



*Life*WINGS[®]

13-Point Checklist to Create and Sustain
a High Performing Organization



Here are 13 specific items to assess in your organization. Your assessment should guide your next steps in creating and sustaining a high performing organization. The items are grouped into four areas: Process, Culture, Measurement, and Leadership actions.

Process (Standard Work)

Assessment Item #1:

Customized, site-specific processes (e.g. evidence-based practices, processes, protocols, and procedures such as checklists, communications scripting, handoffs, etc.) thoughtfully adapted from HROs, must be created and implemented.

Effective, experiential, interdisciplinary classroom or simulator training in most cases will not permanently change behavior¹ or create culture-changing habits. Process tools (Standard Work) are needed to ensure the behaviors learned in education and training are actually used on a daily basis. Successful processes have these important characteristics:

- People who do the work create the process. Processes “borrowed” from other organizations and not locally customized are rarely effective as they don’t account for local and site-specific work flows. These sorts of off-the-shelf tools have no personal investment and support from the people who use them. Processes should never be “dropped” on a work group with orders to “Use this.” Even the designers of the WHO Surgical Safety Checklist recommend their product be customized locally.
- They are updated and refined frequently. Processes are rarely perfect the first time they are used. They must be treated as living documents, to be revised and updated as needed by the people doing the daily work.
- Every written process (e.g. checklist, briefing guide, protocol, etc.) must have the owner’s name, version number and date clearly visible. This allows the team to know

"I M STABLE" TRANSFER NOTE		
I.D. - (Name, Age, DOB, MRN, Stat Name, Sex)		
M.O. - Mechanism of Injury / Chief Complaint, Time of Incident		
S	Status: V/S, Neuro Status, Airway type	PTA, ED
T	Treatment: Meds, Procedures	PTA, ED
A - Allergies		
B - Background: PMH, Meds (home), Surgical History		
L - Last Meal, LMP		
E - Extras - Additional information/Injuries		
Report (Print name): From _____ To _____ From _____ To _____ From _____ To _____		File Numbers: Trauma: 3-1120
<small>*Any entry should be documented with time or unit (LF, ED, etc.) *Not part of medical record</small>		

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who is responsible for updates and revisions, and let's them know that they are using the most current version of the tool. Ownership reinforces the belief that this is a living document to be refined as needed.

- All processes created must be formally embedded into the organization's Policy and Procedure Manual or other formal unit documents describing how work is accomplished in the department.

Processes that hardwire daily behavior are the "engine" producing real and measurable change and the key ingredient of sustainability. Long after the effects of education have worn off, standard processes will ensure permanent behavior change.

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	No Standard Processes Used	2	Off the Shelf Processes Used	3	Customized Processes Used	4	Standard Processes Used Exactly as Described
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Culture

Assessment Item #2:

Effective teamwork and communications training must be provided to all clinicians and staff involved in providing care.

High performance begins with effective teamwork training that creates a culture where it is acceptable to speak up and "stop-the-line." This training must be:

- Interdisciplinary. The purpose of education to create a culture of accountability is to train teamwork, communication and coordination skills, and requires complete healthcare teams, including ALL team members, to do this. The "teams" working together in your classroom educational activities should closely mirror the teams providing care in your organization. Each classroom "team" should have physician, nurse and staff representation. Training nurses without physicians, or vice versa, is ineffective and sometimes counter-productive. Actual patient care is provided by a team; therefore, teamwork training must be provided to the entire team.

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- Skills-based. The training must teach actual skills; therefore it must be experiential, with opportunities for practice and feedback. Knowledge-based training is insufficient to satisfy the responsibility to teach behavioral skills.ⁱⁱ Information gained from knowledge-based learning is perishable and will not be sustainable. “Telling” is not “Training.” Knowledge is important to learning new skills, but not sufficient to change behavior. Avoid training sessions that are strictly knowledge based. Effective training gives your staff the ability “to do” – actually practice the specific behaviors in their daily work activities. Courseware must be based on discrete observable behaviors and the training must equip staff to perform those behaviors.
- Attended by leadership. Make sure your leaders learn and practice the skills as well. To get the maximum buy-in from the staff, it is extremely important that your leaders support these behaviors by modeling them for the entire organization.ⁱⁱⁱ

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1 No Teamwork Training	2 Some Teamwork Training	3 Interdisciplinary Teamwork Training	4 Teamwork Training Conducted Exactly as Described
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Assessment Item #3:

