

BOOK REVIEW

Sanderson, H. & Lepkowsky, M.B. (2014). *Person-Centred Teams: A Practical Guide to Delivering Personalisation Through Effective Teamwork*. London: Jessica Kingsley. ISBN 978-1-84905-455-3

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Introduction

Person-centred teams focus on interpersonal work relationships to deliver a culture of superior performance, trust, engagement and accountability based on the tenet that if *one* fails, then *all* fail. Person-centred teams bring together the concept of high-performing teams, the values of person-centred counselling developed by Carl Rogers and also person-centred practices. Person-centred teams provide a focus on people and relationships, to deliver improved performance together through the use of a range of person-centred practices

Aims of the book

While most people recognise how important it is to have the right people in the team or organisation, recruitment efforts often limit what we know about candidates in terms of skills, knowledge and job-related experience. Teams frequently set goals and develop action plans without knowing the values, contributions, aspirations and needs of individual team members. It is difficult to sustain high levels of achievement over long periods of time if team members do not feel connected to and supported by each other. The intentional focus of using person-centred tools to understand what matters to people and how to support them well differentiates person-centred teams from more traditional teams. The deliberate focus on persons and people promotes a vibrant team culture where staff are engaged and have greater capacity for working in an emotionally intelligent way. The goal of a person-centred team is not merely to get along, but rather to get aligned with individual patient needs and, through this, to achieve results. Performance is aligned with delivering purpose: the processes that the team use are the ones most likely to deliver performance and reflect what matters to people.

Progress starts with how the individual team member is doing in delivering his or her performance.

Intended audience

The particular focus of this book is for teams working in health, social care, education and the voluntary sector. There is a drive towards personalisation, to make sure that people are at the centre of decisions about their lives and services and that they have as much choice and control as possible. No matter its designation, effective personalisation must be delivered by person-centred staff and teams across the entire organisation.

General organisation of the book

After the introduction and initial chapter on profiles and plans, the book guides readers step-by-step through delivering personalisation through effective team-work. This is achieved by focussing on: 1. Profiles and plans, 2. purpose, 3. people, 4. performance, 5. process and 6. progress. For each theme, a range of ways is provided to choose from and a means to check how each works. The conclusion offers practitioners three ways to get started in a day. A person-centred team plan is a compass for the team. It enables team members to see where they are now and the direction that they are heading in. I turn now, to the specifics of the volume.

General thesis

There are things which are 'important to' and 'important for' someone and where there is a need for an accommodation between the two. 'Important to' is what really matters to the person, what makes their life meaningful and what they

want to have present in their work and home life. 'Important for' relates to what must happen for a person to remain healthy and safe and what other people need to know or do to enable the person to function at their best. It is crucial that team managers understand this. As the volume makes clear, research suggests that employees tend to leave organisations due to a poor relationship with their manager. The Chartered Management Institute in the UK found that 49% of staff would be willing to take a pay cut if it meant working with a more supportive, team-orientated manager (HR Review, 11 November 2009). In person-centred teams, people are central - both the people supported by the team and the people in it. Person-centred teams have a shared sense of purpose, know what success means in relation to their purpose, know why they are there and why their work matters. They know what is important to their members and how to support members individually and collectively. They allocate roles and tasks based on members' strengths and interests and reflect regularly on what their members are doing and learning so they can continuously develop and improve. They also maintain a 'living record' of who the team is, their purpose, how people work together, what they are working towards and how they are doing this. In short, they develop and implement a person-centred team plan.

Teams cannot be managed in a traditional, hierarchical way where team members are expected to deliver truly personalised, person-centred support to individuals. We therefore need to explore how teams can work together differently and productively, so that the values of personalisation and person-centred work can be seen and felt in all aspects of how an organisation works. Personalisation requires a person-centred culture throughout organisations and this book describes what this means at a team level. A team's purpose provides positive tension that keeps it striving to fulfil its purpose. Imagine a rubber band that, when stretched, creates a tension that causes the band to return to its original or even an advanced state. A team 'stretched' by challenges and opportunities should be able to rely on a compelling purpose statement that helps them to focus and refocus, thereby pulling them back into shape and holding them together.

