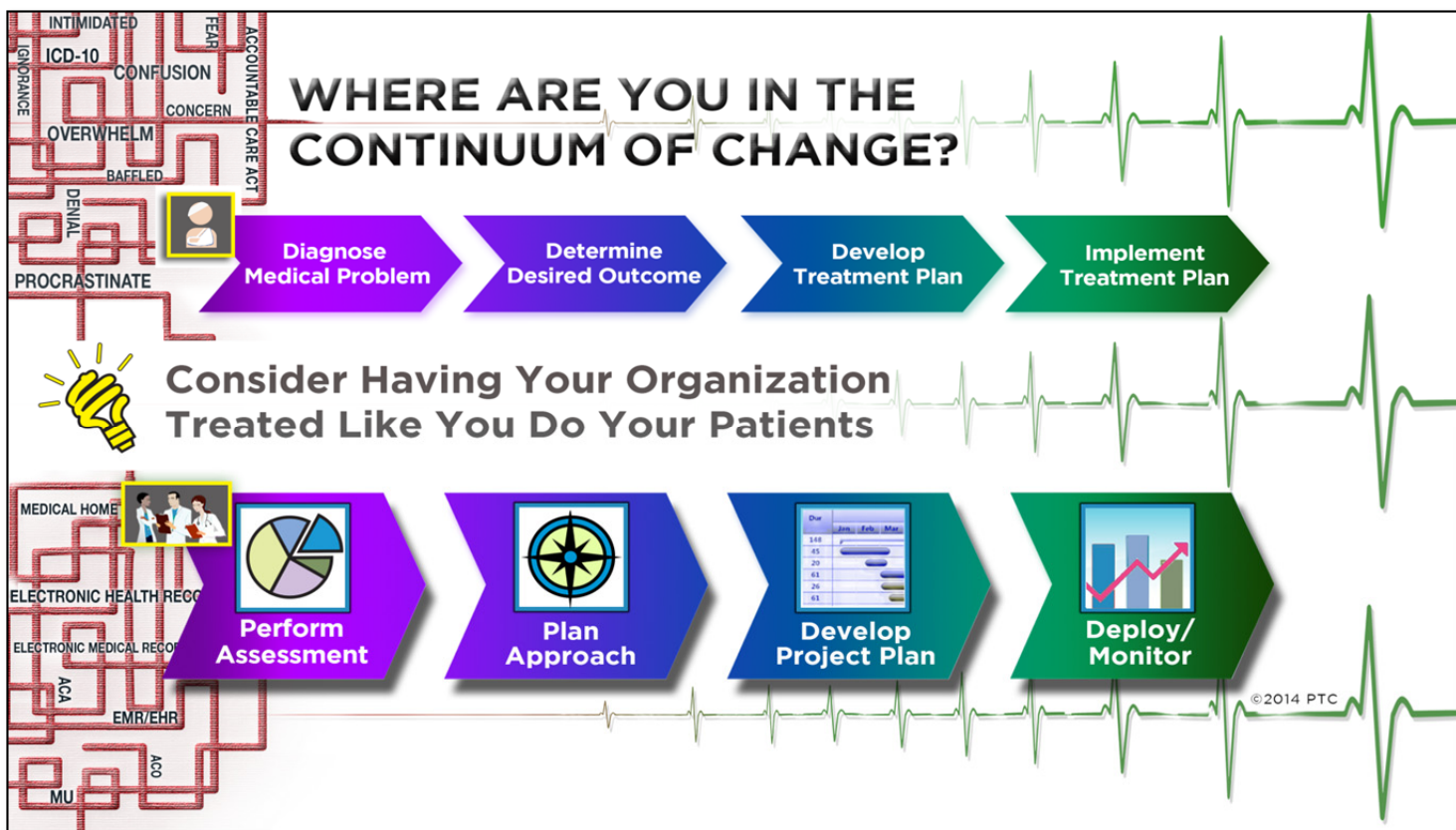


## Let PTC help YOU Manage the Healthcare Industry Changes Impacting YOUR Practice



Physicians, on one hand, you are masters of change. The medical arena is an ever-evolving field with updates in technology, drug interventions and treatment practices. On the other hand, there seems to be a quagmire of healthcare-related legislation, initiatives, and threats of competition. How do you create a balanced and healthy environment in which to thrive?