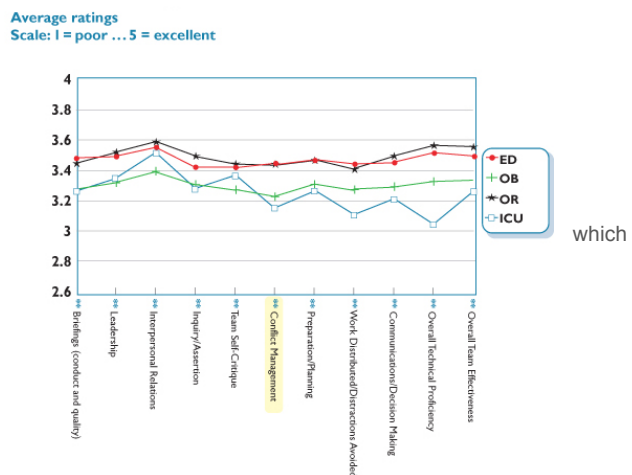
Conduct periodic refresher training on teamwork skills.

Teamwork and communication skills are just like technical skills and knowledge. If not used and refreshed, they decay over time.^{iv} Use it or lose it. A single didactic exposure is not enough to sustain long-term change.^v

Organizations must identify which teamwork skills are decaying most rapidly through data collection and analysis. Direct observational studies, error and “near miss” reporting systems, sentinel event root cause analysis, and quality data can be mined to highlight which skills need focus and attention through refresher training.

Figure 1: Data from Direct Observational Study of Teamwork Behaviors

The graph to the right shows how facilities can conduct direct observational studies of teamwork performance to determine skills should be refreshed during the next training cycle.



RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

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|----------|------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|---|
| 1 | No Refresher Training | 2 | Some Refresher Training | 3 | Regular Refresher Training | 4 | Data-Driven & Regular Refresher Training |
|----------|------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|---|

Assessment Item #4:

Conduct new-hire training.

Healthcare employee turnover in most states averages 15.6%. For every 100 staff members involved in your team training initiative, about 16 of them will be replaced in the coming year. Each one of those new employees will need teamwork training to equip them with the same skill sets the rest of the team now has, and to align them with the corporate culture. Research has shown conclusive evidence of the impact of this approach. Alignment between the cultural values of the organization and the clinical and teamwork competencies of employee is a key indicator of motivation and satisfaction. If an employee's values and abilities are close to those defined as "core" by the hospital, they are more likely to be productive, motivated, satisfied, and well rewarded - four critical elements to long-term sustainment of your improvement initiative.^{vi}

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

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|----------|--|----------|--|----------|--|----------|---|
| 1 | No New-Hire Training to Support this Initiative | 2 | Some New-Hire Training to Support this Initiative | 3 | Skills to support this Initiative are Fully Embedded in New-Hire Training | 4 | Training & Mentoring Provided to New-Hires |
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Measurement

Assessment Item #5:

Performance metrics must be established and transparently shared.

Measurement, and the transparency of those metrics, will drive accountability and allow leaders and staff to **adjust their actions to get the desired results**. Data collection and analysis also allows the organization to objectively hold individuals accountable for results. Lastly, a unit dashboard allows alignment of daily behaviors to the goals of your initiative. If performance isn't measured, organizations won't get the behaviors they need to make the initiative a success. As results improve, passion is ignited in the organization for the initiative and sustainability becomes easier.

An example of a dashboard for a successful performance initiative is shown below:

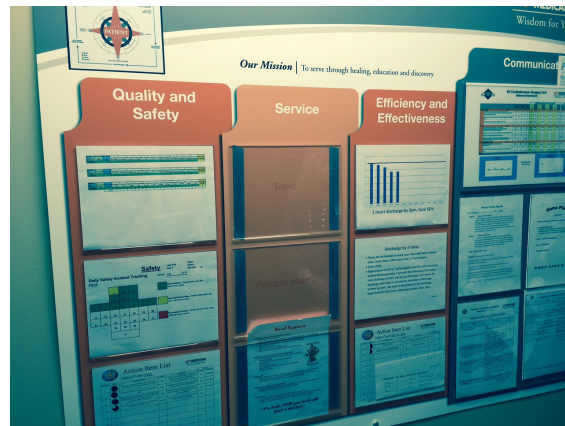


Figure 2: Example of a Dashboard (Visual Management Board)

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

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|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|----------|--|----------|---|
| 1 | No Metrics | 2 | Metrics collected but Unused | 3 | Collected and Used, not Systematically Shared | 4 | Dashboard Transparently Shared via Visual Management Board |
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Leadership Action and Organizational Structure

Assessment Item #6:

Leaders must “Round” on departments that have implemented performance improvement projects.

