



Do You PDSA?

If you are trying to improve the quality in your facility you will need an execution plan. The question is how do you know if you are ready to execute a new change or system? How do you know that what you will execute will stick? How do you know that you are on the right track with what you are trying to do? What can you do to get from where you are now to realizing better outcomes in the future?

One tool you could use is the PDSA cycle or Plan, Do, Study, Act.

The PDSA cycle is intended to provide structure to a team to start implementing rapid and small tests of change. The key to successful PDSA cycles is to: take an idea or hunch, rapidly test it in a small environment, determine what went well and what did not, make adjustments and introduce a larger PDSA cycle to determine the ‘stickiness’ of the change. The following explanation helps define the pieces of the cycle to get a team started:

PLAN:

- Describe the change you are testing and state the question you want this test cycle to answer.
- What do you predict the result will be?
- What measures will you use to learn if this test is successful or has promise?
- What is the architecture of the test: who, what, when and where?

EXAMPLE: I want staff to respond faster to bed and chair alarms. I believe that I can improve the response time by 40 seconds by having each nurse aide complete a bed alarm checklist at the beginning of his/her shift. I will test this by using floor observation and timing during a random sample. This rapid cycle of change will include nurse aides, on first shift, north hall, during the hours of 1-3

DO:

- Report what happened when you carried out the test.
- Describe observations, findings, problems encountered, and special circumstances.

EXAMPLE: The time to respond did not improve as expected. Observations indicate that because the nurse aides were more aware of residents using alarms, their sense of urgency did not seem to improve to answer the alarms.

STUDY:

- Compare your results to your predictions.
- What did you learn?
- What were the surprises?

EXAMPLE: My results did not match my predictions. I learned that using the checklist seemed to imply a false sense of security where the nurse aides were anticipating the alarms going off and that this anticipation did not improve response time.

ACT:

- Modify or refine for the next cycle.
- What will you do next?

EXAMPLE: I will establish a baseline of response times using observations and a stopwatch. I will post these times on the alarm checklist with a “time to beat” as well. I will encourage staff to “beat” the posted time on the checklist as a way to educate staff on the goal and create an employee intrinsic challenge.

What PDSA allows you to do is to act on an idea or hunch in a systematic and rapid way so that you can begin trying new things while you monitor for effectiveness. Once you are able to have your Plan phase match your Study phase, you will know that you are ready to implement a change with success.