Why We Created This Resource:

We have provided Moving Organizational Performance: highmiddlelow Performer Conversations as a resource to help you improve your skill set as a leader. With this workbook and video, participants will be led by Quint Studer through a learning session that will allow participants to understand not just how to do these conversations but why we do them.

At Studer Group, we use the Healthcare Flywheel as a foundation for our work. The Healthcare Flywheel is based on the premise that the good always want to get better. It shows how organizations can create momentum for change by engaging the passion of their employees to apply prescriptive actions in order to achieve excellent results. Our hope is with this training tool, you can keep the flywheel turning in your organization.

The Healthcare Flywheel™:

In the book Good to Great, Jim Collins writes about great organizations benefiting from the flywheel effect where the power of continued improvement and the delivery of results create momentum. Applying this concept to health care, Studer Group developed the Healthcare Flywheel to help organizations understand the journey in creating great places for employees to work, physicians to practice medicine, and patients to receive care.

The beginning of this journey is not a launch or a kick off. It is simply recognition that all we do should start at the core of the organization: our values. In this way, we center or balance the flywheel. In health care, we have great purpose, do worthwhile work, and have the opportunity to make a difference. This is our hub.

From here, the first step to creating movement is to connect the dots to our hub so that people truly believe that they can make a difference. This inspiration is what allows organizations to implement initial changes.

The second part of our flywheel is when we give organizations very prescriptive To Do’s, called Nine Principles® to achieve results. From measuring the important things, to rounding for outcomes, to implementing an objective performance measurement system, to discharge phone calls, these prescriptive To Do’s-when implemented-will continue to turn the flywheel.

The third part of the flywheel process is when the organization starts to see bottom-line results under the Pillars, which provide a framework for prioritizing the desired results in step two. Instead of focusing on what is not getting done, the organization focuses on what is getting done.
In studying great health care organizations, we find what motivates people is the accomplishment of desired results. By tying results back to purpose, worthwhile work, and making a difference, the organization is inspired to follow more prescriptive behaviors to achieve even greater results, thereby creating a self perpetuating culture of excellence, fueled by the momentum of the flywheel.

We are always interested in learning - please let us know how these prescriptive actions work for your organization, and how we can help you further.

Thank you for helping make health care a better place for employees to work, physicians to practice medicine and patients to receive care.
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Introduction

In our work with health care organizations, Studer Group focuses on helping organizations implement actions that will achieve measurable results. With that goal, we are excited to partner with you to apply highmiddlelow Performer Conversations in your organization. By developing this product, we hope to make the training and implementation of highmiddlelow as successful and time efficient as possible for you, the on-site facilitator.

The Facilitator Guide is a part of the training product: Moving Organizational Performance: highmiddlelow Performer Conversations. The other tools included in this product are the Video/DVD Series (Part One and Part Two) and the corresponding guides for participants.

The Facilitator Guide contains the following sections:

1. Why Implement highmiddlelow in Your Organization?
2. How to Implement highmiddlelow Performer Conversations
3. Participant Tools
4. Facilitator Tools
5. Frequently Asked Questions
6. Studer Group Resources

This guide is intended as a resource for senior leaders and those who are identified in championing and coaching the highmiddlelow (HML) process.

From Studer Group’s national learning lab of hundreds of organizations on a journey to excellence, highmiddlelow has been identified as one of the most important building blocks for achieving and sustaining great results. A study of high performing organizations revealed the fact that the turning point for organizations for sustaining results is dealing with low performers. highmiddlelow addresses this, but in a value-driven and results-focused way. Ultimately Studer Group’s goal is to provide knowledge, tools, and processes for you and your organization to be successful and to make health care a better place for employees, physicians, and patients.

Your Feedback

Studer Group appreciates feedback. Please share your comments, feedback, and results from this training tool with us. Write, call, or email Quint at:

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Gulf Breeze, FL 32561

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Section 1: Why Implement highmiddlelow in Your Organization?

A Study of Why Organizational Initiatives Fail

In almost any organization, leaders speak to their frustration that they spend 80 percent of their time on 5 percent of staff who are not meeting expectations. If leaders and their time are our most valuable assets, then we are not using them wisely.

In leading and studying health care organizations over the last twenty years, Quint Studer, CEO and founder of Studer Group, identified a road map for organizations to hardwire a Culture of Excellence. This road map known as Nine Principles® is the foundation for any organization in creating a great place for employees to work, physicians to practice medicine, and patients to receive care.

Yet even with road maps for success, all leaders have been in organizations where the latest initiative failed at getting the desired results. In his research, Quint looked at organizations over the years who had worked to implement well-known and respected initiatives—initiatives that any seasoned leader will remember: cost containment, vertical integration, horizontal integration, reengineering, nurse recruitment, and so on.

Each of these initiatives had good prescriptive actions to attain laudable results. However, in looking at their longevity, each of the initiatives or buzzwords seemed to come and go over a 2–4 year cycle with organizations turning to the next great program for the answer.

Through his work, culminating in 2003, Quint identified what he believed was the root cause of why organizations fail to sustain excellence and why in health care it seems we are always in the midst of the latest program of the month. Quint identified that organizations were hitting a Wall.

