

Optimizing healthcare training programs: What to include to achieve success



Healthcare organizations are battling against some pretty stiff headwinds with funding reductions, staffing shortages, and all-time high demand for their services. These stressors can have a huge negative impact on [organizational culture](#), causing reduced morale, increased conflict, and healthcare worker burnout. Many agree, there's never been a more important time to implement healthcare training programs.

Healthcare ranked last among 27 other industries in employee satisfaction according to the [2023 Healthcare Experience Trends Report from Qualtrics](#). Implementing healthcare training programs to improve morale and engagement is critical to keeping employees engaged. However, it's also tricky because:

- Heavy workloads present serious logistical challenges for scheduling and implementing them.
- Stressed out, unengaged workers make it difficult to get their attention and drive change.
- Programs with the best intentions often miss the mark because they incorporate approaches that don't fix the problem.

We've been working with healthcare organizations for decades and understand the challenges you face. From our work with healthcare organizations like yours, we know that when it comes to patient care, failure is not an option, so any program to drive culture change and improve productivity must be focused on increased satisfaction by both employees and patients. With these goals in mind, here are the attributes of programs we have found to be the most successful.

1. Be flexible

Everyone is busy, but healthcare workers are *uber*-busy. Every moment in training is time away from patient care, so expecting a team of people to sit in a room for days is often not a practical approach. However, some of the most intractable people problems can only be solved when people convene and talk it out. Overburdened coworkers with divergent goals are likely to have conflict, and simply put, you need face time to overcome it.

Organizations have tried multiple approaches to resolve this issue, but in our experience, the best approach includes the following components:

- In-person or live virtual sessions that are flexible enough to meet various scheduling options. Some organizations may be able to schedule a couple of consecutive days for healthcare training programs, while others can only spare a couple of hours a week. Any program must be adaptable to your schedule.
- While group activities are essential, the training content itself should also be available on demand so that participants can consume it according to their own schedules.
- These two modalities—live and on-demand—should be combined so that on-demand sessions are for absorbing concepts and preparing for live gatherings. This

“flipped classroom” approach—where live sessions are focused on the application of training in the real-world scenarios that your workers face every day—has been shown to be the best way for people to internalize information because they can consume the training on their own but talk about its application in live sessions where they can interact with coworkers.

This approach affords the most flexibility for healthcare workers while still providing robust subject matter and the opportunity to “dive in” during live interactions.

Look at this short video to see how we structure healthcare training programs for clients in this way:

2. Drive engagement with real-world examples

The impact of healthcare training programs is directly proportional to the relatability of the material and the way it's delivered. Asking busy healthcare workers to apply abstract concepts to their day-to-day activities will erode the results you're looking for, particularly if people are stressed out and not fully engaged.

That's why it's so important to cover essential topics with real-world examples explained by those who lived them. With bite-sized vignettes that depict people who were going through and overcame similar challenges, the concepts you're trying to get across will resonate far better than written material, simulations, or some other modality.

Focusing on video also facilitates the kind of on-demand approach to training that we mentioned earlier: people can view these vignettes at their convenience and then meet together to talk about how they apply in their workplace.

3. Focus on the root cause of the problem

Most healthcare training programs focus on the symptoms of a problem rather than the root cause. As in healthcare, treating the symptoms is essential, but getting at the root cause is critical. For example, you can't fully remediate the tension between physicians and administrators by implementing new processes; success hinges upon their willingness to work together as a foundation for change.

In this video, we talk about the idea of planting a seed in toxic soil. See how it relates to your organization's culture:

This is important because when stress increases, it's easy to think of others as obstacles or impediments to your own success. For busy healthcare workers, administrators may seem like obstacles requiring undue red tape that takes away from patient care, and administrators may see those workers as impediments to improving reimbursement flows rather than success.

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The root cause of these conflicts—and the foundation high-impact healthcare training programs—is mindset. [Research has shown](#) that focusing on mindset first will provide better results. When you think about the kind of healthcare training programs you want to deliver, start by helping participants understand the mindset that underlies the behaviors and conflict you're trying to remediate. Incidentally, those real-world examples and live discussion sessions are perfect complements to a mindset-focused training approach.

Looking ahead

These three recommendations—schedule flexibility, real-world examples, and a focus on mindset—are borne of our decades of experience working with clients in healthcare and dozens of other industries. In healthcare alone, our customers have seen significant declines in attrition, reductions in employee HR complaints, and substantial increases in both employee and

patient satisfaction.

We've worked with healthcare professionals from large hospitals to small practice groups, helping them identify ways they can collaborate more effectively to achieve the results they expect and need.

To find out more, [please schedule time](#) to speak to an Arbinger healthcare specialist.