

December 2019

The self-study lesson on this central service topic was developed by 3M Health Care. The lessons are administered by Endeavor Healthcare Media.

### Earn CEUs

After careful study of the lesson, complete the examination at the end of this section. Mail the completed test and scoring fee to *Healthcare Purchasing News* for grading. We will notify you if you have a passing score of 70 percent or higher, and you will receive a certificate of completion within 30 days. Previous lessons are available at [www.hpnonline.com](http://www.hpnonline.com).

### Certification

The CBSPD (Certification Board for Sterile Processing and Distribution) has pre-approved



this in-service for one (1) contact hour for a period of five (5) years from the date of original publication. Successful completion of the lesson and post test must be

documented by facility management and those records maintained by the individual until recertification is required. DO NOT SEND LESSON OR TEST TO CBSPD. For additional information regarding certification contact CBSPD - 148 Main Street, Suite C-1, Lebanon, NJ 08833 • [www.sterileprocessing.org](http://www.sterileprocessing.org).

IAHCSMM (International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management) has



pre-approved this in-service for 1.0 Continuing Education Credits for a period of three years, until November 6, 2022. The approval number for this lesson is **3M-HPN 190611**.

For more information, direct any questions to *Healthcare Purchasing News* (941) 927-9345, ext. 202.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain how to motivate and inspire technicians
2. Describe emotional intelligence
3. Explain how to retain technicians with opportunities and promotions

Sponsored by:

**3M Health Care**

## SELF-STUDY SERIES

# Employee engagement!

## Managing our best and brightest in Sterile Processing

by Monique L Jelks, BA, CRCST

The greatest challenge for many sterile processing leaders is acquiring and retaining the best and brightest technicians. Sterile processing technicians work tirelessly behind the scene of surgery, ensuring surgical instrument sets are complete and safe to use from one patient to the next, without ever seeing the fruit of their labor. The work produced by sterile processing technicians is the foundation for which surgery stands, however, its profession and practice are still uncommonly known, aside from those who work in perioperative services. For these reasons, retaining the best and brightest technicians is crucial for supporting the best surgical outcomes. Sterile processing leaders must focus harder on motivating and inspiring technicians by gaining their trust and respect as well as creating goals and opportunities for their success.

### Motivation and inspiration!

The stress of sterile processing is often ignited by seemingly unrealistic demands to produce more sterile sets than what is available and/or the time allowed to sterilize them. No matter the demand, technicians in many sterile processing departments band together as a team and “make it happen” without recognition of a job excellently performed. Without motivation or inspiration from sterile processing leaders, this type of performance on a consistent basis will result in disengagement and eventually turnover. Without motivation, people will not help, and the effort goes nowhere<sup>1</sup>. In order to motivate and inspire, sterile processing leaders must gain the trust and respect of those they lead as well as understand how to manage their own emotional stressors and identify the same in others.

### Trust and respect

When the best and brightest technicians *trust* and *respect* their leader, only then

can the leader *motivate* and *inspire* them. Leaders can gain respect by sharing their knowledge of regulatory standards and processes performed within their own department. Being able to articulate and answer the “why” and “how” questions about sterile processing is inspiring for those who learn from your knowledge. Leaders can gain trust by ensuring concerns are addressed by taking action and/or providing follow-up communication. When technicians are supported, they are motivated to do a better job<sup>2</sup>. No matter how big or small the concern, leaders must follow through with action and/or follow-up communication for how the concern will be resolved. Often times, leaders miss the opportunity to motivate or gain trust because concerns may seem insignificant. For example, taking action to ensure drinking cups are in the break room. Although this request may seem insignificant to the leader, for the technician working in the decontamination area all day this is a big concern when they only have a 15-minute break and must leave the department to find a drink of water. Trust and respect go hand in hand; without one or the other, leaders will be less effective in their ability to engage sterile processing technicians. Leaders must be careful to understand that respect gained is not equal to being trustworthy. Technicians may respect their leader’s knowledge about sterile processing standards and department processes but have no trust in their leader’s ability to support them when they ask for help. In essence, effective leaders possess the knowledge to inspire and the ability to motivate others with their actions.

### Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and manage emotions in yourself as well as recognize and understand the emotions of others<sup>3</sup>. Leaders must possess self and social awareness in order to create an atmosphere of trust

where employees can feel comfortable, secure and become self-motivated<sup>4</sup>. In healthcare, we are trained to notice and report problems that could harm patients<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, leaders often share, as they should, concerns for potential patient harm with individual technicians, as well as their entire department. Leaders must be socially aware of the potential to demotivate the work environment as a result of consistently sharing negative communication. Why would anyone want to be engaged with someone who has nothing positive to say about them? When the best and brightest technicians consistently flex their time, are always willing to help, and produce more sterile sets than what is required for the day, positive communication is a must to ensure technicians are engaged. Service excellence comes from employees feeling valued. Therefore, sterile processing leaders must focus on substantially increasing the awareness of what is right and positive to create an atmosphere of service excellence<sup>2</sup>.

There is no stressful experience like the one when a surgeon calls the sterile processing leader to the surgery suite to discuss a major instrument error while the patient is on the table. Leaders should be self-aware of how situations and circumstances at work can produce negative emotions in themselves that may be projected toward the people they lead. Leaders must deal with their emotions immediately after receiving unfavorable communication as a result of poor sterile processing service, so they do not unintentionally demotivate the technician who provided the poor service. Leaders must remember to inspire service excellence with their knowledge. A great leadership quote to remember is *People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.* ~John C. Maxwell

### Conflict resolution

The stressful demands and challenges of sterile processing can sometimes find our best and brightest technicians dealing with their own emotional intelligence as they work through communication conflicts. Coaching our best and brightest requires social awareness. Social awareness is the ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them<sup>3</sup>. Conflict is defined as a disagreement or disharmony that occurs in groups when differences regarding ideas, methods, and people are expressed<sup>3</sup>. These differences, however, do not have to result in a negative outcome. A-E-I-O-U is a conflict resolution model that sterile processing leaders can benefit from as they seek to resolve conflict for those they lead<sup>5</sup>. If used properly, this conflict resolution model can help the sterile processing leader identify positive intentions, concerns and actions that lead to resolution. Whether the leader is directly involved with the conflict, the A-E-I-O-U model is designed to work with any level of conflict. Using the model is easy as each alphabet vowel followed in order is an organized pathway to resolving conflict. Each vowel letter represents the objective and gives direction for each discussion point. For example, vowel letter *A* stands for *Acknowledge* and gives the direction to acknowledge positive intention. Leaders can create their own document and follow the order as directed for each vowel letter for resolving conflict as follows:

**A – Acknowledge:** Assume everyone means well. Discuss and document the positive intention.

**E – Express:** State the concern. Discuss and document the specific concerns of all involved.

**I – Identify:** What is the desired outcome. Discuss and document what each person would like to achieve.

**O – Outcome:** Discuss and document the proposed changes and the benefits of the outcome.

**U – Understanding:** Ask for feedback and document agreement on specific action plans and/or behaviors.

Conflict Resolution Model	
Conflict Resolution for (NAME): _____	Date: _____
A – Acknowledge: What is positive or good	
E – Express: What is the concern	
I – Identify: What do both leader and employee want to achieve	
O – Outcome: What are the benefits of changing actions or behavior	
U – Understanding: Ask for feedback on what has been discussed	
Sample document created by Monique L. Jelsk, MSOL, CRCST	

### Creating goals and improvement plans

What needs improving in your sterile processing department? The answer for what and how lies in the minds and talents of sterile processing technicians that perform the work. Sterile processing leaders seeking to improve service and productivity can motivate and engage technicians by letting them design and create the improved future state of their sterile processing department. Improvement projects above all else are about motivating and inspiring people who do the work<sup>6</sup>. Sterile processing leaders should think of creative ways to host 30-minute discussions where every technician on every shift can verbalize their opinion. Make it fun! Start the discussion by asking a general question, *“If you could improve anything in our department (process or service), what would it be?”*. Pass out *Post-it* notes and give technicians 30 seconds to reply to the same question with a focus on a particular area, such as sterile storage. Now the question is *“If you could improve anything about sterile storage, what would it be?”* Once all the improvement suggestions are collected, the leader should analyze and organize common improvement suggestions. Suggestions should then be prioritized according to what can be accomplished first that require little effort and/or minimal resources to create successful improvements sooner rather than later. Display the list in the department for everyone to review. Depending on the improvement needed, always seek the help of technicians for implementation. No matter the size or scope of any improvement project, detailed communication is crucial for employee engagement. Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the technicians are never captured<sup>1</sup>.