The Wall is a physiological one, and an organization may hit it at different times. What is the Wall? It is the point in time when our high and middle performers perceive the performance gap between themselves and the low performers as unfair and intolerable. With a feeling that the low performers are not being dealt with, the high and middle performers slow down or reduce their performance, affecting the entire organization.

We as leaders, frustrated by an apparent lack of results, blame the current initiative as not the “right” one and move on to the next program of the year. When, in fact, the root cause was the failure to deal fairly with all employees by means of consistent expectations and accountability.

Time is precious in health care. With our growing population and medical needs we cannot afford to waste precious resources. We cannot afford to spend 2–3 years investing in new behaviors or new initiatives. Many of these initiatives—from revenue cycle reduction to safety to reengineering—are valuable ones. So shouldn’t we make them stick the first time? Well, we can.
Section 1: Why Implement highmiddlelow in Your Organization?

What highmiddlelow Accomplishes

highmiddlelow is a behavior tool to give organizations a systematic approach to continual assessment of your organizational or department performance to ensure constant improvement. It creates consistent methods for feedback to improve all levels of staff performance while addressing the low performer issues. highmiddlelow crafts the ability for health care organizations to achieve and sustain success.

If you look at the graph below, you will see that any organization will have a current or old performance curve. What is the performance curve? It is the plotting of each staff member’s performance, which totals the overall organizational performance. Our goal should be to want to see steady improvement from there. To move from the old performance curve to the new performance curve, we have to move each individual staff member. When we do this, we circumvent the Wall.

Improved Operational Performance Across the Board

OLD

NEW

Performance
Unfortunately most organizations and leaders have spent their time valiantly trying to improve the low performers (the small minority) first. Unintentionally, they have neglected the main drivers of performance, our high and middle performers.

highmiddlelow provides organizations a tool to move organizational performance by first reversing that order by focusing on high and middle performers and then customizing our interaction depending on where an employee falls on the performance curve at any given time. By doing so we effectively move each individual and the performance of our entire department or, even better, the entire organization.

What makes highmiddlelow so effective is that it is a timeless behavior tool. Once an organization trains the leaders on this behavior tool, a leader can use this technique to address any situation in which they are trying to improve outcomes, whether those are financial, quality, or service outcomes.

When you are ready, move to Section 2 of this guide to begin understanding how we are going to implement this important technique in our organization. Included is a review of the training tools that accompany this Facilitator Guide.

This concludes Section 1.
Section 2: How to Implement highmiddlelow Performer Conversations

An Overview of the Videos and Participant Guides

A key component of implementing highmiddlelow in your organization is training the leaders. The Video/DVD series and Participant Guide have been developed so that you can bring the Studer Group training and methodology directly to your leaders. The goal of the training is for each leader to be able to:

- Describe why highmiddlelow Performer Conversations are important to moving organizational performance and consistent with the values of the organization
- Understand the process and techniques to follow in having these conversations
- Conduct these conversations with their staff

The Participant Guide and corresponding Video/DVD series take leaders and you through five key training components with an additional resource section. They are:

1. Moving Organizational Performance Through highmiddlelow Performer Conversations
2. highmiddlelow Performer Conversations Vignettes
3. Role-Play Exercises
4. Process and Participant Tools
5. Frequently Asked Questions and Wrap-up

Your role as facilitator is to help guide this process using the Participant Guide to direct the training. If completed in its entirety, the training will take approximately four hours. (See Facilitator Tool 2 on page 25 for an overview of the agenda.)

It is recommended that you now participate in the training as if you were a participant. This should take approximately two hours as there are sections in the Participant Guide that you can quickly review now during this “preview” session. Use the Participant Guide and follow the instructions as if a participant. At the beginning of each section the guide tells you approximately how long each section will take.

When you have completed the Participant Guide you will be ready to continue to the next portion of this section: When to Introduce highmiddlelow.
When to Introduce highmiddlelow

One of the most important elements of how we introduce something is sequencing. If you think of a house, we do not build the roof and walls before we have a foundation in place. The same holds true for highmiddlelow. Having viewed the training tools, you should now have a solid foundation of highmiddlelow and the training tools and resources available to you.

In Quint’s book *Huwiring Excellence*, he lays out the road map for an organization to create a Culture of Excellence, which can be viewed as an organization constantly improving with defined goals to measure the progress. The key to success is not just what you do, but when you do it. Sequencing is critical.

An organization that wants to improve needs to take the first step, which is to identify where it wants to go (Goals by Pillar) based on its mission and vision. A good question to ask when determining when to introduce highmiddlelow is “Do our leaders know the desired outcomes or goals that they will be held accountable for?” We have to set the desired direction of the performance improvement before we embark, and we need to ensure the direction aligns with our mission. Quint outlines this process in detail in Chapter 9 of *Huwiring Excellence*.

The second prescriptive is the establishment of a formal mechanism to train your leaders, called “Leadership Development Institutes” by Studer Group. These are quarterly training sessions to provide leaders the skill set to achieve measurable results you have set under the first action.

