

## Develop an Out-of-the-Box Approach

by Kriss Barlow

Sometimes, the best way to get the attention of others inside the box (e.g., the other leaders on your team) is to do some serious out-of-the-box thinking. No, we're not talking about doing any mental gymnastics here. We're simply taking the current, accepted dos and don'ts in your work culture and rethinking the process, measures and accepted limits.

Here are some general and service-specific ideas to get you started. Look them over, and then work with your internal team to enhance the list. Next, try one of our ideas, give it time and see if you get some attention for your area and your needs.

**Find new ways to measure.** Create interest and motivation within a department by announcing they've been selected as a beta site. Implement a new internal process, a new vendor or a special study.

**Keep consistent records.** If you manage a call center, for example, figure out what's good for your bottom line—number of calls, number of referrals, a chance to make a patient or customer contact, etc. Then make a plan to track types of calls according to when advertising and marketing campaigns launch, when a new physician group joins the organization, and so on. Then follow through with your record keeping and use it as a comparison in the future.

**Use customer-service measures to show ROI.** Maybe they're not the traditional ones. Consider focus groups, surveys of patients, providers and physicians — even how long your clients continue their contracts with you. Put in place tools to regularly track this information and measure their effectiveness.

**Talk with new people.** Initiate conversations with people from other departments you may normally not interact with daily. Understanding what they do, and vice versa, can create opportunities for internal synergy. Getting to know unknown departments breaks down silos—and reinforces the idea that it's a lot harder to bad-mouth people you know. What a customer-service concept!

**Invite “outsiders” to share what they know.**

Bring in vendors, industry speakers or people who have had success in other industries. Invite them to present their thoughts in a staff meeting, so your team can expand their understanding from a different perspective.

**Assess your personal style.** We're not talking fashion here, but what's inside. Take a look at your personality type or invite a colleague to share what she sees. Then take a look at the people you most need to win over. Note how your styles match, or don't, and take steps to match your style to theirs. It's a strategy that works, whether you're a staff person working with a manager or CEO, or an executive working with your board of directors.

**Make it visual.** Healthcare people are generally visual learners. So show your team the goals or outcomes you desire through a simple graph, pie chart-or something else that paints a picture. They'll be more likely to remember what you've said, and more motivated to deliver results.



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