### Opportunity and promotion

Technicians who consistently exceed expectations are the cornerstone to every sterile processing department. So how do we retain them? It is very important that leaders seek to understand the personal interests and development goals of their best and brightest. Just because a technician is a high performer does not mean he or she desires leadership. Some technicians simply enjoy working to support the greater good of serving patients. For those who choose to continue their excellent work behind the

scenes of leadership, leaders should offer and/or create opportunities that display their skills and talents as the technicians desire. For instance, one of your best and brightest is an amazing organizer who has no desire to lead others. Provide this technician with the opportunity to exceed expectations by helping to create the implementation plan (not lead the process) for an improvement project that others will follow. Another good opportunity to exceed expectations is for your best and brightest problem solver. Allow this technician to attend meetings such as infection control, clinical engineering, clinics or Labor & Delivery where concerns are shared and solutions are needed to improve the service of sterile processing. Remember the answer to many sterile processing concerns are in the minds and talents of those who do the work.

Opposite of the best and brightest behind the scenes of leadership are those who seek leadership opportunities. One way to make technicians feel valued is to fuel their passion by helping them succeed in reaching their personal development goals<sup>2</sup>. The Sterile Processing Leadership Competency (SPLC) is a module that sterile processing leaders can use to help strengthen the leadership skills of those who desire to lead others. Front line leaders hold the key to employee retention; therefore, a good leadership competency can help front leaders retain the best and brightest by providing proper training for effective leadership<sup>2</sup>. Communication (verbal and written), Problem Solving and Leadership Skills (people and processes) are three key objectives of the SPLC. The SPLC allows leaders to provide and document real

leadership situations with feedback that will help develop the leadership skills of technicians who want to become leaders.

Emergent leaders are technicians who do not have official leadership powers. They have the most important power and that is influence. When others perceive an individual as the “go to” person in the department, regardless of the individual’s title, the person is exhibiting emergent leadership<sup>4</sup>. Emergent leaders are individuals who are not official leaders but possess the traits of a leader along with the ability to influence others to achieve a common goal. Emergent leaders are most often identified by the people around them because of their ability to effectively communicate and get things done<sup>4</sup>. Emergent leaders are also often sought after by their leader when a problem arises and a solution is needed. These technicians are prime candidates for succession planning.

### Succession Planning

Succession planning is a way to ensure the business of leadership is continued and the excellent service of sterile processing is not interrupted when leadership changes are required. Seeking and/or training someone that could replace you takes a certain level of humility which some leaders may find challenging. This type of thinking requires a leader to be emotionally intelligent, self-confident, yet unselfish. Succession planning is most successful in a culture that values developing people<sup>7</sup>.

There are many styles and types of succession templates online that leaders can use to help guide the success of succession planning for sterile processing leadership.

### Summary

The best and brightest sterile processing technicians want to work in an environment where they are making a difference and feel a sense of purpose. Understanding the balance between the goals of sterile processing and what really matters to the technicians is the key to being an effective leader with service excellence and employee engagement. Leaders who learn the importance of gaining trust and respect from those they lead will in turn be able to motivate and inspire others to shine bright with service excellence. When stressful situations overcome the sterile processing department, leaders must be self and socially aware, so they do not demotivate their best and brightest technicians. *Without a vision, the people perish*, therefore sterile processing leaders must create opportunities for technicians to exceed expectation, provide leadership competencies for those who seek to lead, and identify emergent leaders who can sustain the business of leadership when sterile processing leadership changes are required. Sterile processing is the foundation for which surgery stands, and our best and brightest technicians are the cornerstones that create sterile processing service excellence.