By hardwiring leader evaluations and the development process (as outlined in the graph above), the organization has put the two key building blocks in place and aligned the leaders to the goals of the organization. From there an organization can look at individual leadership skills development. In order to develop and hardwire leadership skills, Quint identified six essential actions. These prescriptive actions are Must Haves, which assist in achieving and sustaining operational excellence by positioning your organization for improved patient, employee, and physician satisfaction. Satisfaction improvement in these areas will lead to increased volume, decreased LOS, better clinical outcomes, and better staff retention, which lead to a better bottom-line.

**Must Haves** are:
- Rounding for Outcomes
- Employee Thank You Notes
- Selection and the First 90 Days
- Discharge Phone Calls (Pre and Post Calls)
- Key Words at Key Times
- Aligning Leader Evaluations with Desired Behaviors
How Should highmiddlelow be Implemented?

An organization is strongly encouraged to introduce Rounding for Outcomes as a leader’s most important skill set before introducing highmiddlelow. highmiddlelow will actually build off of Rounding for Outcomes and Thank You Notes.

If desired, other Must Haves can be initiated simultaneously with implementation of highmiddlelow, but the key to your road map for improvement should include Leader Evaluation, Development, Must Haves, and awareness of how much you want to put on the leader’s new skill plate at once. Studer Group experience shows it is best to focus on one or two new behaviors, tools, and processes and hardware 100 percent rather than implementing many efforts that may fall short.

For more information on coaching resources and knowledge to develop the foundational road map for Nine Principles and Must Haves, see the resources section of this Guide.

Assuming the foundation of Leader Evaluation and Development is in place and competency of Rounding is being taught, an organization needs to make a simple decision in implementing highmiddlelow.

As you saw in the training video, highmiddlelow is a technique to coach and develop staff. This technique is invaluable for any leader and can be taught to leaders to implement in their own department according to their own schedule. This would be appropriate for organizations early in the journey who have yet to hit a Wall and want to use highmiddlelow as a foundational coaching technique as part of rounding and engaging staff. This approach is called highmiddlelow Skill Implementation, in which the focus is on creating the skill.

Many organizations, however, have tried various efforts and, in fact, have hit a Wall. In this case, it is suggested that the entire organization go through highmiddlelow, starting with senior leaders. This process is more rigorous in terms of expectation and process to follow and is called highmiddlelow Organizational Alignment. It should be noted that hitting a Wall does not mean results are inferior; it is just that to get to the next level we have to move our entire organization.
Section 2: How to Implement highmiddlelow Performer Conversations

Developing Your Plan for highmiddlelow Skill Implementation

1. Get Approval from and Prepare Senior Leaders
   Most important is getting support and direction from senior leaders. Many leaders will have attended a Studer Group Institute, read Hardwiring Excellence, or had a Studer Group coach who has recommended this tactic. Providing background including information in Section 1 is important to your senior leaders.

   Many organizations will use their Leadership Development Institutes to introduce this skill. Senior Leaders can actually participate in the training during the same time as leaders.

   Senior leaders must commit to use highmiddlelow as an ongoing coaching tool in the organization, not as a training exercise. They also need to know that at some point a more systematic use of highmiddlelow may be necessary, depending on current results.

2. Customize Tools and Processes and Prepare Training
   Once senior leaders have signed off on training, a date and time to train leaders need to be set. The participants will go through Moving Organizational Performance: highmiddlelow Performer Conversations, Part One and Part Two using the Participant Guides at this session. The general time frame for training is a half-day (4 hours).

   If you have a large group to train and do not have a Studer Group coach, you may want to have one or two others help facilitate. Representatives from HR are excellent co-facilitators. In fact we recommend that they be briefed on the training and prepared to help leaders on low performer conversations. Having HR walk through the training (at least Part One) is advisable.

   It will be important to feel comfortable with the material you will be using. You have already watched the training. There are a few tools you will need to look at to determine what you need to customize. The first set of tools are these that participants will be using. These are below. They are in the Participant Guide and in Section 3 of this guide.

   - **Participant Tool 1:** Overview of Process (page 19) – This is essentially the instruction for your leaders. For those who follow Studer Group’s Leadership Development Institute guidelines, this would be the linkage grid — those actions that the leaders will implement based on the training received to date.

     How specific a process you are implementing will dictate how specific the dates and actions will need to be. It is critical for each leader’s supervisor to review the assessment and status of these conversations. This creates the accountability and provides further coaching.

   - **Participant Tool 2:** Differentiating Staff Worksheet (page 20) – This is a standard tool to help leaders identify their staff. It is recommended that this be customized based on the organizational standards of behavior, performance management guidelines, and other norms or expectations.

   - **Participant Tool 3:** Employee Tracking Log (page 21) – in order to turn this training into an acquired skill, leaders need to be rigorous in their follow-up with staff. The tracking tool allows leaders to see with whom they have spoken and any follow-up that needs to be done. The follow-up date can be the responsibility of the employee, but as the video discussed, being on top of “agreed” improvements is critical for success.
The other set of tools are those that you, the facilitator, will be using to prepare or manage the process. They are found in Section 4. The below tools are the main tools you will use for skill implementation.

