Internal Comm-edy
How to Infuse Humor to Engage Employees

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Learning Objectives

- Understand how to establish a complex, multi-phased communication strategy for major changes in your organization
- Understand how storytelling and engagement are the foundation of any internal communication strategy
- Understand how to navigate the complex communication requirement for multiple stakeholders while maintaining interest and engagement
Permission to Have Fun

- A leader’s vision.
Go Big or Go Home

- MWHC Sings a Tale of Needing a New EMR
Mission Epic

- 18-month implementation timeline
- Seeking engagement, energy, and commitment
- Entire organization had a role in the success
- Tried and true communications just would not cut it
Communication Challenges

- Change of this magnitude will create discomfort.
- Effort requires dedicated communication development and management.
- Communication vehicles must be tailored to each audience.
- Angst caused by prior implementations may overshadow the project.
- Keep the focus on the benefits of the technology, not the technology itself.
Communication Objectives

- Position Epic EMR as a care enhancement tool for MWHC community.
- Set expectations early in implementation.
- Use stories to help communicate benefits.
- Adjust communications as necessary.
- People over technology.
- Recognize and celebrate individual and team contributions.
- Engage the audience!
Goin’ Live with Epic

- Leadership committed to engagement as a critical success factor for the communication strategy.
- Best practice to have a theme for communication.
- Another Go Big or Go Home moment.
- Mission Epic Launch!
Mission Launch Communication
Enter Spaceman!
Communication Tactics

- **Kick-off**
  - Epic EMR video
  - Epic work space design
  - Guiding principles
  - Theme
  - Design (App Icons, Templates)
  - Presentations

- **T-9 months**
  - Intranet weekly updates
  - Weekly e-newsletter
  - Training support
  - Astronauts (physicians)

- **T-1 month**
  - MyChart Sign-Up Events
  - Goin’ Live with Epic video
  - Super Users
  - Tip Sheets

- **Mission Launch**
  - T-minus Updates (one week)
  - Daily News (Launch+2 weeks)
  - Rovers, Relaxation Zones
  - Moon Packs
  - Status Briefs
Lessons Learned

- Go all in
- Early and often
- Consistent
- Ditch the waste
- Tell stories
- Have fun!
Storytelling

- A way to share and learn ideas, values, and practices.
Why share stories?

- Stories solidify abstract concepts and simplify complex messages
- Stories bring people together
- Stories inspire and motivate
Transforming the Complex

1. Isolate shared desires of the audience
2. Make your audience take a side – personify the “villain”
3. Solutions need a problem; find it and demonstrate it
4. Allow your audience to aspire to reach the ideal state
5. Find a common purpose
6. Incite passion among your audience transforming them into ambassadors
Storytelling Principles

- Stories are how we are hardwired.
- Everyone is a storyteller.
- We tell stories to connect, dream, and imagine.
- A story is what you take with you.
- Bad storytelling has numbed our ability to tell good ones.
- When you sell anything – including an idea – you tell a story.
- We are naturally curious, and we all want to be smart.
Putting It Together

- Know our audience
  - Get your audience involved
  - People like to be a part of the story
  - Strike an emotional connection
Putting It Together

- Find our voice
  - Authenticity
  - Transparency celebrates our uniqueness
  - Show your challenges and failures
  - Reveal admiral characteristics
  - Gain trust
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- Define our core message
  - Consistent

- Organized (disorganized stories are confusing and uninteresting)
- Know it inside and out before you tell it

- What kind of story are we telling
  - Incite action
  - Convey values
  - Foster community or collaboration
  - Impart knowledge or educate

- Establish a CTA or desired outcome
  - Lesson learned
  - Keep it short, simple, and relevant
  - Appeal to shared values and beliefs
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Storytelling Exercise

Exercise #1
- Break up the group by a row or section of the room.
- Have the first person identify the opening line of a story.
- Have the last person identify the closing line of the story.
- Each person goes one at a time to build the story with characters, conflict, and resolution.
- Use your imagination and make it fun!
High Reliability Heroes

- Finding our funny.
High Reliability Journey

- **Kick-off right before Epic implementation**
- **Content was intense and emotional**
- **Lost messages among Mission Epic**
- **Realized opportunity to re-energize the campaign with some humor**
Stories Need to be Memorable

- Storytellers share from life or the life of others
- Listeners relate and retell it
- Creates a connection around feelings, information, and shared experience
Why humor?

- Humor is a stress buster
- Humor is inspirational
- Humor boosts morale
- Humor increases productivity
- Humor incites innovation
- Enthusiasm is contagious!
Re-launched HR messaging using a superhero theme
High Reliability Heroes
High Reliability Heroes Tactics

- E-newsletter
- Stories
- Real people
- Graphic images with simple messages
- Launch parties
- Trading cards
- Humor/Hero ambassadors
- FUN training
- Another video, of course!
Storytelling Exercise

Exercise #2
- Use inspirational photos to tell a story.
  - Superheroes
  - Images from your workplace
  - Faces with specific expressions
- Practice developing a story for a specific audience based on the inspirational picture.
- Consider the audience, set parameters, and plan the story.
- Practice adding humor or light moments to the story!
Find Your Funny

- Look for humor in the organization.
- Identify people are funny and encourage them!
- Consider “Humor Ambassadors” who recite humorous tales and encourage laughter
Key Take-Aways

1. Remember to assess your organization’s leadership humor “tolerance.” Get leadership on board before embarking on a humorous campaign. Culture shock can set in!

2. Go big or go home! Commit to a campaign theme including how much or how little humor and storytelling you use. Try to source real stories that give a meaningful stress reducer with some laughs.

3. Plan, plan, plan, and practice! While some people are talented story tellers, it often takes a good amount of practice to tell humorous stories that resonate with your teams.

4. Mar-Comm should not own the comm-edy (instigator not an owner). Find your humor and storytelling ambassadors to assist with the communication.
Questions?

Please be sure to complete the session evaluation on the mobile app!
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Lisa is a 25-year veteran of healthcare marketing and communications. She serves on the SHSMD Board of Directors and has presented to local, state, and national organizations. She is often tapped to teach entertainment-style classes to her peers on topics ranging from leadership, high reliability, communication, and more.
Bibliography/References

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- Stein, J. (2017, July 11). Humor is serious business: You are not as funny as you should be, and your company is suffering for it. *Stanford Business*.
- MWHC We’re Goin’ Live with Epic Now (https://youtu.be/GeYIAHD4p0E)
- MWHC Sings a Tale of Needing a New EMR (https://youtu.be/T4SajyGkEp4)
- MWHC 10 Safety Commandments (https://youtu.be/0TzG3GV9WRI)