### Conclusion

Thank you! To the many sterile processing technicians who work tirelessly behind the scenes of surgery every day ensuring instrument sets are complete and safe to use from one patient to the next, without seeing the fruit of your labor. You are the *best and brightest* of sterile processing. **HPN**

Monique L. Jelks, BA, CRCST is an Educational Consultant to 3M Health Care. Jelks is the operation manager for sterile processing at Ascension Health St. Vincent, Indianapolis, IN. She began her career as a surgical technologist in her home town of Detroit, MI in 1993. Monique became a Certified Registered Central Service Technician (CRCST) after working hard to improve OR – SPD relations. Since 2013, she has presented a wide variety of motivational presentations to encourage sterile processing technicians throughout the US. Monique holds an associate degree in science and surgical technology from Highland Park College in Detroit, MI, and from Indiana Institute of Technology she earned both a bachelor’s degree in business



Sterile Processing Leadership Competency (SPLC)		
Sterile Processing Leadership Competency	Coach	Date
<b>Communication (verbal and written):</b> <i>Demonstrates ability to provide verbal and written communication including follow up</i>		
Situation #1		
Feedback:		
Situation #2		
Feedback:		
Situation #3		
Feedback:		
<b>Problem solving:</b> <i>Demonstrate ability to resolve problems independently</i>		
<b>Leadership:</b> <i>Demonstrate ability to independently lead daily operation (people and processes)</i>		
<small>SPLC and document model created by Monique L. Jelks, MSOL, CRCST</small>		

administration and a master's of science in organizational leadership.

References

1. Kotter, J. P. Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail. *Harvard Business Review*. 2007; Jan.  
 2. Studer, Q. *Hardwiring excellence: Purpose worthwhile work*

making a difference. Gulf Breeze, FL: Fire Starter Pub; 2003.  
 3. Bradberry, T., Greaves, J., & Lencioni, P. *Emotional intelligence 2.0*. San Diego, CA: TalentSmart; 2009.  
 4. Northouse, P. *Introduction to leadership: Concepts and Practice*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage; 2012.  
 5. Wisinski, J. *Resolving conflicts on the job*. New York, NY: American Management Association; 1993.  
 6. Norton, D. Successful Strategy Execution Part I: What Does

it Look Like? Balanced Scorecard Report. *Harvard Business Review*. 2012; Jan-Feb.  
 7. Grossman, R. J. ROUGH Road to Succession. Society for Human Resource Management. 2011. Retrieved from URL: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0611grossman.aspx>

For more CEUs visit <https://www.hpnonline.com/continuing-education>.

**CONTINUING EDUCATION TEST • DECEMBER 2019**

**Employee engagement!**

*Managing our best and brightest in Sterile Processing*

Circle the one correct answer:

1. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Leaders who gain the respect of others also gain their trust.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. A-E-I-O-U is a model leaders can follow for conflict resolution.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. Emergent leaders only manage emergencies.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. Every high performer should be a leader.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. Credible communication is necessary to capture the hearts and minds of technicians.
  - a. True
  - b. False
7. When technicians are supported, they are motivated to do a better job.
  - a. True
  - b. False
8. Leadership competencies can help leaders retain the best and brightest.
  - a. True
  - b. False
9. In order to motivate and inspire technicians, leaders must gain their trust and respect.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. Succession planning is most successful in a culture that values developing people.
  - a. True
  - b. False

**CONTINUING EDUCATION TEST SCORING**



The approval number for this lesson is **3M-HPN 190611**.

HPN is thrilled to now offer all CEU quizzes online by scanning the QR code on the right or visiting: <https://educationhub.hpnonline.com>.

**The cost to take the quiz online remains at \$10.**

Due to rising costs if you would like to mail in your completed quiz using the method below the price is now \$50 for each test taken.

**Request for Scoring**

I have enclosed the scoring fee of **\$50 for EACH test taken** — payable to **Endeavor Business Media**. We regret that no refunds can be given. (It is not necessary to submit multiple tests separately.)

**Detach exam and return to:**  
 Continuing Education Division  
 Healthcare Purchasing News  
 2477 Stickney Point Road, Suite 221B  
 Sarasota, FL 34231

