Employee engagement vital to ISO 15189 success

By Lisa M. Walters, PhD, MBA, MT(ASCP)SBB, SSGB

Engagement can be thought of in terms of trait engagement, state engagement, and behavioral engagement. Trait engagement is part of you like a proactive personality. State engagement is an antecedent of state engagement, which represents the psychological state of engagement, manifested as energy or absorption in work. The result of state engagement is behavioral engagement, and that is really where the rubber hits the road. Behavioral engagement is the discretionary work performed; it is the work we would like to see staff undertake as part of QMS implementation. Critical to these dimensions of engagement are work attributes, leadership, and trust. Work attributes include challenging and important work, and work autonomy. Transformational leadership is visionary, challenging people to achieve the exceptional. It inspires, and it provides clear expectations, fairness, recognition of exceptional behavior, and realization of existing staff competencies.

Trust is a fragile but necessary component. Lack of trust equals no engagement, and no sustainable ISO 15189. The primary responsibility of building trust is on management. Trust means openness, honesty, two-way communication, willingness to be influenced, and willingness to change if necessary. Trust "encourages self-control, as opposed to control through direct supervision."

Prior to beginning accreditation processes, explore how engaged you really are. Consultants may advise you to gap the lab to ISO 15189 to begin the accreditation process. Instead, try to first analyze the engagement gap. By identifying gaps and then improving those engagement conditions, there is a better chance of successfully deploying and sustaining not only ISO 15189 but other initiatives as well.

By understanding the role of engagement in organizational initiatives, not only will ISO 15189 elevate the lab to a new level of quality, but everyone just may want to be a part of it.

References

2. Erickson, TJ. Testimony submitted before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; May 26, 2005; Washington, DC.