

Prioritization Matrix



The prioritization Matrix is a simple and useful tool to assist in determining which problems are most important to spend time and resources first. Through a group effort, the structured, disciplined use of the prioritization matrix will help your hospital knowingly do “first things first”. By using the collective knowledge and experience (brainstorming) of your group to create criteria and importance, you can quantitatively prioritize what to work on first. That is so important in today’s hospital environment.

The process below will describe a “moderate to high” level for completing a prioritization matrix. While this is still a simple tool to use, it may be simplified even more in smaller settings, where less risk is involved, etc. The same disciplines described below may also be useful when brainstorming for root cause(s) during the corrective action process.

Here is a brief description on how to effectively use the Prioritization Matrix.

Step 1- Assemble a cross-functional team, ensuring that the team assembled has intimate knowledge of the issues that need to be prioritized.

Step 2- Using your team; brainstorm the criteria that are important to help you determine the priority of the issues. (In all likelihood, all of the issues will likely be addressed at some point in time, just not at the present). A quick thought about the criteria. Your team can create criteria specific for the issues being discussed, or you can have some “standing criteria” for each brainstorming session, along with some issue specific. Either way, choose what works best for your hospital. Here are some examples of criteria to be considered:

- a. Risk to patient, employee or hospital
- b. Frequency of the issue
- c. Does the issue affect our ability to achieve objectives?
- d. Does the issue affect our brand?
- e. Cost and/or time
- f. How easy is the fix?
- g. Others that you might add based on your organizational culture, resources, etc.

Step 3- Using a whiteboard or easel chart, brainstorm to agree on the top 5-10 criteria to use in this process. Use a consensus of the group.

Step 4- Now that you have the criteria, you need to rank them or weigh them. Using a scale of 1-3 or 1-5, determine the weight and assign a weight to each criterion by consensus.

Step 5- Create a matrix on the whiteboard, using the criteria on one axis and the issues on the other axis.

Step 6-Each member of the group casts their vote for the most important weighted criterion for each issue. They only get one vote per issue. A “tally” mark is placed in the appropriate box on the matrix.

Step 7-Each tally mark is multiplied by the weight of each criterion and a total is added across for each criteria to get a total for each issue.

Step 8- Complete these steps for each issue. Once this is complete, you should have a numeric order in which to begin work on the issues. See example Prioritization Matrix below. Assumption: there are five (5) members on the team.

Prioritization Matrix



	Risk to patient (wt.5)	Effects on hospital brand (wt. 4)	Cost to fix (wt. 3)	Effects on hospital objectives (wt. 2)	Frequency of occurrence (wt.1)	Total	Results
Issue 1	III (15)	I (4)			I (1)	20	3
Issue 2	II (10)	III (12)				22	1
Issue 3	III (15)		II (6)			21	2
Issue 4	II (10)	LII (8)			I (1)	19	4
Issue 5			III (9)		II (2)	11	5

Additional Notes:

The numbers in each box equals the total of the weight X the number of tally marks.

The total is the sum of each box for that issue.

In the event that you have a “tie” for first place, you should have some discussion to determine the best path forward, such as work on two issues concurrently or come to consensus on which issue to work on first.

Ensure that you employ the usual ground rules when brainstorming.

Summary:

This is a simple and effective tool that can help you determine where to best spend your efforts to address issues. It is designed to be a quick process so that you can spend the bulk of your time on the issue itself. Having the right cross-functional team is important to ensure that all aspects of the issues are considered. While not every issue encountered in your hospital will need this type of discipline to address, there are those times when you would benefit from this quality/risk tool, such as planning, scheduling, budgeting, etc. Finally, there is no Prioritization Matrix Police force tracking you to ensure that you follow this convention. Make this prioritization process work for you! I think Edwards Deming is attributed to saying “it’s important that we not only do things right, but that we also do the right things”. Good luck!