



Achieving improvement through insight and teamwork

Philips Utilization Consulting at work in Trier, Germany

Who/where

Krankenhaus der Barmherzigen Brüder in Trier, Germany. Teaching hospital providing specialized medical services to 100,000+ patients per year.

Challenge

With a new Ingenia MRI system installed in the imaging centre, staff wanted to optimize work practices and improve patient throughput.

Solution

Philips Utilization Consulting helped staff discover ways to improve patient flows and create new efficiencies through greater cooperation.

The Krankenhaus der Barmherzigen Brüder, or Brothers of Charity Hospital, in Trier, Germany is a teaching hospital that provides highly specialized medical services to more than 100,000 patients per year. Philips Healthcare installed one of the first Ingenia MRI systems in combination with Ambient Lighting at the hospital. Philips healthcare consulting offered to run a rapid workflow improvement project (Kaizen Event) to help hospital staff discover ways to improve patient flows and create new efficiencies. As a result, the Trier team learned how greater cooperation could boost patient throughput and enhance job satisfaction.

The rapid workflow improvement project focused on the hospital's imaging centre for radiology, ultrasound and nuclear medicine, where the new MRI system was installed. The team of clinicians were already operating at the top of their game, but with the complexity of their work systems they recognized there was potential to change and improve, although they did not have a clear vision for doing so. "Process optimization is nothing new to us. But it is seen that, again and again, even in project management or process optimization, you come to a point where it is difficult to get even better," said Prof. Dr. H.P. Busch, Head of Radiology.

The Philips consultants undertook a Kaizen Event, closely observing staff practices in action. Kaizen is Japanese for 'improvement', and a Kaizen Event aims for a rapid improvement that optimizes a small, self-contained process in a single burst of

change. It involves describing and observing processes, then brainstorming to identify potential areas for change.

At Trier, a team of Philips facilitators worked with the imaging centre staff for a week, observing their practices, examining their workflows and hosting workshops where all staff could meet openly and talk in a constructive way about current work habits and potential ways to improve.

The Philips team also followed a typical patient flow, repeatedly questioning why each process was in place, while remaining as unobtrusive as possible to the hospital's daily operations. Every aspect of the workflow was examined and analyzed: efficiency, attitude, equipment, patient interaction.

Working together to identify solutions

A key stage in the rapid workflow improvement process was a series of staff workshops facilitated by the Philips team. The sessions benefitted from being inclusive, with staff from all areas of the organization involved: radiologists, technicians, scheduling staff, even transport and reception staff.

In the workshops, staff were encouraged to talk freely about current work practices and, with the help of the Philips facilitator, to identify bottlenecks in the workflow system. "I am putting a lot of thought into trying to change many things, more precisely, to grow together with my organization," said Ms Beyer, Receptionist.

Constructive discussions

With an experienced staff such as the team at Trier, deep insight is common, but so are old habits. The Philips consultants worked to draw out opinions and issues in a constructive and positive manner, bearing in mind that talking about problems in a mixed environment can be an uncomfortable experience for some staff.

One method the Philips team used to help uncover core issues in the workshop was a 'Murphy's Analysis'. Here as a team, the staff discussed and prioritized workflow issues in a structured, non-confrontational way — weighing the pros and cons of each issue, brainstorming for solutions and deciding together how to move forward.

"There was someone from outside who has given feedback who is not part of the system, but looks at it from the outside, like a mirror."

Bearing in mind that any solution will affect the staff's lives on a daily basis, the Philips consultants worked to make sure all team members were engaged and part of the process. "Now we could formulate the problems more clearly and there was someone from outside who has given feedback who is not part of the system, but looks at it from the outside, like a mirror. And that was, for us, a very nice experience," said Frau B. Bungert, Lead MR Technologist.

DVD will be placed here



Prof. Dr. H.P. Busch and Frau B. Bungert at work in MRI control room

Shared vision for the future

At Trier, the staff agreed to try out certain process improvement changes, including changing scheduling and changing patient flows. With a shared vision for improvement, all staff agreed to try a new regime for a day and to consider its impact. "We have discussed the changes that we are going to implement, and not only do we have the radiologists, the technologists, the administrative people on board, but here also we have the IT guy," said F. van Latum, Senior Consultant. After a day working with new processes, the hospital staff were impressed with the results. More patients were accommodated and work practices flowed smoothly. What's more, the team felt a sense of achievement and cooperation, with everyone giving their best effort. They agreed to continue with the process changes and to work together towards even greater efficiency.

"We are at the end of a week together, a week of cooperation with Philips. We all felt it was worth it. Looking forward, we must see that we have an enrichment of how to solve problems and apply that internally. And on the other hand, it is very important

"The team felt a sense of achievement and cooperation, with everyone giving their best effort"

that achievements we made must also be held onto to ensure that we do not go back to the old ways," said Prof. Dr. H.P. Busch.

The team at Trier recognized that installing cutting-edge technology and offering best-in-class clinical services were essential for success, but operational excellence and the ability to continuously improve performance were equally important.



Prof. Dr. H.P. Busch with Ingenia MRI system in combination with Ambient Lighting

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