Rounding is a version of “management by walking around.” Rounding means that leaders get up, leave their office, and daily and personally visit departments conducting improvement projects. Leaders touch base with physicians and staff to find out what is working with the initiative and what improvements can be made. This is the key leadership action that will help ensure sustainability. In our experience, every organization that has failed to sustain their performance improvements over time has also failed to Round. An effective leadership Rounding program will:

- Be conducted according to a written schedule with people, places, and times specifically designated. Without a specific schedule, Rounding will not happen.
- Be emphasized in the first month after the first standard process is implemented in the department/unit.
- Include key executive leadership such as the COO, CMO, and CNO, as well as departmental leadership such as the Chief of Service and departmental directors and managers. Leaders must be present in the unit and demonstrate support of the team training initiative by providing positive messages about the initiative and positively reinforcing observed teamwork behaviors.^{vii}
- Collect key information on the success of the initiative by having managers ask these questions:
 - What is working in our initiative?
 - What needs to be fixed?
 - Who should I thank for doing a good job?
 - Do you have everything you need to make this successful?
- Analyze and act upon the information collected during Rounding. Leaders should make sure there is a formal feedback program for the information obtained during these Rounds. Managers must fix what needs to be corrected and ensure their efforts and improvement results are publicized to their personnel.
- Reward positive behavior that is helpful to your initiative discovered during Rounding. Be especially alert for significant examples of supportive behavior from champions and

difference makers. When discovered, send personalized “Thank You” notes, write letters of appreciation for personnel files, and recognize individuals during departmental meetings.

- Staff members want to know the effort they are expending on this initiative is important. The presence and interest of their managers and leaders signifies its importance. Additionally, they want to know that what they’re doing has an impact and makes a difference to their patients. Rounding enables leaders to collect the anecdotal success stories for publication and dissemination.

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	No Rounding	2	Some Rounding, Variably Conducted	3	Regular Rounding Conducted Systematically	4	Rounding Conducted Exactly as Described
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Assessment Item #7:

Leadership must be willing to conduct coaching conversations with low performers and impose consequences for poor performance.

Research shows that in the typical healthcare organization 34% will improve performance after training and stay at their new level, 58% will improve and stay there if their performance is reinforced and 8% will not improve.^{viii} The “eight percenters” must be held accountable. Leaders must coach them to change performance and terminate them if performance does not change. By hanging on to the low performer, organizations are negatively impacting the sustainability of their team training initiative.

What you permit, you promote. Toxic colleagues who are allowed to persist with low performance will cause 48% of your staff to decrease the quality of their work and 78% will decrease the level of their commitment to the initiative.^{ix} Failing to impose consequences on low performers will cause those who support your training initiative to be pulled backwards and your champions will become frustrated. Dealing with low performers is one of the most critical leadership actions needed to ensure sustainability of training.

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	No Accountability	2	Some Coaching	3	Willing to Impose Consequences	4	Uncompromising Accountability
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Assessment Item #8:

Ensure Operational Excellence in Safety, Quality and Efficiency become part of the corporate mission or annual goals.

Behavioral change begins and is sustained when leadership communicates its vision for the role of operational excellence in achieving safety, quality, and efficiency. Sustained individual behavior change is more likely to occur when the strategic priorities and mission are clearly communicated. Written corporate mission statements, yearly goals, and other organizational commitments must include an emphasis on operational excellence and the behaviors needed for safety, quality, and efficiency. Additionally, institutions have little chance of convincing their medical staff and employees of their serious commitment to operational excellence without the willingness to put that commitment in writing.

Here are a few examples of mission or vision statements from hospitals that have successfully sustained their performance improvements over time:

“General Hospital provides care that is safe, efficient, patient-centered, timely, effective, and equitable. To do this, we will excel technically, be experts in teamwork, and follow our policies, procedures, and protocols to provide the highest standard of care.”

“Memorial Hospital provides safe, efficient, compassionate care of the highest standard through teamwork, technical proficiency, and adhering to guidelines, policies, and procedures.”

Notice that both examples include the concept of “teamwork” to drive their culture, and adherence to “process.” Teamwork and Process must become part of mission statements, yearly goals and other written commitments because executive performance assessment and compensation tend to follow those corporate goals (as discussed in Assessment Item #9). The more closely aligned the written corporate goals are with your initiative, the more executive

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assessment systems will be aligned with your program, and the more focus and attention your leaders will give the effort.

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	OE not Mentioned	2	OE Mentioned but not Important	3	OE Takes a Backseat to Other Goals	4	OE Drives Everything We Do
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Assessment Item #9:

Executive assessment and reward systems must be aligned with the performance improvement initiatives.

