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HOW TO IMPROVE HCAHPS SCORES WITH THE QUALITICK PROGRAM



WHY HOSPITALS ARE STRUGGLING

With the launch of CAHPS, specifically HCAHPS, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) essentially created a “national beauty contest” among hospitals for core performance metrics. CAHPS stated goals:

1. Produce comparable quality of care data from the patient's perspective which allows objective and meaningful comparison between hospitals.
2. Create incentives for hospitals to improve quality of care.
3. Enhance public accountability in healthcare by increasing transparency of the quality of care.

For most hospitals it's not a question of why, but how to improve their HCAHPS scores. The benefit is avoidance of financial penalties through reimbursement holdings and attaining good overall performance star ratings. Yet despite these obvious benefits, 27% of all star-rated hospitals nationally receive a 1- or 2 star rating. Only 9% of all star-rated hospitals receive a 5 star rating, and an enormous 60% of all star-rated hospitals receive a 1, 2, or 3 star rating.

We can summarize the reasons why most hospitals and healthcare providers struggle in their attempt to elevate scores by examining two main components:

1. External – The primary reason to raise HCAHPS scores is the method employed to collect data which does not provide consistently high response rates in order to obtain a fundamental understanding of process execution and individual performance in a timely manner. This is reflected by low survey response rates, surveys not providing high-quality data, data taking days, weeks, and months to get reported, and very simplistic reporting tools.

2. Internal – Medical leaders often misunderstand the mechanics of HCAHPS scores and, therefore, lack understanding on how to properly analyze data intelligence and how it can be improved. They are often out of the habit of effectively analyzing data, which, in turn, means they cannot apply better understanding to improvement actions.

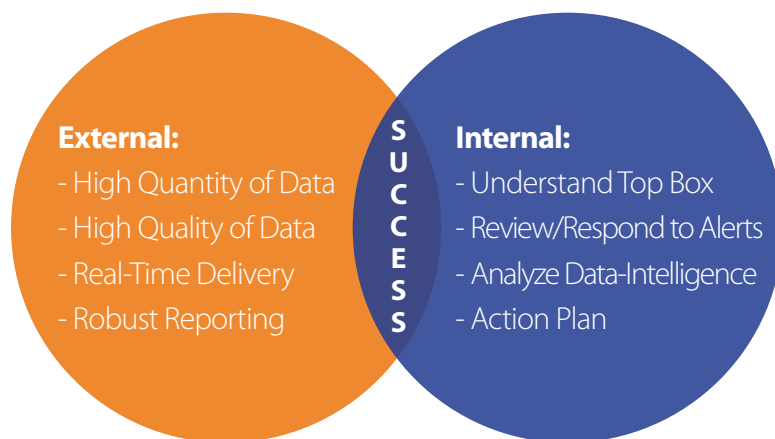
Ultimately, many hospitals get “stuck in the ditch” and have no means of being able to pull themselves out. Yet many still keep employing the same methods, hoping to get a different result which never comes.



IMPROVING HCAHPS SCORES

HERE'S THE SECRET

To improve and attain superior HCAHPS scores requires a scientific approach, a method which can be replicated to produce desired results. The scientific approach is illustrated by the following simple model incorporating the Internal/External analysis.



The model illustrated above reflects the symbiotic relationship between the external methods of data-collection/reporting and the internal work required to understand and apply for improved results. Success can only be attained when both are working in unison in a continuous loop.

External Data-Collection and Reporting – Has to provide high quantity and quality of data. The data must be timely (i.e., real-time) and the reporting of data-intelligence has to be robust such that it fosters superior understanding of processes and execution by staff. This is the primary reason why many hospitals cannot elevate their HCAHPS scores. Hospitals often rely only on the CMS mandated mail/phone surveys, which do not provide any of these necessary attributes. Therefore, CMS implores hospitals not to depend on their mandated method of data collection¹.



IMPROVING HCAHPS SCORES

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Internal Analysis and Application – Having all the necessary data in your possession is not enough; it has to be understood and then correctly applied. It's critical that medical providers understand the mechanics of HCAHPS scoring (i.e., Top Box), as its improvement in this score which elevates national standing. Medical leaders should be responsive to survey alerts, thoroughly analyze data-intelligence, and then apply this improved understanding by formulating strategies and tactics in order to improve process and execution.

This scientific process of measurement, analysis, and application, using the correct tools is a proven method for success.

