

# PEAK PERFORMANCE

## EIGHT TIPS FOR IMPROVING EFFICIENCY ACROSS THE CARE CONTINUUM



*The healthcare system in the United States is ranked both high in cost and low in performance when compared to other developed countries. For this reason, and many others, reducing costs and improving patient care are top priorities for the healthcare industry. In order to accomplish these goals, healthcare leaders need to work to increase efficiency at every point across the care continuum. The following efficiency tips will help your organization recognize opportunities, as well as design and implement improvement strategies that lead to cost reductions and increased quality.*

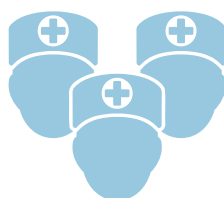


**1. START BY EXAMINING INTERNAL PROCESSES.** The first place to start when trying to improve efficiency is with an internal audit. Examine internal processes to determine which efforts add value and which are wasteful. This means looking at each and every step in your different processes and workflows. For example, map out what happens from the moment a patient arrives to check in at your facility until the moment they leave. By charting the steps you and your team take to provide care, you can gain a better understanding of where time and resources are being spent. From there you can make a determination on what is and is not essential for delivering value to patients. Then you can simplify and streamline.



### **2. FORM A COMMUNITY COALITION TO IMPROVE COLLABORATION AND CARE**

**COORDINATION.** Making improvements to internal processes is a start, but there are a lot of external processes that involve other players – and those areas need attention to make them as efficient as possible. Sharing and receiving patient data, transitioning patients from one care setting to another, coordinating medications prescribed by different providers – all of these things require collaboration with outside providers. It is helpful to put together a community-based coalition of providers in your area. This is an easy way to bring providers together so they can continuously work to make shared patient care as effective and efficient as possible.



**3. INVOLVE STAFF AND LISTEN TO THEIR SUGGESTIONS.** Whether you are a physician office, hospital, nursing home, or other medical provider, if you pay attention you will likely find that your staff can share valuable insights and ideas for improving efficiency internally and externally. Team members can share information on why particular processes or workflows aren't working, and what needs to change in order for them to be more effective. Encourage your staff to make suggestions. Better yet, require staff members to routinely submit feedback and recommendations. This also helps with getting buy-in when organizational changes are necessary because people are generally more open to change when they have a voice and opportunities to provide input.



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### 4. PROMOTE PREVENTIVE CARE TO REDUCE HOSPITALIZATIONS AND OTHER COSTLY ACUTE CARE

**NEEDS.** Regardless of what area of healthcare your organization specializes in, promoting and encouraging preventive primary care is a huge part of driving efficiency across the care continuum. Effective preventive care can eliminate the need for more expensive and invasive treatments. It costs less to prevent disease than treat it, so all providers should do their part to encourage and support preventive care that keeps patients well.



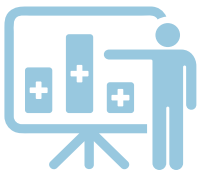
**5. UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY.** Large hospitals and health systems across the country have led the way in adopting electronic health records systems that make accessing and sharing patient data easier and more efficient. However, some physicians, many nursing homes, and various other providers have not yet adopted EHR technology, or they are not using it to capacity. Electronic health records are easier to access and more efficient than paper. By training your staff to correctly utilize EHR technology you can vastly improve efficiency.



**6. ADOPT THE BALDRIGE EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK.** Organizations that are serious about making long-term changes and helping drive efficiency across the care continuum should consider adopting the Baldrige Excellence Framework. The principles in the Baldrige framework are used by businesses and organizations around the globe from every industry. When applied to healthcare, the Baldrige framework has been shown to lower rates of complications, grow profit margins, and increase improvement levels. The Baldrige principles can be applied universally to any healthcare organization and used as a framework for managing improvement.



**7. FIND AN OUTSIDE FACILITATOR TO GUIDE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS.** Quality improvement management may very well be outside your organization's scope, particularly if you are a small provider. If that is the case it may make sense to partner with a quality improvement expert. By doing this, you can focus on caring for patients and let someone more experienced in quality improvement guide you toward measurable healthcare improvements and cost reductions.



**8. FOCUS ON QUALITY FIRST, WATCH EFFICIENCY FOLLOW NATURALLY.** Here is a funny thing about efficiency: if you focus on doing what comes naturally – providing high-quality care – efficiency tends to follow. Make improving quality your primary aim and you will also see efficiency improve. A hospital that works to make quality improvements can reduce infections that require additional care and lead to longer and more expensive hospital stays. A nursing home that aims to provide the highest level of training to its staff can reduce safety issues (like falls) that send residents to the hospital. The point is, safe, high-quality care is always more efficient. It costs less and uses fewer resources to do things once and do them right. So, focus on improving quality first, and you will notice that efficiency is a byproduct.

**FOR MORE CUSTOMIZED TIPS AND INFORMATION ON HOW YOUR  
ORGANIZATION CAN INCREASE EFFICIENCY, CONTACT PRIMARIS TODAY.**