NHS
Improvement

ACT Academy

Online library of Quality, Service Improvement and Redesign tools

Sustain momentum

collaboration   trust   respect   innovation   courage   compassion

Sustain momentum

What is it?

The day-to-day pressures on time and resources that we all experience can make it difficult to sustain the initial momentum of a service improvement project. This approach describes some simple techniques to help you reignite interest in a project and maintain commitment to it.

When to use it

Enthusiasm for change can be difficult to maintain. If people are regularly dropping out of meetings or not doing the things they committed to doing, your project momentum may be in decline. There are, however, ways you can keep the momentum going. The key is communication – keep talking and listening to people throughout the process and share the benefits and impacts of the project.

How to use it

1. Start by reviewing what is currently going on.

- Check that the original aims and objectives are still valid.
- Check who is responsible for what. You may find that people aren't clear about their roles. **Responsibility charting** can help with this.
- Review what you have done and assess progress. In particular, identify where you have been successful in overcoming barriers to change.
- If a process or procedure is not currently working, don't be afraid to change it as repeating failures leads to frustrations.
- Review key milestones and timescales to see if they are still appropriate.
- List all achievements related to the project to date.
- Use **root cause analysis using five whys** to understand why momentum has waned.

2. Ensure that you communicate success with all those involved.

- Share achievements with the team, department and stakeholders, eg via the Intranet, boards in the wards/clinic areas and celebrate success at events and in newsletters.
- Write a progress review for an internal/external audience.
- Deliver update presentations to key stakeholders to gain feedback.
- Assess fears/stress levels of key individuals and address as necessary.

3. Listen to others and understand their priorities.

- Seek views and feedback from staff on the ground, senior management, etc. Tools in the **thinking creatively to solve problems** section may help you resolve any issues.
- Identify different ways to communicate the same thing. For example, explain what

you expect to achieve from your project in terms of organisational objectives. You could also demonstrate success – or the problem itself – from the patient's perspective. See **patient stories** and gather evidence about how long patients have to wait.

- Exercise empathy. Your priorities aren't necessarily theirs. See **active listening**.

4. Think about the team.

- Arrange away days/time out for the project team to promote co-operation, communication and team cohesion.
- Acknowledge and reward progress.
- Celebrate success!

What next?

If energy for the project is reignited, keep the communication going using these strategies to maintain interest.

If interest remains low, you may find that your original aims aren't right – that the project has drifted and is unlikely to succeed. Try holding a formal review with key people to decide whether the project should be stopped. It is worth taking the time to communicate success, thank people for their input and celebrate closure. Undertaking a lessons learnt exercise will increase the chances of success in future projects. See also **enabling collaboration by working with resistance**.