- **Facilitator Tool 1**: Preparation Checklist (page 23)
- **Facilitator Tool 2**: Draft Agenda (page 25)
- **Facilitator Tool 3**: Sample Flip Charts and Key Words (page 26)
- **Facilitator Tool 7**: Evaluation Form (page 32)

3. **Implement Training and Support Network**

   This is the easy part. You are now ready to conduct the training. Most of the on-site facilitator’s work will be in leading the participants through the Participant Guide Section 3 (Role-Play Exercises) and Section 4 (Process and Participant Tools). This is why you have taken time to customize your process tools and understand exactly what you want them to do. Again, the facilitator tools will help you prepare for this day. **The goal in developing this product was to make the training as easy as possible for you, the on-site facilitator.**

4. **Monitor and Use Every Day as Part of Leadership Culture**

   The real work begins now. The conversations and techniques need to be used. For those who have missed the training it will be important to hold make-up sessions. Below are some tips for this phase:

   - Schedule a session post-training for each senior leader to review their leadership team with the CEO and plan to conduct development conversations.
   - Use highmiddlelow language every day. If you are coaching leaders about a particular staff member, ask them if the staff is high, middle, or low to develop a foundation.
   - When rolling out new initiatives, look at using the highmiddlelow as the way to engage and align staff to new behaviors.
   - Do additional role-plays or simulation training where leaders are given certain scenarios to work through at manager meetings or future LDIs.
   - Ask HR to track how many staff are in the disciplinary process after this training and if leaders are accessing them for assistance.
   - Translate the employee tracking log into an ongoing employee rounding log.
   - Do a survey of leaders three months out on how they are using skill and techniques.
Section 2: How to Implement highmiddlelow Performer Conversations

An organization may determine that a complete cycle of these conversations with each staff member and leader in the organization needs to occur during a specific time period. In this scenario the steps in highmiddlelow Skill Implementation still need to take place as well as additional ones. These additional steps focus on sequencing and monitoring and are even more important when an entire organization completes this process.

Additional Steps for highmiddlelow Organizational Alignment

1. Get Approval From and Prepare Senior Leaders
   It is imperative that senior leaders support the concept that these conversations are not negotiable, are to be completed in a certain time period, and that the reporting up of the number and status of these conversations will occur.
   - In this alignment, the senior leaders should be trained prior to other leaders. This is important in that senior leaders will be coaching and advising their leaders on these conversations in almost all cases. Senior leaders need to be well versed in the technique and need to have conversations with their own direct reports. This cascading approach strengthens your foundation as you move into the organizational effort. See Facilitator Tool 4 Implementing highmiddlelow with the Senior Leader Team (page 27) to see how to conduct this preliminary step of training.

2. Customize Tools and Processes and Prepare Training
   - In highmiddlelow Skill Implementation some organizations simply ask leaders to begin using the highmiddlelow technique. In organizational alignment, the dates and flow need to be more prescriptive. You will need to complete Part B of Tool 1, which gives specific deadlines for finishing high, then middle and finally low performer conversations. The dates are determined by the number of staff that report to the leader.
   - We highly recommend that a resource team be established that would be comprised of a senior leader (perhaps head of HR), the on-site facilitator, and others from the LDI team and HR who will help answer questions and support leaders as they go through this process. This team can ensure that leaders have additional tools they need such as review of the Corrective Action Policy.
   - If an organization has Standards of Behavior, we strongly suggest that copies be available at training to use during the role-play time. Leaders will want to use these valuable behavior expectations during highmiddlelow. See Section 5: Frequently Asked Questions for more information on Standards of Behavior.
   - Another suggestion that has worked well is for the on-site facilitator to train the assistants of senior leaders. In many cases they will be handling the “assessment forms” as they are sent up the chain of command. Understanding confidentiality and the purpose of the exercise is very important. Having them view Part One will help. Engaged assistants to senior leaders really help hardwire processes and improve the culture. Their role is vital, yet they are often overlooked in training.
3. Implement Training and Support Network
   - Follow the same steps as highmiddlelow Skill Implementation

4. Monitor and Use Every Day as Part of Leadership Culture
   - At a certain date, leaders will be asked to turn in their highmiddlelow assessment of staff
     before conversations begin. The on-site champion for highmiddlelow will need to work
     to gather this information. Many times HR can do this. Eventually, you want to be able to
     present back to leadership the actual performance curve of your organization as illustrated
     in Facilitator Tool 5.

   - Reminders with upcoming due dates are important.

   - With a goal of literally moving the organizational performance curve of the organization,
     it is imperative to make sure that the low performers actually improve or are moved out.
     Three to four months from the time low performer conversations are to be completed,
     a process of follow-up with leaders is recommended to judge effectiveness of the effort.
     See Facilitator Tool 6: Follow-Up Process.

   - Many organizations have determined that a highmiddlelow Organizational Alignment
     makes sense once a year. If an organization evaluates staff on a common date, then six
     months in between the annual evaluations is ideal. Staff cites that professional development
     is a key satisfier and that annual feedback is not enough. highmiddlelow supports the eval-
     uation process nicely without the formality of the process. Remember though, all leaders
     need to ensure that low performers are addressed not just during these times. Once you
     have implemented this technique, leaders need to use it at all times so the low performers
     do not creep back into the organizational performance curve for any length of time.