Regardless of which external force is impacting you, allow yourself and all of your staff to go through the emotional cycle of change. It is normal to be resistant to change, as there is usually a certain sense of loss of familiarity or lack of control. One of the many models designed to help people cope with change was developed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and emphasizes the natural and expected phases of grief: Shock, Denial, Frustration, Anger/Depression, Acceptance, and Integration/Moving On. Another normal human reaction is to skip these steps to get through the grieving process more quickly. Historically, if these phases don't naturally occur in the proper order, you may feel the impact later. It is best to accept that

allowing individuals within an organization to go through their respective mourning phases, will enable the organization to become resilient and bounce back, stronger than ever. However, that success is dependent upon the leadership (you) role modeling the proper course of action through the change process.

Having a plan helps progress through this cycle more quickly and efficiently. Those in healthcare are already familiar with this process in dealing with their patients on a daily basis. As pictured in the diagram above, the provider performs a series of steps for all patients:

1. Diagnose a Medical Problem (e.g. take X-rays, use a thermometer, understand patient history)
2. Determine the Desired Outcome (e.g. heal broken bones, consider patient constraints)
3. Develop the Treatment Plan (e.g. write a prescription, recommend physical therapy)
4. Implement the Treatment Plan (e.g. take medications, perform exercises, change diet)

This four-phase plan, although not a formally documented methodology is logical; however, there is also a tacit understanding that the steps can neither be skipped nor be completed in a different order.

The same holds for the organization. Treat “it” like a patient and run it through the four steps (note the parallel diagrams above). In business terms:

1. Perform an Assessment
2. Plan the Approach
3. Develop the Project Plan
4. Deploy/Monitor to the project plan



The “Perform Assessment” phase is very similar to the diagnosis activities a physician performs. First, a history and physical exam are taken of the patient to determine the following: chief complaint, history of present illness, past medical history, family history, social history, and review of systems. Then a differential diagnosis is generated and tests are ordered (if applicable) in order to narrow down the possibilities. Finally a working diagnosis is established. In business terms, the activities performed on/in the organization include: analyzing all of the workflows and processes; understanding the criteria of the data required to operate effectively (as well as the system’s current constraints in gathering/reporting these data); details of where the initiative/compliance occurs that touches the organization currently (or not); and identification of where opportunities for improvement exist, regardless of what the initiative/compliance impacts are.



In the “Plan Approach” phase, there are similarities to determining the desired outcomes for the patient; this is where the goals of therapy and applicable prognosis is established. Any constraints from the patient’s history are considered at this time (e.g. wheelchair bound, hereditary issues). Within an organization, this means setting the direction/goals of the change. If there are concurrent initiatives, prioritization, as well as identification of resource constraints, needs to occur. For the healthcare organization this means understanding the nuances of the Initiative(s) and determining if there are non-compliance issues. It means establishing how to get from current state to future state. This resulting gap analysis or roadmap also requires associated metrics/milestones to ensure that the activity being done is moving towards the desired outcome.



During the “Develop Project Plan”, a provider develops the treatment plan. This is based on the goals of

therapy, influenced by patient desires and therapies available, and includes detailed activities to get the patient from their medical problem to the desired outcome. Organizationally, this ensures that all activities are focused on achieving the successful completion of the initiative. This means doing so in an efficient and effective manner so that workflow and systems are integrated and aligned. At this time, many decisions will be made (e.g. modified workflow layouts, reorganization of staff, new floor plans, respective policies). All interdependent issues should be aligned and activities identified with specific details. In addition, due dates and accountable personnel are assigned. This project plan is the result of a lot of planning and input/validation by all the stakeholders who will be impacted. Getting buy-in at the front end is critical.



As part of the “Deploy/Monitor” phase, in a clinical setting, the patient receives therapy, results are monitored, adjustments are made, conditions are reassessed, and corrective action is taken, if necessary. The same holds true for the organization’s implementation of the project plan. However, because there are many people and possibly multiple cultures involved, a great deal more attention should be given to the “softer” side of things as the issue of resistance to change will arise. So, change management and project management activities need to be constantly monitored. This is the reason why communication, metric tracking, and training are critical activities during all, but especially this, phase to ensure success.

Ultimately, the reason for all of these externally imposed changes within this industry is to improve the whole condition of healthcare in this country. Increased metrics, accountabilities, competition, and transparency will become the norm. Physicians spend years practicing their trade and focusing on the holistic clinical aspects of treating patients. You are not expected to know how to do that for an organization; leave the leading the charge of organizational change to those with that type of subject matter expertise.

The focus of these initiatives is to provide better outcomes (including safety) for more patients, while reducing the cost to deliver these goods/services. Achieving both of these (with additional benefits of increased patient/staff satisfaction and lower employee turnover) should be the objectives for the physician practices in creating their future healthier work environment.

***Embrace the change and enjoy the journey!***