The Seven Essential Steps to Magnet® Readiness

By Gen Guanci, MEd, RN-BC, CCRN, Consultant

The journey to Magnet is long and intense under even the best circumstances. If you’re considering embarking on the most rewarding professional journey of your life, here are seven things you’ll want to do to prepare.

1: Conduct a Readiness Assessment
Some people refer to this as a gap assessment. Regardless of what you call it, it’s vital that you fully understand where you’re starting from, where you need to go, and where your current challenges are. The wise organization has this assessment completed by an external, non-biased individual. If you do this, be sure the individual has many years of experience in a wide variety of organizations that have been successful in attaining Magnet® designation. When looking for an external consultant, make your first question, “What’s your track record for helping organizations attain Magnet®?

2: Create your Budget
Your overall Magnet® journey budget will have elements that are dependent upon your readiness results. In addition, it will be a multi-year budget. Items you want to be sure to include are as follows:

- initial education costs
- application fees, including general application as well as appraiser fees associated with document review and site visit
- external consultant journey support fees
- human resources costs, such as those for a program manager and administrative assistant
- monies needed to support the structures and processes needed for a successful Magnet® journey such as councils, professional advancement program, and nursing research

Other budget considerations include printing or electronic document set-up costs, marketing costs both before and after designation, celebration costs when you receive your designation, and finally costs to sustain your designation. If you don’t know these numbers, check with an experienced Magnet® consultant. It’s essential that your numbers are realistic.

3: Educate Yourself
When it comes to participating in a Magnet® journey, there is no such thing as too much education. I have seen four program revisions in the 15+ years I have been involved in Magnet®. This requires that I constantly refresh my knowledge. Education is available in a variety of methodologies. You can attend workshops and webinars, read the wide variety of articles available, or even join a learning community.
4: Educate Others
It’s obvious to most people that an organization embarking on a Magnet® journey must educate its nurses; however, your educational initiatives should go well beyond this group. Be sure to include all of the organization’s stakeholders since the designation is for the entire organization. The best course of action is for the Magnet® program lead to see that all departments, leaders, executives, medical staff and even the Board of Directors/Trustees get educated about what it takes to achieve Magnet®. The wise program manager tailors the message to the audience and includes the “what’s in it for me” message.

5: Network
Visiting other Magnet® organizations and networking with people who have been directly involved in a successful Magnet® journey are extremely helpful. If your organization is a community hospital, your biggest benefit would come from speaking to those from a similar community hospital as opposed to a large academic medical center. When you do your visit, whether in person or virtual, be sure to set up an opportunity for staff from your organization to speak to peers at the networking organizations. When staff hear the Magnet® journey stories from peers it really helps to unify the team around a common goal.

6: Create a Project Plan
Time flies while on the Magnet® journey. Deadlines that might seem a long way off have a way of rapidly sneaking up on you. The creation of a project plan or specific timeline is crucial. Be sure to include the following major milestones or journey phases:
- the getting ready/pre-submission phase,
- the document creation and submission phase,
- the document determination phase,
- the site visit phase, and
- the status determination phase.

Each of these phases has several components to them, so be very specific. The more detail you have, the higher the likelihood will be that you will not overlook something essential to your success.

7: Involve the Clinical/ Direct Care Nurses
Successful Magnet® organizations involve staff at every opportunity. At site visit, staff will need to be able to speak to how they were involved in items such as the development of the professional practice model and how they are involved in decision-making. Whenever possible always ask yourself, “Which clinical nurse should be involved in this?”

You may be asking yourself, at this point, “What is the best time to invite in a consultant partner for our Magnet journey?” The facts are that 1) it’s never too late to invite a consultant into the process, and 2) it’s never too soon to invite a consultant into the process.

Creative Health Care Management has a 100% success rate in helping organizations reach Magnet designation or redesignation. No matter where you are in the process, it is possible to maximize your potential for success. But I can tell you from experience that it’s a much easier road if you engage a consultant early on. The time you save in rework alone will pay for the consultant several times over!

MAGNET®, Magnet Recognition Program®, ANCC®, Magnet®, and the Magnet Journey® are registered trademarks of the American Nurses Credentialing Center. The products and services of Creative Health Care Management are neither sponsored nor endorsed by ANCC.

© 2013 Creative Health Care Management