   This concludes Section 2.
Section 3: Participant Tools

Note – All Tools are available electronically on www.firestarterpublishing.com.

- **Participant Tool 1:** An Overview of the Process
- **Participant Tool 2:** Differentiating Staff Worksheet
- **Participant Tool 3:** Employee Tracking Log

**Participant Tool 1: An Overview of the Process**

*Facilitator Instructions: Customize and set dates below.*

**Part A. Approach**

| 1a. | Complete an assessment of your staff using the Differentiating Staff Worksheet (Tool 2). Document your assessment on an Employee Tracking Log (Tool 3). Return a copy of this list with the performance level completed for each employee to your supervisor by **due date**. |
| 1b. | Determine general schedule for conversations. First high performers, then middle, and finally low performers. |
| 2. | Prepare notes for each employee using guidelines covered in this training. You may also want to role-play with your peers or managers or access additional resources such as HR. Complete the conversations. Record the date of this initial discussion in the appropriate column (Date of Initial Discussion) on Tracking Log. You must indicate a follow-up discussion date for any employee receiving middle or low performance scores. Document any follow-up discussions unless following the disciplinary process. Complete conversations by **dates in Part B**. |
| 3. | Once you have completed all of your employee feedback meetings, return your completed form to your supervisor in accordance with the completion dates outlined. For leaders managing leaders, please forward the logs from your managers to your supervisor once you have reviewed them. |
| 4. | Be prepared to discuss the results of your conversations and share feedback. |

**Part B. Specific Timeline for highmiddlelow Organizational Alignment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of employees</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Low</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 50</td>
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### Section 3: Participant Tools

**Participant Tool 2: Differentiating Staff Worksheet**

**Facilitator Instructions:** Customize as appropriate to your organization. The standards of behavior of an organization are excellent starting points to identify the traits and specific characteristics of high, middle, and low performers. By completing this worksheet an organization reduces the variance of how leaders view their staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Low</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professionalism</strong></td>
<td>Adheres to unit policies concerning breaks, personal phone calls, leaving the work area, and other absences from work.</td>
<td>Usually adheres to unit policies concerning breaks, personal phone calls, leaving the work area, and other absences from work.</td>
<td>Does not communicate effectively about absences from work areas. Handles personal phone calls in a manner that interferes with work. Breaks last longer than allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teamwork</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates high commitment to making things better for the work unit and organization as a whole.</td>
<td>Committed to improving performance of the work unit and organization. May require coaching to fully execute.</td>
<td>Demonstrates little commitment to the work unit and the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge &amp; Competence</strong></td>
<td>Eager to change for the good of the organization. Strives for continuous professional development.</td>
<td>Invested in own professional development. May require some coaching to fully execute.</td>
<td>Shows little interest in improving own performance or the performance of the organization. Develops professional skills only when asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Comes to work with a positive attitude.</td>
<td>Usually comes to work with a positive attitude. Occasionally gets caught up in the negative attitude of others.</td>
<td>Comes to work with a negative attitude. Has a negative influence on the work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety Awareness</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates the behaviors of safety awareness in all aspects of work.</td>
<td>Demonstrates the behaviors of safety awareness in all aspects of work.</td>
<td>Performs work with little regard to the behaviors of safety awareness.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Participant Tool 3: Employee Tracking Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rating (H-M-L)</th>
<th>Initial Meeting Date</th>
<th>Follow-up Date/Comments</th>
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This concludes Section 3.
Section 4: Facilitator Tools

- Facilitator Tool 1: Preparation Checklist
- Facilitator Tool 2: Draft Agenda
- Facilitator Tool 3: Sample Flip Charts and Key Words
- Facilitator Tool 4: Implementing highmiddelow with the Senior Leader Team
- Facilitator Tool 5: Reporting Results
- Facilitator Tool 6: Follow-Up Process
- Facilitator Tool 7: Evaluation Form

Facilitator Tool 1: Preparation Checklist

A preparation checklist is provided to help you think through and prepare for what will be needed to make the session a success. You can customize this list to meet the needs of the organization.

- Read through the Facilitator Guide and Participant Guide and view Part One and Part Two of the Video/DVD series.
- Understand the targeted training audience and modify learning objectives to meet desired outcomes. Prepare opening and closing comments. Learning Objectives:
  - Describe why highmiddelow Performer Conversations are important to moving organizational performance and are consistent with the values of the organization
  - Understand the process and techniques to follow in having these conversations
  - Conduct these conversations with your staff
- Train and brief Senior Leaders and HR.
- Study and Customize Tools.
  - Participant Tool 1: An Overview of the Process
  - Participant Tool 2: Differentiating Staff Worksheet
  - Participant Tool 3: Employee Tracking Log
- Determine if participants should pre-read a selected article or information before attending session. Quint’s article “Reducing Leadership Variance” is an excellent five-minute read. It is available on the Studer Group Web-site, www.studergroup.com.
- Ask leaders to bring a list of employees with them or have HR bring the list to training.
- Prepare Training Evaluation Form. See Facilitator Tool 7 for template.
- Arrange for equipment and materials for participants:
  - Videotape or DVD player
  - TV monitor or screen
- Moving Organizational Performance: highmiddelow Performer Conversations Part One and Part Two
Section 4: Facilitator Tools