Improvement initiatives must have continual management attention and focus to be sustained over time. Therefore, executives and managers must be held accountable and rewarded for meeting the goals of the initiative. Without alignment between your organizational goals and individual performance assessment and reward, management attention will drift and become devoted to what is assessed and rewarded. Managers will pay attention to the projects that affect their personal performance evaluations.

An organization might want to see a 20% improvement in compliance with the Universal Protocol but if a manager's evaluation is not tied to this metric, the increase is merely a nice idea – not a “must do” for that manager. If, however, the manager's assessment system is revised to reflect that increased compliance in the department becomes 10% of her evaluation, the initiative will get constant leadership attention. There is a simple principle at play here - behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated. Sustained organizational change requires the ongoing support of leadership.^x

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	Initiative Goals Not Considered	2	Initiative Goals are Part of General Assessment	3	Initiative Goals are Rewarded but Without Compensation	4	Initiative Goals are Part of Compensation Plan
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Assessment Item #10:

Physicians must be actively recruited as “partners” in support of the initiative.

Physicians play a critical role in the sustainment of improvement initiatives. Physicians are clinical workplace leaders and set the teamwork example and influence the standards of conduct for the organization. Without their active support and partnership, few facilities will be able to sustain their improvements. The physician that treats his or her patient with care, cooperation, and effective communication when working with that patient but otherwise displays a complete lack of teamwork and collaboration with the staff will undermine the clinical team’s ability to sustain the initiative.

Leaders of the initiative cannot allow physicians to sit on the sidelines and wait for the project to bear fruit. They must convince physicians of the need for their commitment from the very beginning of the initiative and that their influence, example, and leadership are critical to sustained success. In our experience, following a strategy of “Let’s train everyone else and hope the physicians come onboard later” is not a winning game plan. Sustainable initiatives follow these steps in creating and supporting physician partners:

- Provide the “evidence” for the new way of doing things – the data and literature that support the new processes and document the resulting clinical outcomes;
- Insist on physician involvement in the initiative. Prescriptive training conducted with the rest of the clinical team is critical for performance improvement;
- Provide feedback on performance data collected and analyzed to measure the progress of the training initiative. Ensure your physicians can see the results of their efforts in a systematic and comparative way;
- Recruit physician champions to the cause and equip them with the “scripting” and data to conduct “one on one” conversations with their peers. The support of respected physicians for the initiative is crucial in the informal process of convincing physician colleagues to make practice pattern changes;
- Ensure physicians are crystal clear about your organization’s behavioral expectations resulting from your project. “Over communicate” your revised Mission, Values, and behavioral standards. Where needed, revise Med Exec By-Laws to include verbiage supporting the desired behaviors and ensure these are well communicated to all physicians;

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- Create patient demand for the new processes by making your patients aware of the collaborative role you expect them to play. Patient expectations can have a tremendous influence on physician behavior;
- Reward and recognize supportive physician behavior discovered during Rounding and observations.

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	No Physician Support	2	Some Physician Support	3	We Have Strong Physician Champions	4	We Have True Physician Partnerships
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Assessment Item #11:

Revise the Policy & Procedures Manual and other unit documents to include teamwork and behavioral guidelines.

If the hospital desires specific behaviors from its physicians and staff, it must put those expectations in writing. Policy and Procedure manuals and other written documents governing how work gets done should contain behavioral guidelines. These written policies will drive procedures and practices on a daily basis. Including these performance guidelines creates alignment between the organization's philosophy, as expressed in their mission statement, their written policies, and the daily practices of the staff. Employees are keen to discern any disconnects between the mission, value, policies and actual daily work practices. If the organization is unwilling to create policies supporting the new initiative, there is great risk that the effort will fail. Changing the policies is a way for leadership to commit publicly, in writing, to the necessary changes.

It is difficult to implement any sense of the standards of behavior until the standards are clearly articulated. By revising the documents that govern how work is done, the organization is simply saying, "This is how we do things here." Including behavioral guidelines ensures all teams in all departments all of the time will have the same behavioral standards.

Here are examples of policy statements a hospital inserted into its P&P Manual to support its initiative:

"All members of the surgical services team at General Hospital will be trained in teamwork skills and are expected to use these teamwork skills in their daily work and

in their professional communication with other members of the General Hospital healthcare organization.”

“It is the personal responsibility of each member of the team to cross check other members of the team.”

Figure 3: Examples of Teamwork and Behavioral Guidelines in a P&P Manual

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	Behaviors not Mentioned in P&P	2	Behaviors Generally Mentioned in P&P	3	Specific Behaviors Listed in P&P	4	Specific Behaviors & Processes Included in all Written Documents
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Assessment Item #12:

Employed physicians, nursing, and staff member evaluation systems must include teamwork and communication behavior metrics.

