



Six Questions Every Sponsor Should Ask

How structured conversations can build team engagement and effectiveness

Engaged sponsors are key to the development of high-performing unit-based teams. But sponsors—like most managers, staff and physicians—have many competing demands for their time and attention.

How to make the most of the time with their teams? Peter Nixon, director of Metrics and Analytics, Office of Labor Management Partnership, suggests six simple questions that can help sponsors and managers quickly identify where teams stand and what they need.

1. How are you modeling joint leadership in your team?

“Strong leadership on both the labor and management side is crucial for team success,” according to a study of UBTs by Rutgers University, Johns Hopkins and Kaiser Permanente. Indicators of strong joint leadership include: openness to feedback from the team; sharing of performance and financial information; and the ability of both labor and management co-leads to lead team meetings.

2. What is your team working on?

Goals should be consistent with regional or medical center goals and should be SMART—specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Sponsors can help teams set goals that are well-defined, meaningful and aligned with regional objectives.

3. What are you doing to ensure every member of the team is able to contribute to the team’s performance improvement work?

One key to full team engagement and understanding is making the time for regular communication (for instance, in regular team huddles). This is something team co-leads need to build into their ongoing work processes—and sponsors can help teams do that.

4. How are you measuring the success or progress of your team?

Clear, relevant metrics are essential to keep teams’ performance improvement on track and to give all team members the information and understanding they need to be effective. Does the team have access to the right data, and is the data being shared and discussed with the whole team?

5. What tools or training do team members need to make progress?

Training in the Rapid Improvement Model and other performance-improvement techniques is vital—and the lack of such training is a frequent obstacle to team development as defined by the **UBT Path to Performance**. Sponsors can use the online **Path to Performance toolkit** to help their teams get appropriate training and other resources needed to build team capacity.

6. How can I help?

As is the case with training, teams rely on their sponsors to give guidance, provide resources and help overcome obstacles. Often this involves closing gaps or clearing hurdles between teams or departments—things most sponsors are better positioned to do than the team co-leads.