

Project Title

Ancillary Staff Talent Management – Job Re-design through Core Training Framework

Project Lead and Members

Project lead: Ben Lau, Senior Manager, HQ Operations

Project members: Chong Hui Jia, Tan Seok Peng, Joan Lee, Jeff Chia, Cynthia Wong

Organisation(s) Involved

National Healthcare Group Polyclinics

Project Period

Start date: 2017

Completed date: 2019

Aims

Low productivity has been the bane of the Singapore economy for years, given that it forms a key part of the equation in ensuring sustainable wage rises and economic expansion, as our population ages and country's workforce growth slows.

Healthcare institutions have introduced automation, innovatively disrupted processes to achieve greater output without hiring more staff. At the same time, these technological disruption has also resulted in a shortage of workers who are equipped to handle the new changes/ roles in the work environment.

To tackle this skills shortage, there is a need to start supporting employee transformation to build a versatile skills base through upskilling. This will set the basis for a more sustainable and productive growth.

Hence the team set out the triple objectives:

1. To upskill/upgrade our ancillary staff, so that they acquire new knowledge and deeper capabilities, so as to be able to command a higher salary and are ready to cope with the rapid changes in the transformation of healthcare delivery.

2. To have in place a systematic and robust training and competency assessment framework,
3. Maintaining patient satisfaction would be a key measure of our success. From using our self-help services to having the non-clinical staff performing clinical supporting roles eg. taking BP/BMI, carry out screening questionnaires etc; and that patient has to be assured and confident that they are in the best possible hands.

Background

In 2015-2016, National Healthcare Group, Polyclinics (NHGP) through a suite of automation across the patient's journey effectively freeing up a total of 45.6 frontline headcounts.

Through this automation, our frontline staff- Patient Service Associates (PSA) and Patient Care Assistants (PCAt) have the capacity to perform/take on tasks/roles of higher value that would improve the patient's experience at the Polyclinic. Also, NHGP realizes it is critical for our workforce to constantly keep up with the rapid rate of change necessary to support healthcare transformation by encouraging our staff to upskill and re-skill. With the acquisition of new knowledge and deeper capabilities, employees would also be able to command a higher salary and benefits package in a high demand industry such as healthcare.

In July 2017, after a year of ground work, NHGP Ancillary Job Re-design Framework was implemented to enable ancillary manpower to be trained and deployed in higher-value functions, and as well as to create a future-ready workforce from within our ranks. With this impetus, our ancillary staff has pushed and expanded their boundaries, upskilled and taken on duties traditionally managed by clinicians, thus allowing the clinicians to focus on patient care duties. This allow NHGP to achieve a cost avoidance of \$0.4mil in 2017 simply by training ancillary staff to perform duties that were previously done by the clinicians.

Methods

With the 3 objectives as the compass, the workgroup reviewed the steps/solutions that can achieve our goals.

Ancillary Job-redesign Framework

A detailed breakdown of the competencies /tasks associated/required for each job grade (JG) was clearly detailed. This was shared with staff through a roadshow at each clinic, with key stakeholders e.g. HR present to help explain rationale and allay fears.

Opportunities for promotion or lateral movements were easily facilitated as staff understood the competencies and requirements that is required for the job at the particular JG.

On-Job Training

The workgroup was cognizant that training forms the backbone of the entire Job-redesign framework. Coaching and upskilling were facilitated through the On-Job-Training (OJT) framework.

NHGP Clinic Operations attained the Certified On-the-Job Training Centre (COJTC) award by Institute of Technical Education (ITE) Singapore in 2016. The award recognizes organizations that have institutionalized a systematic and structured OJT system to improve the quality of OJT practices.

Patient Satisfaction

Patients must be involved and engaged through all these changes. Hence, these changes e.g. the composition of their care team were shared through Patient focus group sessions. Service Ambassadors were also on hand, on the ground to guide patients through our self-help services.

As Job re-design to a certain extent changes and stretches the job scope of our staff and it requires staff to move away from their area of comfort and familiarity.

