



Productivity High on Mental Wellness Nurses Agenda

There's a popular saying that goes, "You can't pour from an empty cup." When a cup is empty, no amount of work or wishing could produce a drop out of it. In the very same way, as individuals, when we push ourselves beyond our limits (emptying our physical and mental reserves) and more is required of us, we are then unable to produce in a manner that is efficient.

The notion of productivity is steeped in the ideals of efficiency, continuous improvement and excellence. In fact, the Business Dictionary defines productivity as the "*measure of the efficiency of a person, machine, factory, system, etc., in converting inputs into useful outputs.*"

In a field like nursing, where the work never ends, achieving maximum productivity is a difficult feat. A normal/typical day does not exist in the life of a nurse. As primary caregivers, nurses are often found balancing diverse tasks to ensure that their patients are well cared for, all while putting their own needs aside. Regrettably, the effects of caregiving on their health/well-being and output are often considerable.

The nurses of the Rehabilitation Unit #3 of the St. Lucia National Mental Wellness Centre provide mental health care services to the patients on the unit. Their patients include long stay patients who are sometimes geriatric and independent patients who have been undergoing treatment for periods exceeding ten (10) years. Their primary goal is to prepare patients for re-entry into society by ensuring that they adhere to their stipulated treatment regime. The delicate nature of their work means that the nurses are constantly on the go.

The team of nurses who service the unit came to the stark realization that continuing in the current "always on the go" fashion would do more harm than good to their overall job efficiency. It was with this in mind that on June 24th, 2016, the nurses broke away from their usual work setting and decided to invest in their own self-care and development.

In an attempt to boost overall staff morale and productivity at the Centre and by extension help them to achieve even greater results on the job, the idea of a teambuilding retreat was birthed. The activity which was observed under the theme '*Celebrating Our Achievements, Striving to Give our Best*' opened with a debriefing session facilitated by Mr. Martin Weekes, a training and management consultant professional. During this session, the nurses had the opportunity to examine where they were at professionally and personally and where they would like to see themselves advance and the required actions to needed for their advancement.

The highlight of the day however was a presentation on "Productivity in the Workplace" by Mrs. Fiona Hinkson, Executive Director of the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council.

Having identified productivity as critical to improving the existing work environment at the National Wellness Centre, when Unit Manager, Ms. Enda Edward approached the Secretariat, the response was a resounding yes.

The presentation sought to give the nurses an overall understanding of what productivity is, the existing productivity climate but more so as it pertained to the health sector, the importance of productivity and most importantly ways to improve it. Mrs. Hinkson was very pleased at the level of interest and interaction during the presentation and in closing applauded the Unit for taking the initiative to improve their productivity. “You cannot pre-empt how any given day is going to unfold or the number of patients that you may have to care for. However, there is so much that you can do to take care of your own personal well-being and ensure that your needs are met,” Mrs. Hinkson stated in her opening remarks to the participants.

“Understanding productivity and what impacts it, means that you now have the tools to work in a manner which is more efficient and will yield greater results. While you strive for greater output, you must not neglect the quality of that output. Your investment in yourselves today, is reflective of your willingness to be better at what you do and I applaud that. Today is a step in the right direction which can only augur well for the health sector. The NCPC urges you to continue to invest in yourselves so that your patients can continue to receive an even higher quality of health care.”

Productivity continues to be a major impediment to organizational efficiency, growth and development. More often than not, a lack of understanding of the part that each individual has to play in improving productivity is what creates barriers. As we pursue productivity on a national level, we must continue to challenge current mindsets and highlight the need for continued efforts at attaining excellence.

About the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC)

Established in October 2013, The National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) is responsible for the identification of key issues related to competitiveness and productivity in Saint Lucia.

The NCPC and its Technical Secretariat is committed to providing the necessary advocacy and research to produce timely and effective recommendations to policymakers on issues that affect both competitiveness and productivity on island. For more information about productivity or on the NCPC, visit www.stluciancpc.org; www.facebook.com/stluciancpc, call 468-5571/5576 or send an e-mail to stluciancpc@gmail.com