Five Tips for Creating an Effective Suggestion System

Engaging staff in problem identification and suggestions for improvement is essential for any organization yet most organizations do not have a system that effectively encourages staff involvement. Below are tips to create an Effective Suggestion System.

1. ***Make it Public***
   If you have a locked box for staff suggestions, please take it down. They are a symbol of a failed system from the past and they represent much that is wrong with American suggestion systems. Why locked? To hide participation, to hide ideas, to submit in secrecy, to not share ideas. Make your Idea System public so participate or lack thereof is visible to all.

2. ***Keep it Local***
   Eliminate the Blue Ribbon Panel and red tape approval process. Develop a system for local approval. Train managers on the purpose of the program – staff involvement and recognition and on the focus for ideas – quality, cost, delivery, patient satisfaction, staff satisfaction, productivity, etc.

3. ***Make it Simple***
   Develop a simple brochure to describe the program along with a self-evaluating form that includes the problem, the idea and if the employee can implement it on their own. A simple bulletin board should be developed to indicate idea status including columns for New, To Do, In Process, and Complete Ideas.

4. ***Focus on Singles not Homeruns***
   Encourage small ideas that can be implemented quickly by the employee versus large changes that require external resources such as engineering, IT and facilities. While some of these types are inevitable, they need to be balanced with many more that can be completed within the unit.

5. ***Measure the Process not the Results***
   Remember the purpose of the program is primarily staff involvement and recognition. Measure process effectiveness not individual ideas. The wisdom of this decision will soon become apparent. Measure Participation Percent and Level of Participation. Most importantly measure Time to Evaluate and Time to Implement. Consider the following goals for each measure: 100% participation, 12 ideas per employee per year, 48 hours to evaluate and 5 days to implement.

Source: Daniel J. Fleming, Continuous Improvement Manager, GBMP.
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