¹ *"CMS emphasizes that HCAHPS scores are designed and intended for use at the hospital level for the comparison of hospitals to each other. CMS does not review or endorse the use of HCAHPS scores for comparisons within hospitals, such as comparison of HCAHPS scores associated with a particular ward, floor, individual staff member, to others. Such comparisons are unreliable unless large sample sizes are collected at the ward, floor, or individual staff member level...HCAHPS is not appropriate for comparing or assessing individual hospital staff members [providers and nurses]. Using HCAHPS scores to compare or assess individual staff members is inappropriate and is strongly discouraged by CMS."*

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services HCAHPS Quality Assurance Guideline V11.0, March 2018



THE QUALITICK METHOD

SUPERIOR DATA-COLLECTION & REPORTING

The Qualitick program and method for improving your HCAHPS scores allows for success in every aspect of the External side of the model.

High Quantity of Data – The Qualitick program is a point of service surveying and electronic rounding tool, with real-time analytics. So, by engaging the patient before they leave the facility, you have a captive audience, and, therefore, gain insight on their experiences and not an after-the-fact recollection of events. Patients are, therefore, much more likely to complete a survey, and the program harvests 10, 20, 30+ times more surveys than modes which engage the patient post-visit, e.g., mail, phone, email, and text. Post-visit surveying modes do not provide enough quantity of data, which cannot then provide medical leaders a clear and accurate picture of performance.

High Quality of Data – The breadth of data quantity has to then be complemented by high-quality data. If the mode of surveying used poses certain limits on how questions can be asked and answered (e.g., text surveys), then the depth of data quality is severely limited. Therefore, while it can boast higher response rates than mail/phone/email surveys, the data which is harvested is lacking quality. The Qualitick program imposes no limits on the quality of data it harvests, as the interface used (tablets at bedside/check-out) is ideal to pose and receive answers for myriad of question types.

Real-Time Delivery – The Qualitick program offers true real-time, meaning that as soon as the patient survey or electronic round is complete, the data is immediately uploaded via the tablet which is connected to your WiFi, to our cloud, and ready for reporting. Other modes claim real-time even though they are surveying the patient post-visit, which defies the meaning of real-time.



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Robust Reporting – The Qualitick real-time reporting is industry leading and provides medical leaders early warning alerts via email and/or SMS text, an in-depth dashboard for on-demand reporting and real-time analysis, individual real-time provider/nurse portals, and email push reporting capabilities to receive critical reports at your convenience.

Tablets are Provided, Supported, Tracked, and Warranted – Qualitick provides you surveying tablets as part of the program; we also remotely support, GPS track, and warranty the hardware. This means easy setup, and puts a lot less strain on your IT team to procure and support surveying hardware.

Dedicated Concierge Account Management – All Qualitick clients receive concierge account managers to support them for all their collection and reporting needs. No more calling random non-responsive people at call centers for support. Real responsive people, direct phone numbers, and emails.

Multiple Surveying Options – The Qualitick program is tailored to support different types of point-of-care surveying data- collection, and includes (but is not limited to):

- Patient Satisfaction Surveys
- Electronic Rounding, e.g. Nurse Leader Rounding
- Safety Checks
- Environmental Rounds
- Patient Call-Backs
- Employee Surveys



