who have completed the program, four have been personally regraded as senior dietitians and three have been recruited into senior positions. Comparable allied health departments have not achieved similar results in personal regrading. All staff report greater levels of confidence in clinical and non-clinical activities and contribute to the department's culture of continuous service improvement, research and teaching/training.

Conclusion

Introduction of a well-articulated and methodical career development program provides tangible outcomes for both organisations and employees. StepUP has successfully engaged and motivated early to mid-career dietitians by enhancing capacity and skills across a range of performance indicators. The StepUP framework can be easily adapted to all allied health disciplines through inclusion of profession specific criteria.