NHGP decided to adopt a 2-year time-frame to fully implement the framework. This would allow sufficient time for communication, resistance management and most important for staff to be trained and be proficient in their new job scope.

The components of our change / implementation strategy includes:

- Communications

To both staff (roadshows) and to Reporting Officers (RO)/Supervisors (focus groups and meetings)

Reinforcing the rationale and need for these changes through 6-monthly dialogues sessions with staff.

This provides an avenue for staff to feedback on difficulties encountered.

- Coaching the ROs to help facilitate the changes.

Sessions are conducted with ROs to help them navigate the framework, to deepen their understanding of the rationale and appreciating the nuances.

HR was also heavily involved to support ROs, to help counsel staff or for those staff who may be re-designated or transferred to a different scope of work.

- Training our staff using the COJT framework

Leveraging on this framework and online tracking system to ensure staff is certified competent.

With this COJT framework, we are assured that the standard of training and assessment across our clinics are standardized.

- Tracking successes and progress

The percentage of staff who has completed core modules and modules that are required for their particular JG. This is tracked as part of the clinic monthly progress report.

Results

The skill of our staff is important and correlates to our organization attaining the level of productivity required. This is evidenced by our manpower savings year on year despite the increasing workload. There was also a positive impact on patient satisfaction. NHGP achieved a significant satisfaction increase in the Health Ministry's annual Patient Satisfaction Survey, from 81.7% (2014) to a high of 92% (2017), surpassing the national average for the Polyclinic sector.

Our ancillary staff has pushed and expanded their boundaries, upskilled and taken on duties traditionally managed by clinicians, thus allowing them to focus on patient care duties. NHGP has effectively achieved the same outcomes with lower costs, hence bringing greater value to patients.

- Management of Consumables Store

Took over the role from nurses.

- Creating referrals (specific) to Specialists Outpatient Clinics

Took on the role to relieve the clinicians of administrative work.

- BP/BMI measurement, administer Coronary Risk Screening questionnaire

Took over the role from nurses.

- Assessor for Essential skills

Train-the-Trainer program took over the role from nurses.

Certified Trainers are able to assess and certified fellow PSAs/PCATs annually.

- Medisave Signups

Took over from financial counsellors (FC) and reduced the FC appointment lead time by 75%

Lessons Learnt

Good communications and support are required for both the staff and the Reporting Officers when the staff's job scope is reviewed and expanded.

Staff needs to be reassured that automation is meant to augment manpower and does not take away jobs. Automation takes on mundane/routine tasks so as to allow existing staff to be upskilled to higher value skill-sets. Hence it is also imperative that staff is open to participate in training programmes, the intent is to help staff make the transition to be deployed in higher-value functions.

Patients must be also constantly engaged as we move towards increasing more self-help services, and that ancillary staff playing a bigger role as part of the care team. Patients must have the confidence and assurance that help is on hand for self-help services and that our ancillary staff is more than competent to be a member of their care team.

Conclusion

Workforce transformation requires a longer lead time as it involves staff buy-in. Resistance management is an essential part of implementation strategy.

At NHGP, a 2-year timeframe was given to allow staff to understand the framework through roadshows and to provide regular feedback/updates through dialogues. It is important to help staff understand the impact and benefits it would bring in ensuring job continuity/stability as well as a sustainable healthcare system for all.

Project Category

Workforce Transformation

Keywords

Workforce Transformation, Improvement Tools, Job Redesign, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics, On the Job Training, Coaching, Patient Satisfaction, Certified On-the-Job Training Centre, Train-the-Trainer

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Objectives

The triple objectives are:

1. To upskill/upgrade our ancillary staff, so that they acquire new knowledge and deeper capabilities
2. A systematic and robust training and competency assessment framework
3. Achieving equally good patient experience if not a better experience.