YOUR ROLE IN IMPROVING SCORES

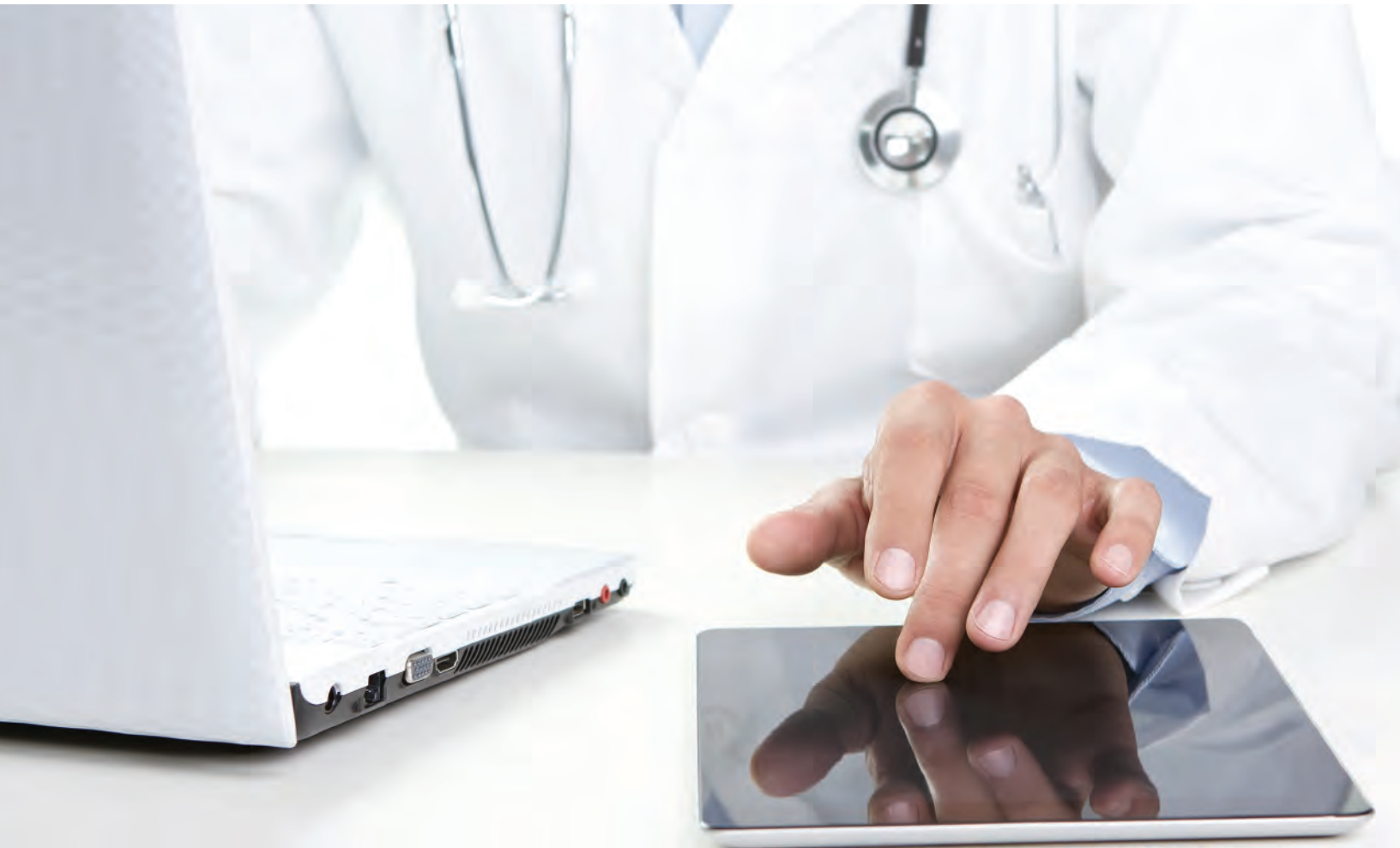
Superior data-intelligence alone does not drive up HCAHPS scores. It is critical that medical leaders understand and apply this new information to define and implement internal strategies and tactics. The areas which are specifically important are:

Understanding Top Box – The national CMS database reflects that for most metrics total patient satisfaction is about 90-95%, and that patient dissatisfaction for most metrics is about 3-5%. This is why CMS places a huge premium on Top Box scores, as this is what ultimately differentiates the good from the great. The great hospitals are those which have created separation from the national Top Box average for most metrics, and that separation only needs to be 2-5% higher. Yet medical leaders are confused when their total satisfaction is high, yet their facility receives an average or low star rating from CMS. Their focus must be on Top Box scores for each metric and how to improve Top Box scores.

Review & Respond to Alerts – The Qualitick system provides real-time early warning alerts of events about which medical leaders need to be kept informed, e.g., patient dissatisfaction or recognition of staff members. Other modes of post-visit surveys fail to capture these types of alerts for timely use by the provider. Therefore, critical data-intelligence is not captured and never known. However, by being aware and responding to point-of-care alerts, immediate understanding and rapid action can be undertaken.

Analyze Data-Intelligence – Medical leaders being in the habit of successfully analyzing team and individual performance will naturally be better informed and aware of performance execution at a deeper level than the limited reporting that traditional methods garner. It is critical to evaluate the collected data, as performance levels can change in subtle and dramatic ways week-to-week, and month-to-month. Having a finger on the pulse is critical.

Apply Data-Intelligence – Greater understanding of performance and execution naturally allows medical leaders to implement superior tactics and strategies geared towards improving Top Box scores. In our experience, we find medical leaders thrive in this area because they finally have the data and a better understanding of how to apply it to the workings of the CMS model of performance improvement.



Qualitick is a pioneer in real-time data collection and analytics in the healthcare industry. With over a decade of experience in this emerging industry, Qualitick partners with and supports some of the top healthcare organizations across the country in 42+ states.



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