

MediSys Script – Corey Portell

In only ten years, MediSys Corp. has brought innovative, lifesaving healthcare technologies to the market. Entrepreneurial and profitable, you've created a name for yourself. Your new technology, IntensCare, has shown immense promise, but issues threaten an on-time launch.

Several issues contribute to the ultimate concern presented: IntensCare team performance. This team is pulling itself apart; Ms. Merz, you almost handed in your letter of resignation, team members are hiding delays from one another, and few individuals understand how their work impacts the entire team.

Before diving into solutions, I want to acknowledge the challenging situation in which you find yourself Ms. Merz. As the individual charged with the long-term success of this product, you bear significant responsibility for the team's outcomes, but with no supervisory power. You're also the newest member of MediSys, one of the youngest, and one of only two women. Your colleagues don't recognize the weight you carry, nor do they seem to look past their own work. These are incredibly challenging power dynamics. Steering this team in a productive direction is not your job alone, but it is one you can manage with the right strategies.

Using perspectives from Harvard Business Review experts, I'll diagnose where the team performance is less than ideal and present short-term solutions to reroute IntensCare team for long-term success. I'll be happy to answer your questions at the end of the presentation.

So where do we start? The ABCs. Affect, Behavior, and Cognition. Team formation researcher and NASA-team contributor Leslie DeChurch points to three necessities for successful team leadership. Teams need to have Affect – or shared motivation, feeling, and camaraderie, they must have Behavior – a coordinated effort, and there must be Cognition – a common vision and purpose.

With the ABCs as our metric for performance evaluation, the IntensCare team leaves much to be desired. Affect – there is no collective team. Disparate members “have each other's backs”, but within their own functional area. Behavior – this team has experts in their own right, but they have their own goals, again, often based on functional area expertise. The group is also failing to share key information about delays with one another. Cognition – Individuals are thinking narrowly, within their own functional area. Currently, there is no common vision or goal, but there are many assumptions about *other* teammates' goals and motivations.

So how are we going to build healthy ABCs for this team?

First and foremost, by focusing on aligning feeling, behavior, and thinking towards your shared mission, set out by your President, Art Beaumont: “Launch an innovative, world-class MediSys Corp. product by August 2009.” This is your goal, what you've been charged to work towards. A management and business scholar Azaddin Khalifa points to evidence that a clear sense of mission has led organizations, around the world to be at the top of their industry for decades.

Think of Sears Roebuck during WWI or the Grameen Bank's role in sustained poverty alleviation. IntensCare can help MediSys Corp. stand at the top of your industry, and it needs to use its mission to get there.

Your mission relates to Affect, Behavior, and Cognition. For Affect, the team needs to feel connected to something shared. Identify President Beaumont's statement and acknowledge that this is expected; it must be worked towards. Beginning to build relationships where colleagues don't mind being in the same room as one another will help. This is not your job alone; it will take a team approach. Organize a one day, off-site team building retreat. Give each other the opportunity to share your individual motivations for working at MediSys, and in this industry in the first place. HBR authors and experts note that getting to know each other outside of work, your habits, your priorities, your values, can help teams coordinate better. You need to be able to develop trust and rapport. Ms. Merz, your colleagues need to understand where you're situated, to respect the role you've been given, and work with you towards those ends. Your teammates also need to feel valued in this way; your team can begin to build this value by acknowledging each colleagues' strengths and skills, and by surfacing personal contributions.

This will go a long way towards building a team that seeks input from one another. Your team is made up of stellar, expert contributors, many of whom your C-suite has identified as potential future leadership. Acknowledge this off site, and continue to do so once back in the office. If you're successful, you gain recognition and legitimacy, but only if your team trusts that they will be individually valued. You fail or succeed together.

At the same time, you'll need to focus on behavior; teams can't function properly if individuals don't understand their roles and responsibilities, or those of their teammates. Your colleagues need to see the domino effect their work has on the project, and mission, as a whole. You'll do this by reorganizing the team for increased productivity. Harness the positive rapport many of the engineers have built by creating an engineering team that meets at increased intervals with the expectation that they will have deliverables for the all-team check-in meeting each week. You'll also create production and business development teams, across which individuals will have shared functional leadership. Those with end product responsibility, like you and Jack Fogel, will work together across teams to report progress and road blocks to each other; you'll work together to make any task adjustments, as needed. This removes some of the interpersonal issues, and will make productivity more likely.

This directly relates to team cognition. Leadership expert and Harvard Business School faculty Amy Edmondson notes that building psychological safety is necessary for teams to have trust. Individuals must feel safe enough to take risks, like offering a dissenting opinion. This means you must set the expectation that team members challenge ideas only, not individual people. Team conflict is about perception of teammates; conflict should be about tasks, not relationships. Building your team's understanding of one another and organizing them with relationships in mind goes a long way, but this must be a clear expectation; the group norm is respect. You can also create shared mental models, or mental operating systems, by having

team leads create and share out agendas 24-48 hours in advance of each meeting. This helps establish upcoming deadlines and benchmarks, and articulates the meetings' goals. Before the end of each meeting, next steps should be determined.

Some important notes on additional short term interventions. There are significant timeline and regulatory problems presented by outsourcing software design to India. MediSys should take pride in being a U.S.-based corporation and bring all this work in-house in order to meet the internal workflow deadline of May 1. Relatedly, the product engineering team has expressed significant time constraints because of multiple team responsibilities. Their time should shift to focus exclusively on IntensCare. This may require additional resources, but a McKinsey & Co. economic model calculates that going 50% over budget during development in order to launch a product on time only reduces profits by 4%, but staying on budget and getting to market late reduces profits by 1/3. This timeline makes sense for the bottom line, as do your instincts about pausing modulation. While this will make you competitive in the long-term, your timeline is already tight; you must focus on delivering a quality, innovative product by August that can stand on its own. This is your mission.

Mid-term ABC interventions include celebrating milestones. Once software is delivered in final form on May 1, enjoy an off-site team dinner and ask management to announce the progress in a company-wide email. As you effectively build cross-functional input and rapport, formalize it by working with managers to pilot the incorporation of team-based evaluations into year-end assessments to create team accountability. After May 1, have a focused, day long, all team meeting to reassess and recalibrate timelines, roles, and tasks in order to meet your August deadline. These actions will build off of initial interventions and provide weight to the importance of your team.

After launch? Celebrate! Work with managers to organize a company-wide party that acknowledges the hard work of your team that has paid off for the company. After August, you can focus on building out modulation for the second version of IntensCare with a team that has capacity and a willingness to work on something new. In the long term, you can also decide if adding team-based evaluations to MediSys's reporting structure should be replicated across projects.

Ms. Merz, you have something special; your project is poised to change the medical device industry for intensive care units. By staying true to your mission and addressing your team's Affect, Behavior, and Cognition your team will deliver an exceptional product on time that will enhance MediSys Corporation's reputation and grow its business.