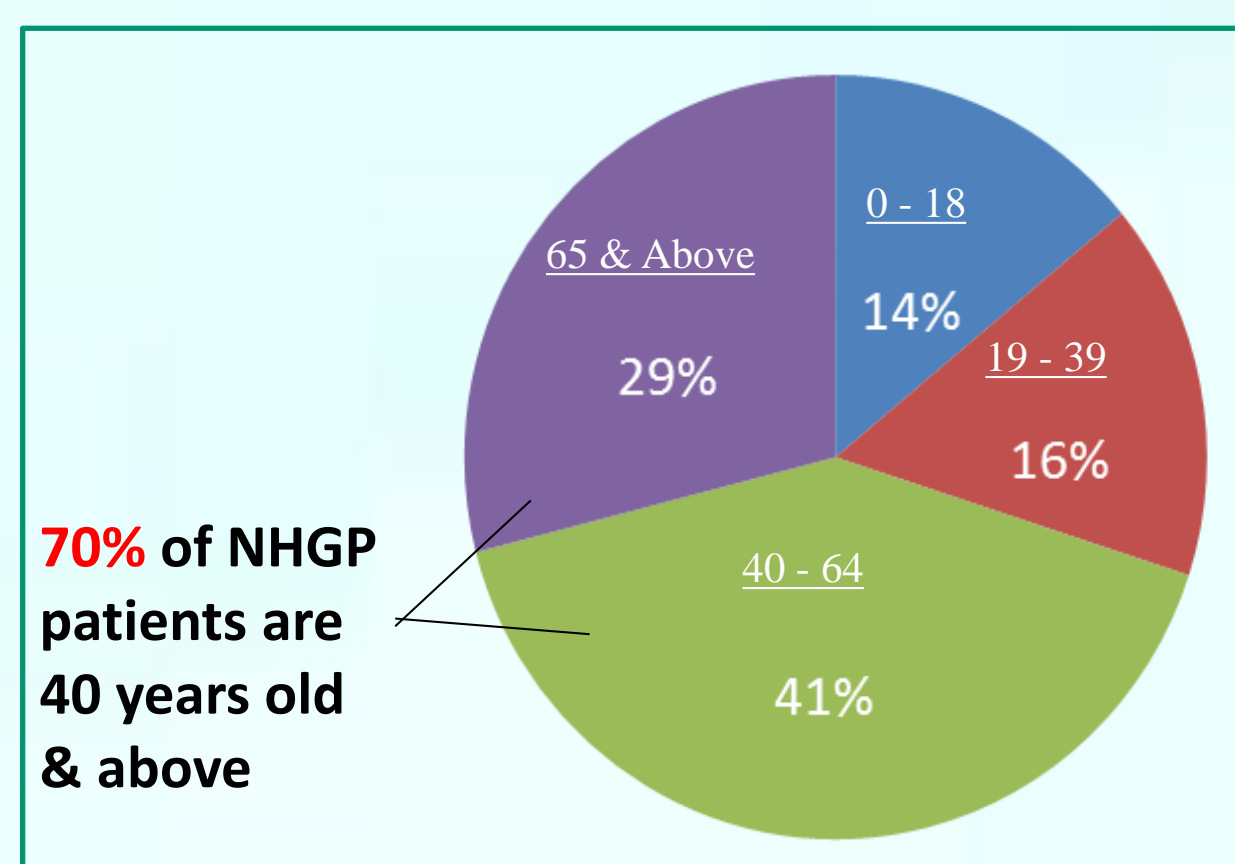
Team Members

Team	Name	Designation	Department
Team Lead	Ben LAU	Snr Manager	HQ Operations
Team Members	Cynthia WONG	Snr Manager	HR
	TAN Seok Peng	Manager	Clinic Operations
	CHONG Hui Jia	Snr Manager	Clinic Operations
	Joan LEE	Manager	Clinic Operations
	Jeff CHIA	Asst Manager	Clinic Operations
Sponsor	Dr Simon LEE	COO	Operations