At the outset the authors show practitioners how to define the purpose of their team. The vision is the desired future state of the organisation; a long-term view of what would be different if the work was completed. The mission statement describes why the organisation exists and what it does in order to achieve the vision. The matters which are most important to people within the organisation are these: its influences on how the mission is enacted and how it can guide decisions and behaviour and thus fulfil its values. The team purpose expresses the contribution a group makes towards fulfilling the organisation's mission. A statement that describes what an individual team member is passionate about - and draws them to their chosen line of work - is the individual purpose.

Sometimes, indeed often, teams are created to deliver specific objectives. The organisational leadership creates the initial purpose or 'charge' to the team, department or committee. There are times when it becomes necessary for

team leaders to suggest the initial purpose to provide context, but person-centred team members are encouraged to 'co-create' that purpose and explore their own values and aspirations in relation to it. If team members are not given the opportunity to discuss their individual hopes and dreams for the future, it is likely that they will be less motivated to contribute to or commit to the organisation's mission. The process of arriving at a shared purpose is as important as the final purpose statement itself. I turn now to the opportunities and challenges of 'co-producing' a team purpose statement. An individual purpose statement asks the question: 'Why am I part of this team?' as it's the framework for creating a powerful life at work, at home and in the community. A strong sense of personal purpose guides people in the decisions they make and in the directions they take. In the team context, a purpose statement is a guide to all members about who each person is and why the work they do matters.

In considering how to describe a person's reason for being, their purpose, the team should think about past successes. They can identify examples of personal success in recent years these could be at work, at home or in the community and identify common themes. In understanding staff values, they could be asked to develop a list of values and attributes that identify them and their priorities. After narrowing these down to the 'top ten', they can then choose five which they believe to be the most important. To these, they could add to their aspirations an ambition to help others understand them better.

Process

Process? When teams use intentional person-centred practices, they become equipped to build positive relationships and maintain a culture that keeps people at the heart of the team's actions and encourages trust, empowerment and accountability. The authors are clear: This is 'process'! We have answered the 'Why are we here?', 'Who are you?' and 'What does success look like?' questions. Process is the 'how' question, so that clinicians can focus on delivery and how it can be achieved.

Later in the volume, two questions are asked in terms of how, precisely, teams work together and how their processes can be used to deliver appropriate services. It discusses how people can work together and how to deliver success. The aim is to find ways to enable and support the team to work together in ways that reflect and deliver a person-centred culture and what is important to the team. However, this alone is not sufficient - the way people work together are the real mediators of how performance expectations are actually delivered.

Process defines how a team works together, how the work gets done and how decisions are made. It includes clarity about who will do what, when and how and it defines systems and practices that keep the team focused on the five Ps of a person-centred team. This volume will help readers to think about the following: 'What does the team want to agree on how to work together? How to be clear about how to make decisions together? How to have

meetings that are effective, productive and positive? How to get the best fit between an individual's talents and interests and the tasks the team has to do? How to plan for success? How to support the team members to deliver success?' The processes chosen by a team are influenced by the team's purpose, values and personality styles and the strengths and gifts of members. Person-centred teams put values into practice by designing processes that support clear responsibility, shared decision-making and working to team members' strengths. It is thought that how a team gets together - what happens in meetings - is a microcosm of the culture of the team.

What is meant by 'performance'?

To deliver high quality services, team members must have a thorough understanding of whom they serve, what they deliver, how well they are expected to do the work (performance standards) and how this will be measured. In order to actualise those standards, the teams need to understand what is expected from their performance before agreeing to processes and setting goals for improvement (progress). After the person-centred team plan including a purpose statement and useful information about what is important to team members and their support needs, teams must go further than focusing just on mission, purpose and people. Teams need to know what *good looks like* to ensure that people know what their job is, why it is important and what impact it has on others. People can only achieve a high level of job satisfaction when they measure their job performance against a pre-determined standard. If they cannot define and measure performance, they will never know if they have achieved real success or not. A major cause of stress to employees is not knowing what is expected of them by management and their peers. Lack of clarity about expected performance and how it will be measured can lead to confusion, frustration and duplication of effort within teams, departments and organisations. With rising competition for limited resources and a responsibility to use public and private capital responsibly it is overwhelmingly important to develop a description of a job done well. We also need to consider that at an individual level the team members know what is expected of them - they know very well what their core responsibilities are and competencies they need to hold or achieve.