Most of the assessment systems in use in healthcare organizations have a heavy emphasis on clinical performance and procedure. Few assessment systems evaluate an employee’s skill with standardized work, communication skills, and teamwork behaviors. True change in support for teamwork training programs in aviation organizations did not occur until flight crews were assessed on their teamwork skills and the same is true for healthcare personnel. What is assessed becomes important to those being evaluated. The evaluation system becomes the linking bridge between the employee and the organization’s goals. Changing the evaluation system changes the employee.

Additionally, the assessment program can feed valuable data back to the training program so that future training targets areas of need as indicated by data analysis.

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	Process & Teamwork Behaviors not Included	2	Some Process & Teamwork Behaviors Included	3	All Required Process & Teamwork Behaviors Included	4	All Required Process & Teamwork Behaviors Included & Annually Assessed
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Assessment Item #13:

Institute a system to capture project successes and publicize those to the organization.

The culture of silence is so pervasive in many healthcare organizations that most departments have no idea of their actual performance record. For instance, many of the surgical departments with which we have worked are shocked to find out that their department has had a record of wrong surgeries. That culture of silence also prevents many institutions from documenting and publicizing those instances where a staff member did assertively speak up and prevent an impending adverse outcome.

Without transparency of unit performance and knowing the “current state,” many staff members will see no reason to do anything differently. As well, if the staff never see the results of the effort in which they have invested, they’ll see no reason to continue that effort. In short, success breeds success. The institution must absolutely capture, document, and publicize the improvements in performance to sustain their initiative.

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION:

Circle the numbered box below that is most closely aligned with your organization.

1	Success Never Discussed with Staff	2	Success Metrics & Stories Available to Staff	3	Success Metrics & Stories Sometimes Communicated with Staff	4	Success Metrics & Stories are Routinely Communicated & Celebrated
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Assessment items with a rating of 2 or less should become part of your action plan for creating and sustaining a high performing organization.

Conclusion

Sustaining the gains in performance is best accomplished by a disciplined approach to site-specific standardized processes. Standardized work allows the organization to hardwire the desired high-performance behaviors into daily work life. Therefore, successful initiatives equip physicians and staff with the skills to create and employ processes such as evidenced-based practices, checklists, communication scripts, and standard operating procedures. These tools make it easy to do the right thing, and hard to use the wrong behavior. Hardwiring behavior through standard processes is an iterative process, and staff must constantly refine them.

Processes must be supported by an organizational culture where it’s okay if, even expected that, team members will speak up and “stop-the-line” when a problem is perceived with patient care. This sort of culture is created with skills-based, interdisciplinary team training. Effective

teamwork training programs also include periodic refresher training to prevent atrophy of skills, and new-hire training to equip new employees with the same skills possessed by incumbent staff.

Finally, and most importantly, sustainability is primarily a function of specific leadership actions and of the changes made to the organizational structure by those leaders. Only leadership can blast through the many sources of organizational inertia. Only leadership can motivate the actions needed to alter behavior in any significant way. Only leadership can get change to stick, by anchoring it in the very culture of the organization. Key leadership actions to change the culture are Rounding, coaching low performers, terminating hard-core resisters when needed, recruiting physician champions, and collecting, analyzing, and publishing performance data documenting the effect of the training initiative.

ⁱ Sarafino, E. P. Behavior Modification (2nd ed.) Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001.

ⁱⁱ Beukelman, D. Information alone does not change behavior. *Michigan Consortium on Assistive Device Delivery Systems: Resource Directory* (2nd ed.). (pp. 79-82), 1990.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kotter, J., Cohen, D.S.: *The Heart of Change: Real Life Stories of How People Change Their Organization*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

^{iv} Helmreich, R., Merritt, A., & Wilhelm, J. The evolution of crew resource management training in commercial aviation. *The International Journal of Aviation Psychology*, 9 (1), 19-32, 1999.

^v Beeson, S., *Practicing Excellence*. Gulf Breeze: Fire Starter Publishing, 2006.

^{vi} K. D. Jones : The Impending Crisis In Healthcare . *The Internet Journal of Healthcare Administration*. 2001 Volume 1 Number 2.

^{vii} Tannebaum, S.I., Yukl, G., Training and development in work organizations. *Annu Rev Psychol*. 43: 399-441, 1992.

^{viii} Studer, Q., *Results That Last*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

^{ix} Porath, C., Pearson, C., *How Toxic Colleagues Corrode Performance*. Harvard Business Review, April 2009.

^x Kotter, J., Cohen, D.S.: *The Heart of Change: Real Life Stories of How People Change Their Organization*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.