☐ For each participant:
  ☐ Participant Guide
  ☐ Tools that have been customized
  ☐ Evaluation Form (Facilitator Tool 7)
  ☐ Other Resources/Tools of Organization
    (Standards of Behavior, Corrective Action Policy, employee lists)
  ☐ Flip-chart paper
  ☐ Tape to hold flip charts on wall
  ☐ Flip-chart easels
  ☐ Marking pens
  ☐ Pencils and pens for participants
  ☐ Index cards for questions
  ☐ Table assignments if appropriate

☐ Prepare Talking Points to use during training and cues for when to begin reading the guide and its section overviews.
  - Arrange opening remarks for training and 3 introduction flip charts or PowerPoint slides (see Facilitator Tool 3).
  - Take last review of your Participant Guide and make notes of comments you want to add based on your organizational perspective.
Facilitator Tool 2: Draft Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Draft Agenda – 4 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>highmiddlelow Performer Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction and Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Initiatives Have Failed in the Past and Moving Organizational Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highmiddlelow Performer Conversations Vignettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-Play Exercise and Understanding the Process and Tools to Use for These Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions and Wrap-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Facilitator Note:** We recommend that you have only the start and end times on the agenda for participants. This will give you more control with time.
Facilitator Tool 3: Sample Flip Charts and Key Words

Opening Remarks
- Welcome
- Share where your organization is in the journey
- Review past training and where highmiddlelow relates

Flip Chart – 1
Moving Organizational Performance
highmiddlelow Performer Conversations
Your Coach – [Your Name]

Opening Remarks
- “We want to accomplish the following today.”
  Review outcomes on flip chart.
- “This will help us tremendously based on where we are in our journey and our results.”

Flip Chart – 2
Desired Outcomes
- Describe why highmiddlelow Performer Conversations are important to moving organizational performance and consistent with our values
- Understand the process and techniques to follow
- Conduct these conversations with your staff

Opening Remarks
- “How we will do this today is through this agenda.”
- “Everyone also has a Participant Guide, which is your key resource.”
- “We will be using Studer Group’s Video/DVD series. Our main coach today will be Quint Studer.”
- “You also have an evaluation form at your table. It is extremely important to complete this. Let’s review that now.”
- “At this point I will ask you to open your Participant Guide and read the introduction and then the first page of Section 1. When you are done, let me know and we will have Quint start.”

Flip Chart – 3
Agenda
- Why Initiatives Have Failed in the Past and Moving Organizational Performance
- highmiddlelow Performer Conversations Vignettes
- Role-Play Exercise
- Understanding the Process and Tools to Use for These Conversations
- Frequently Asked Questions and Wrap-up
Facilitator Tool 4: Implementing highmiddlelow with the Senior Leader Team

Successful implementation of the highmiddlelow Performer process in an organization begins with the senior leader team as discussed. The following outlines a process and facilitated method to use with senior teams.

A. Timeline

120 Days

CEO Conversation
Establish HML roll out schedule.
Set up Facilitated Executive Team Session.

Facilitated Executive Team Session
CEO and Sr. Leaders implement HML process and conduct HML conversations within 4 weeks.

Roll out of HML to leaders
HML staff identified and HML conversations conducted within 6 weeks.*

Learning/Evaluation:
Follow up post completion of conversations.

* Depends on size of organization

B. CEO Conversation

During this meeting, the on-site facilitator provides the CEO, Initiative Champion, and Senior HR leader with education about high, middle and low performers. Implementing the highmiddlelow process and coaching on the reasons why the highmiddlelow process must begin at the senior level. Key points to make during this meeting are:

- Agreement on implementing the highmiddlelow process in the organization
- Communicate the benefits of implementing the highmiddlelow process
- Identify highmiddlelow implementation timeline for the organization
- Establish Facilitated Executive Team Session Date
- Provide references and reading material
  - *Hardwiring Excellence* pp. 122 – 129
  - Section 1 of the Facilitator Guide

C. Facilitated Executive Team Session (3 hours)

*Session Objectives*

- Understand the highmiddlelow process
- Create a common understanding of how to assess leaders
- Learn how to conduct highmiddlelow conversations
- Commit to the highmiddlelow implementation timeline

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Section 4: Facilitator Tools

Facilitator Supplies
- Flip Charts and Markers
- Participant Guides and DVD/Video Series Moving Organizational Performance Part One and Part Two
- Proposed Tools & Timeline

Pre-Work
Reduces Leadership Variance Article by Quint Studer

Room Set Up
- U-shape to facilitate participant interaction.

D. Abbreviated Training Agenda for Senior Leaders
In this reduced training Section 2 and Section 3 are eliminated to complete training within 3 hours. Most senior leaders participate in the training with the leaders and therefore will actually participate in the full session later in the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction and Guide</td>
<td>8:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Initiatives Have Failed in the Past and Moving Organizational Performance</td>
<td>8:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>9:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the Process and Tools to Use for These Conversations</td>
<td>9:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions and Wrap-up</td>
<td>10:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>11:00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Facilitator Tool 5: Reporting Results

In our goal of helping all health care organizations throughout our national learning lab, Studer Group would encourage you to communicate your results of highmiddlelow Performance Conversations with us so we can study, track, and communicate progress to all using this tool.