Performance is aligned with delivering purpose: the processes that the team use are the ones most likely to deliver performance and reflect what matters to people. Progress starts with how each individual is doing in delivering his or her performance. Defining performance converts the abstract concepts described in the team purpose statement into concrete, observable events or activities that can be measured or evidenced. Performance helps to align the team's purpose with its daily work activities. A person-centred team has a culture of trust, empowerment and accountability. Performance indicators build accountability and keep the team focused on continuous improvement for the benefit of the people

served by the team. The team and individuals can then decide which processes will be needed to achieve expected results.

The more specific care staff are about what success looks like, the easier it will be to decide how to measure it. The authors of the volume are clear that there has to be a clear line of sight between success and what it is planned to measure, then test it with other people (the notion that if it seems logical that success means this, it makes sense to measure that). The best measures are data which have already been collected. There is always a danger of putting more effort into measures than the time and energy that people have for delivering the results in the first place. As practitioners start looking at what team core responsibilities are, they have to make sure that every member is involved in the decision-making on what those responsibilities might be. If they are handed down from management, rather than co-created with their team, the team will not feel involved and compliance will be the over-riding issue, instead of clarity of accountability.

Although the authors suggest starting with meetings, it is up to managers and their team to decide on their priorities. Managers could simply ask team members what they think is working and not working about how they work together as a team and deliver their purpose. Another possibility is to ask each person if they could change one thing about how the team works together and what would that be. To ensure that meetings are positive and productive, the questions in a team meeting would be: 'What is or is not working?' and 'If you could change one thing, what would it be?' Sometimes, team members may have very low expectations due to previous or existing experiences; or their managers might decide to introduce new ideas to the team and then evaluate them after a designated period of time so that the team can decide what to keep or discard.

Writing style

The aim is to match staff to people, tasks and roles. A care home manager wanted to find out what staff liked and admired about their managers. Given that 'too many people' write what they imagine people like and admire about them without actually asking apposite questions, the procedure of creating a one-page profile is demonstrated from a national organisation that provides support to people with learning disabilities sees one-page profiles as integral to performance management. New staff members and their managers normally start their one-page profile during the induction training. Three times a year, in their 'one-to-ones' management consultations with their manager, staff members update their one-page profile, if necessary and talk about whether they are being provided with the support described in their profile and how they are functioning using the person's gifts and talents in the workplace. Most managers know the skills of their staff, but to be able to make a good match, they also need to have information about characteristics and interests. A detailed one-page profile will provide that information.

For organisations that provide support to individuals, it is vital to achieve the best match between the individual and the staff or volunteers who provide that support. At the annual appraisal, both the staff member and the manager write in the notes what is working and not working from both of their perspectives and then to use this as the basis for review and action planning. Another organisation does the same and it uses that information to contribute to its business planning in place of the usual staff satisfaction survey. At the appraisals, when staff have completed their working/not working points and acted on these, the manager asks for the top two working/not working themes. This information is collected for each staff member and used anonymously to identify the general themes that are working/not working for all staff. The information is then used within the business plan.

Conclusion

This book is a very practical guide designed to provide a clear and well illustrated example of how to define effective team work with just five themes and examples from health and community services across the charity and public sector. The authors have clearly explained 'performance' and 'progress' in the context of team work. They have defined success as sharing learning and growing a community of practice around these ideas. The book takes the practitioner step-by-step through purpose, people, performance, process and progress and, for each, provides a range of ways to choose from and a means to check how people are doing.

An excellent example of involving individuals in teams is the one-page profile which is not only described but practical examples are also provided. One-page profiles are developed through conversations and using person-centred thinking tools, for example, talking about good days and bad days. The authors of the volume provide information about what is important to the individual staff and how he or she needs to be supported. A good one-page profile will make the reader feel as if they have met the person, even before they meet them. The amount of detail is crucial. They can also be solely work focused, or broader, covering all areas of a person's life. Once everyone in the team has one-page profiles completed, they can begin a team one-page profile. A national organisation that provides support to people with learning disabilities uses one-page profiles as integral to performance management.

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This essential manual is an invaluable resource for service providers, managers, practitioners and students involved in health and social care. In discussing multidisciplinary teamwork and those most effective components of this particular approach, this volume represents an important contribution to the person-centered healthcare literature and is, therefore, highly recommended to academics, clinicians and health policymakers alike.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.