The Innovation Road Map: A Guide for Nurse Leaders

1. The Characteristics of Innovation

Promote Five key characteristics:

To promote a culture of innovation, healthcare leaders must exhibit foster, promote, and reward five key characteristics:

- **Divergent Thinking**: Divergent thinking allows for the connection or consideration of unrelated matters while contemplating a specific problem.
- **Failure Tolerance**: Failure tolerance is accepting that the path to success is paved with many failures. Without failure tolerance, there can be no risk-taking behavior.
- **Agility & Flexibility**: Agility is defined as the capability to adjust swiftly in response to global market changes.
- **Risk Taking**: Divergent thinking can produce ideas that seem risky to implement. Put simply, risk-taking is engaging in a behavior that involves risk in order to achieve a goal.
- **Autonomy & Freedom**: Giving employees freedom to complete tasks as they see fit produces the autonomy they need to become more confident about their abilities and decisions.

2. The Components of Innovation

**Components for promoting innovation:**

As with any solution, once size does not fit all. Leaders must be willing to try, test, adopt, or adapt components until the right combination is found.

- **Employee Feedback**
- **Role Filling**
- **Role Modeling**
- **Employee Engagement**
- **Education**
- **Protected Time**
- **Technological Support**
- **Rewards**
- **“IDEO” Methodology**
- **Budgeting**
- **Leadership**

3. Team Collaboration: Innovation in Action

**Five strategies that promote innovative team collaboration:**

The value of a team approach to innovation has become so pervasive that literature on the topic refers to an open innovation concept in which the greatest innovations are produced by teams of individuals from across markets and disciplines.

- **Unlikely & Diverse Team**: Including team members who do not think alike creates the friction that produces innovative solutions.
- **Productive Interaction**: Leaders can promote productive interaction and cohesiveness among team members by having them engage in team activities.
- **Skillset Development**: The innovation team leader must allow each member to develop within his or her role, while providing feedback and kudos during this process.
- **Play**: Play promotes an easygoing atmosphere where ideas can flow in a non-rushed, lighthearted environment. Playing and being creative ignores rules, practicality, and the idea of being wrong.
- **Pauses & Breaks**: While humans naturally do this after becoming frustrated with a task, the practice does not carry over to teams. Like individuals, teams also need pauses and breaks to interrupt faulty thinking and logic.


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