Below is an example of one organization that completed the highmiddlelow Organizational Alignment and its reported operational performance curve. This organization six months later reported a 75% reduction in low performers.
Facilitator Tool 6: Follow-Up Process

A. Sample Letter With Instructions

Dear Leaders,

In (date) we started an important process for improving our organizational performance, hardwiring highmiddlelow Performer Conversations. Most research points to staff receiving feedback as a critical factor in engaging our workforce. I applaud your actions and the ongoing use of this important tool.

This cannot be a one-time exercise, as you all know. In our debriefing at last LDI, it was shared that we had over (X) low performers identified. Our goal is to have them improve or move on.

Having completed this exercise almost (date) months ago, we need to evaluate where we are as an organization and if our efforts were successful, providing us the results we want.

Please know this is not a test. You do not fail if you have low performers. The key is to identify why you do and how we can support and coach you in improving them. Below you will find the process the senior leader team would like you to complete so that we can do an organizational assessment.

We are asking Managers and Directors to do the following:

Managers: Please submit to your supervisor a list of low performers identified in the exercise via the Template (Facilitator Tool 6B) attached by (date). Please add any additional low performers to this list whom you have identified since the first round. Please note current status (improvement satisfactory—transitioned out, transitioned to more appropriate position, corrective action being taken).

To not lose focus on our high performers, each manager is welcomed to email my CEO assistant, with a copy to your supervisor, the name of a staff member whom I can send a thank you note to and the specifics of your recommendation. Please use CEO Managing Up in e-mail title.

Directors: Please review your managers’ low performer submissions. After reviewing, please send this list to your senior leader assistant. Please provide a brief overview of your actions to support your manager. Please do this by (date). If you have non-leadership staff who report to you, please complete the same exercise as identified under Manager.

Sincerely,

CEO
B. Template for Evaluating Low Performer Status

_Evaluation of Low Performer Status_
Confidential

**Status Code**
- I  Improvement Satisfactory
- G  No Longer with Organization
- CA In Corrective Action
- CH Changed to More Appropriate Position
- N  New to List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Department</th>
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Please send to your supervisor by (date)
Facilitator Tool 7: Evaluation Form

EVALUATION

PROGRAM TITLE: highmiddlelow Performer Conversations

DATE:

What three things did you find most important today?
1. 

2. 

3. 

What three things are you going to start to do or increase doing after hearing today's presentations?
1. 

2. 

3. 

What three things are you going to quit or decrease doing after hearing today's presentations?
1. 

2. 

3. 

Please rate the following —
1 being “Poor” and 5 being “Excellent”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Guide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

This concludes Section 4.
Section 5: Frequently Asked Questions

Review of Common Questions

Who should participate in training?
This training is designed for leaders in any type of supervisory role. It can be used to teach in a group or for a leader who would like to participate in this training as part of personal professional development or as a make-up session.

Do leaders go through these conversations also?
Absolutely.

How do we assess leaders?
Similar to staff: Do leaders conduct themselves to the standards of the organization? Are they role models? Do they need some coaching? It is hoped that there are no low performer issues with leaders. If there are, they need to be addressed quickly.

Leaders are also responsible for achieving results. Does the leader consistently meet their targets? If they are high performers they should be achieving their results and role modeling standards of behavior. If they are just doing the latter but struggle with some results, then they are middle performers. If they struggle with results across the board or consistently over time, there are low performer issues.

Do you have to train the senior leaders first? What about directors? Do they go through this before the managers who report to them?
If the organization will be undergoing highmiddlelow Organizational Alignment, the senior leaders should be trained first. It is important that they are completely comfortable with the technique and process before rolling out to the rest of the leaders and initiating the conversations. Beyond your senior leadership team, you can train the remaining leaders together.

Is there a specific objective criterion on which middle, low, and high performers are ranked? The personality of the supervisor categorizing employees may affect decisions. Also, some individuals may be high in one type of performance, medium in another, and needing guidance in yet another.

The beauty of the highmiddlelow is its simplicity. Unlike the evaluation process, which is usually tied to pay, the highmiddlelow is 100 percent about development. This helps reduce leaders' anxiety about "Am I doing the right assessment?"

The key in identifying a low performer is if their performance is holding back the department or the leader's ability to lead. Again, the low performer can be great clinically and great with patients, but no one will work with them. That one trait makes them a low performer because it is an unacceptable trait. For middle and high differentiation, the difference is the degree to which the leader is coaching the staff member. The leader believes a middle performer needs development but the leader is still re-recruiting them. High performer conversations are mainly re-recruitment and retention ones. The high performers usually are pro-active in their own development.

