

briefing

Doing things differently – a time for change



Introduction

As the NHS in Wales undergoes a major restructuring, we have a real opportunity to think about the style and philosophy of the new organisations that will come into being in 2009. There are two reasons why it is so important we begin this debate now: firstly, we are embracing a period of transformational change in Wales in terms of the structure of health organisations and the services they deliver; secondly, the challenging economic times we have entered are putting even more pressure on public service resources. The changing, and challenging, environment we are in means we have to find ways of doing things differently and being more flexible in the way that we meet the needs of our citizens.

In this Briefing, we discuss two different ways NHS Wales can take on that challenge.

Social Entrepreneurship in the health service

In the context of doing things differently, a look at social entrepreneurship has much to offer. The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship says it is about applying practical, innovative and sustainable approaches to benefit society in general, with an emphasis with those who are marginalised or poor. They see it as a unique approach to economic and social problems that cuts across all sectors.

Social entrepreneurs are leaders or pragmatic visionaries who:

- Achieve large scale, systemic and sustainable social change through new inventions, different approaches, more rigorous application of known technologies or strategies, or a combination of these.
- Focus on social value creation, they are innovative, and they continuously refine and adapt approaches in response to feedback.
- Have an unwavering belief in the innate capacity of all people to contribute meaningfully to economic and social development and a driving passion to make that happen.
- Have a practical but innovative stance to social problems, a zeal to measure and monitor their impact and a healthy impatience.

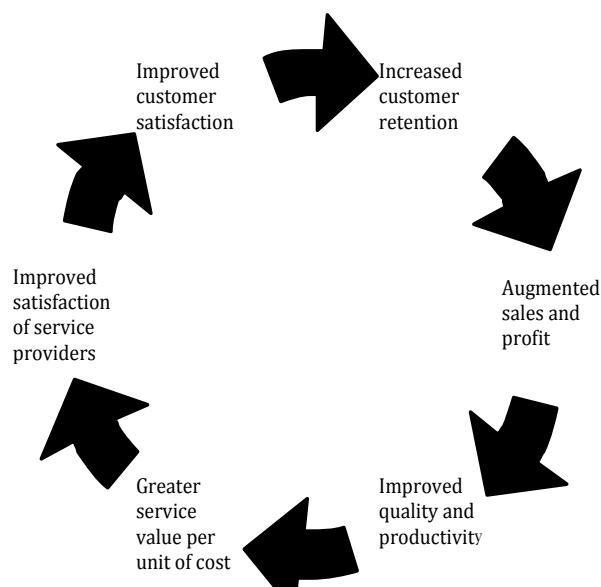
Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, the global association of the world's leading social entrepreneurs, believes that the job of a social entrepreneur is to recognise when a part of our society is stuck and to provide ways to get it unstuck. Identifying and solving large-scale social problems requires leaders who can provide the committed vision and inexhaustible determination to persist until they have transformed an entire system.

It has been said that scholars come to rest when they express an idea, professionals succeed when they solve a client's problem, managers call it quits when they have enabled their organisations to succeed - but social entrepreneurs go beyond the immediate problem to fundamentally change communities, societies and ultimately the world.

Achieving "breakthrough" level of service

Taking a slightly different tack in looking at new mindsets and approaches to achieving success, it is worth us considering Heskett, Sasser and Hart's study of "service breakthroughs" – outstanding service organisations that lift them above and beyond their "merely good" competitors. Heskett et al contend that breakthrough service providers are those who have changed the rules of their respective industries by consistently meeting or exceeding customer needs and expectations.

Their research discovered a "self-reinforcing service cycle" that breakthrough organisations create and benefit from, demonstrated in the diagram below:



Breakthrough organisations deliver a clear, consistent message to people who understand and support it, which invariably results in a strong organisational culture. If the culture is appropriate for the service and its clientele, it can become a potent force.

Heskett et al found that breakthrough leaders develop counterintuitive, even contrarian strategic service visions in which they:

- Define their "service concept" in terms of results achieved for customers rather than services performed.
- Study the values, attitudes, etc. of a consumer population and how customers think and behave (the psychographics),

rather than the characteristics of a population, such as age, sex, income, etc, for market research, sociological analysis, etc (the demographics).

- See service delivery systems as providing opportunities to enhance the quality of the service, rather than just ways of producing and selling them.

The researchers, in comparing “merely good service providers” with those that they call “breakthrough”, studied a wide range of characteristics:

- Developing vision
- Building customer loyalty
- Focusing and positioning a service
- Determining the true cost of poor quality
- Developing devices for achieving total customer satisfaction
- Managing for quality and productivity gains
- Managing demand and supply
- Management of networks
- Managing information technology
- Mobilising people
- Organising work

Their research showed that outstanding service organisations are managed differently from their competitors. Missions are stated differently. Leaders act differently. Actions are based on totally different assumptions about the way success is achieved. And the results show it.

The picture here

So is social entrepreneurship and breakthrough relevant to the future of our health and social care services in Wales?

Well there is no doubt that in line with the coalition government’s statement of intent One Wales, the Health and Social Services Minister is looking differently at how services are organised and delivered, and is challenging traditional viewpoints and approaches that are seen as no longer effective or fit for purpose.

As the new NHS in Wales takes shape, the principles and spirit of social entrepreneurship will be important in shaping the leadership roles and public service partnerships of the future. There is also much in the concept of “service breakthroughs” that is relevant to the changes we are now facing in NHS in Wales if we want to make them a success. Heskett et al’s book, *Service Breakthroughs – Changing the Rules of the Game*, and their continuing work on this theme, certainly offers us plenty of food for thought on how we might think and act differently in our new world.

The NHS now has the opportunity and responsibility to rise to the challenge of being entrepreneurial in the way that they respond to the needs of the communities and people they serve. Certainly, the new health boards will need to show that they are different and capable, not only of putting a new balance in the system, but also unblocking those key issues that are impeding the improvement and modernisation of services in Wales.

The characteristics of entrepreneurship and breakthrough are certainly relevant here and to the whole agenda of delivering sustainable health and social services in the future. Now is the time for doing things differently – a time for change.

THE **WELSH NHS** CONFEDERATION
CONFFEDERASIWN **GIG CYMRU** 

Unit 3, Waterton Park
Bridgend CF31 3PH

Tel 0845 33 00 499
E-mail info@welshconfed.org

www.welshconfed.org