We have unions. Can we do this?
Yes. We have many organizations that have done the Organizational Alignment with great results. In a union environment you will need to work even more closely with HR. In fact, any low performer conversation will most likely fall under a counseling session in which there are guidelines concerning who needs to be present. We have contacts of organizations with unions who have completed, if you want more information.
We don’t have four hours to do the training. What do you recommend?
Start with Part One and give the leaders the Participant Guide. Explain what your expectations are. Then schedule time to complete the training. If you are doing the highmiddlelow Organizational Alignment, you need to find the time as training must be completed and not rushed if the entire organization will go through this.

Is pre-assigned seating at training important?
It is helpful to group people who may need to assess staff as a team together. An example may be a group of nursing supervisors or nurse leaders—any who can resource each other. Think about who would be appropriate to sit together, but it is not necessary.

We are really just at the beginning of our journey. What do you recommend we do?
We suggest that you ensure rounding is in place and that you have initiated the process for implementing the objective, measurable leader evaluation system recommended by Studer Group. After this point you can certainly introduce highmiddlelow as a coaching technique, using Section 1 and Section 2 predominantly. Doing an highmiddlelow Organizational Alignment is most effective once the Standards have been put in place, as you have a key tool leaders can use in defining expectations for staff.

Should the standards be in place before we do highmiddlelow?
The standards are essential to creating clearly defined expectations for staff and leaders. highmiddlelow can be used without standards in place and can be taught as a skill set. However, once standards are in place, highmiddlelow becomes an even more powerful tool as organizations now usually have even greater specific behaviors to coach to and hold staff accountable.

What do we do with new leaders who come on board or have been promoted from within after we have implemented this new skill?
Schedule new leaders to participate in this training as part of their first 90-Day orientation. The Participant Guide was written so that this training can be done without a facilitator. You may schedule the room and such for them, but they can complete on their own. You will need to share with them how your organization uses this technique.

This concludes Section 5.
Section 6: Studer Group Resources

Studer Group Web Site Resources (free resources):

www.studergroup.com
- Sustaining Operational Excellence: “Reducing Leadership Variance - The Key to Achieving Better Outcomes and Greater Operational Efficiency”
- Insight: “Building a Mature Leadership Team - October 2004”
- Various “Ask Quints”

Fire Starter Publishing Resources (Studer Group Products):

Books
- Hardwiring Excellence, by Quint Studer – see Chapter 6 for an overview of highmiddlelow Performer Conversations
- 101 Answers to Questions Leaders Ask – informative answers to real questions from the field

Training Videos
- Must Haves Video Series - a video/DVD training series focusing on hardwiring 5 Must Haves

Software
- Leader Evaluation Manager, Results through Accountability - a software application that automates the Annual Evaluation, 90-Day Plan, and Monthly Report Card

CD-ROM
- Tools for Leaders: Rounding, A virtual seminar on CD-ROM (audio)

To order more Moving Organizational Performance, highmiddlelow Performer Conversations Participant Guides:
- Order directly through www.firestarterpublishing.com or go through www.studergroup.com; Studer Group Partners can also access through their partner website.
- Call Fire Starter Publishing at 866-354-3473 with questions or to personally place your order

This concludes Section 6.

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Glossary

Hardwire
The process by which an organization, department, team, or individual integrates a behavior or action into the daily operations.

Healthcare FlyWheel™
A teaching tool/diagram that illustrates the power that Purpose, Passion, To Do's, and Results have in creating momentum in an organization. The Studer Group developed the Healthcare Flywheel to help organizations understand the journey in creating great places for employees to work, physicians to practice, and patients to receive care.

Leadership Development Institute (LDI)
A way to develop leaders' skills to enable the achievement of organizational goals, as well as to improve individual leadership performance and organizational consistency and facilitate the process of connecting those results to purpose, worthwhile work, and making a difference. Studer Group recommends two-day sessions every 90 days off-site.

Linkage Grid
An accountability form with specific assignments, behaviors, and actions of learnings from the Leadership Development Institute to be completed over the period of time in between sessions.

Manage Up
A form of communication at all levels that aligns your own skills, your co-workers', other departments' and physicians' to the goals of your organization. Example: Letting your supervisor know to attend a celebration regarding achievement of results or to pass on positive information regarding an area so that they can be recognized. This makes you and your organization better and aligns everyone to work on the right goals.

Must Haves™
Specific actions and “to do’s” common to organizations achieving exceptional results. These Must Haves are based on the Nine Principles and evolved from the Studer Group partnering with more than 250 organizations to identify these actions. The Must Haves are (1) Rounding for Outcomes, (2) Employee Thank You Notes, (3) Selection and the First 90 Days, (4) Discharge Phone Calls, (5) Key Words at Key Times, and (6) Aligning Leader Evaluations with Desired Behaviors.

Nine Principles®

Five Pillars
A foundation and framework used to set organizational goals and the evaluation process. Once the goals for each Pillar are set for the organization as a whole, they are cascaded throughout, from the division level to department or unit level, to individual leader. Most organizations use the Five Pillars: Service, People, Quality, Finance, and Growth. These can be customized to fit specific language or organizational terms, or other pillars can be added, such as Community. These pillars then lay the framework for consistent evaluations, communications, and work planning.

Thank you for your commitment and willingness to help others and in working to make a difference in health care. Please feel free to contact Studer Group at 850-934-1099 or SG@studergroup.com should you have any questions about this resource.