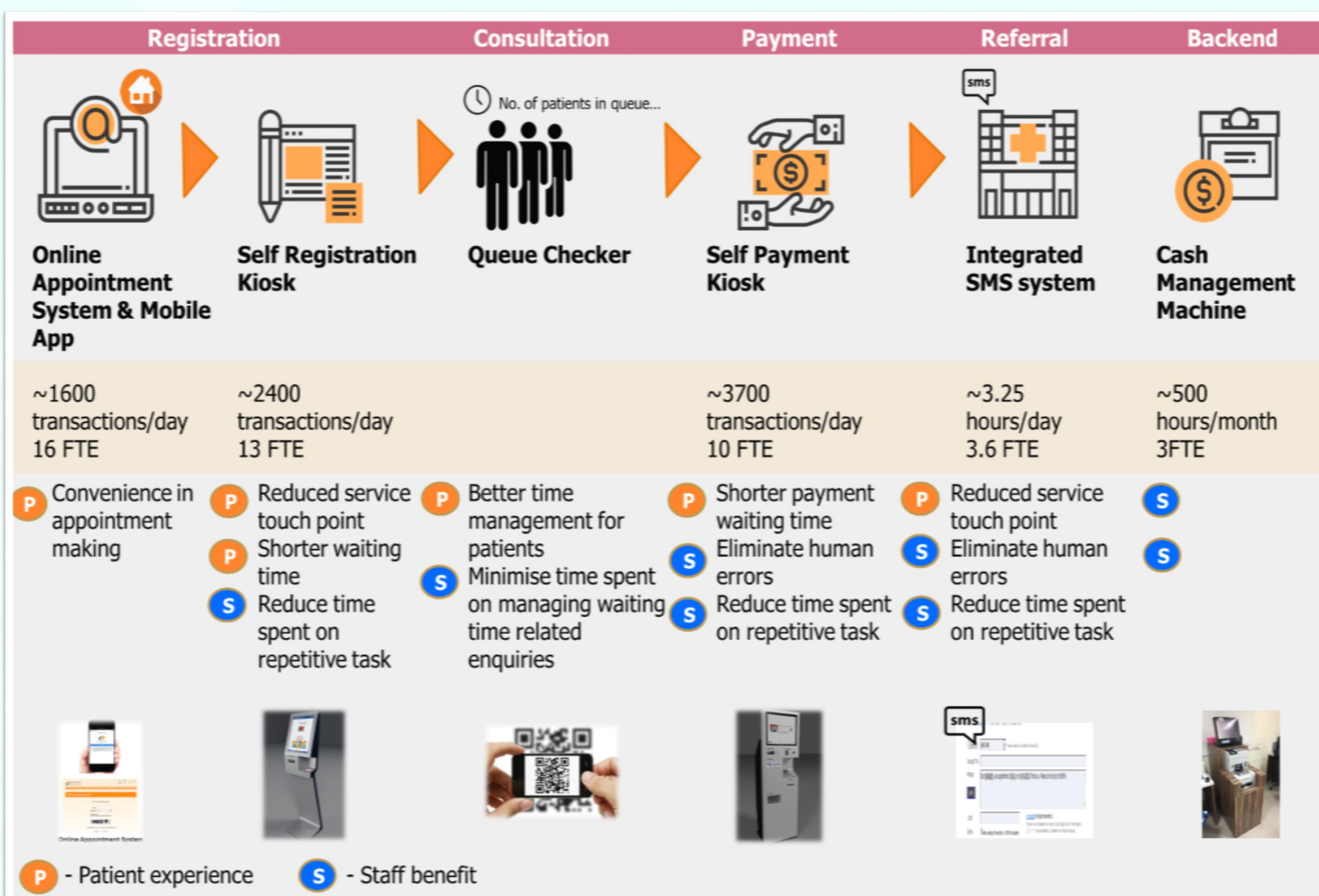
Background

The "Silver Tsunami" will affect Singapore economically, social and financially

- Economically- a shrinking workforce as result of an aging population;
- Socially- a higher demand for healthcare as the population ages;
- Financially- higher spending on healthcare to support our seniors.



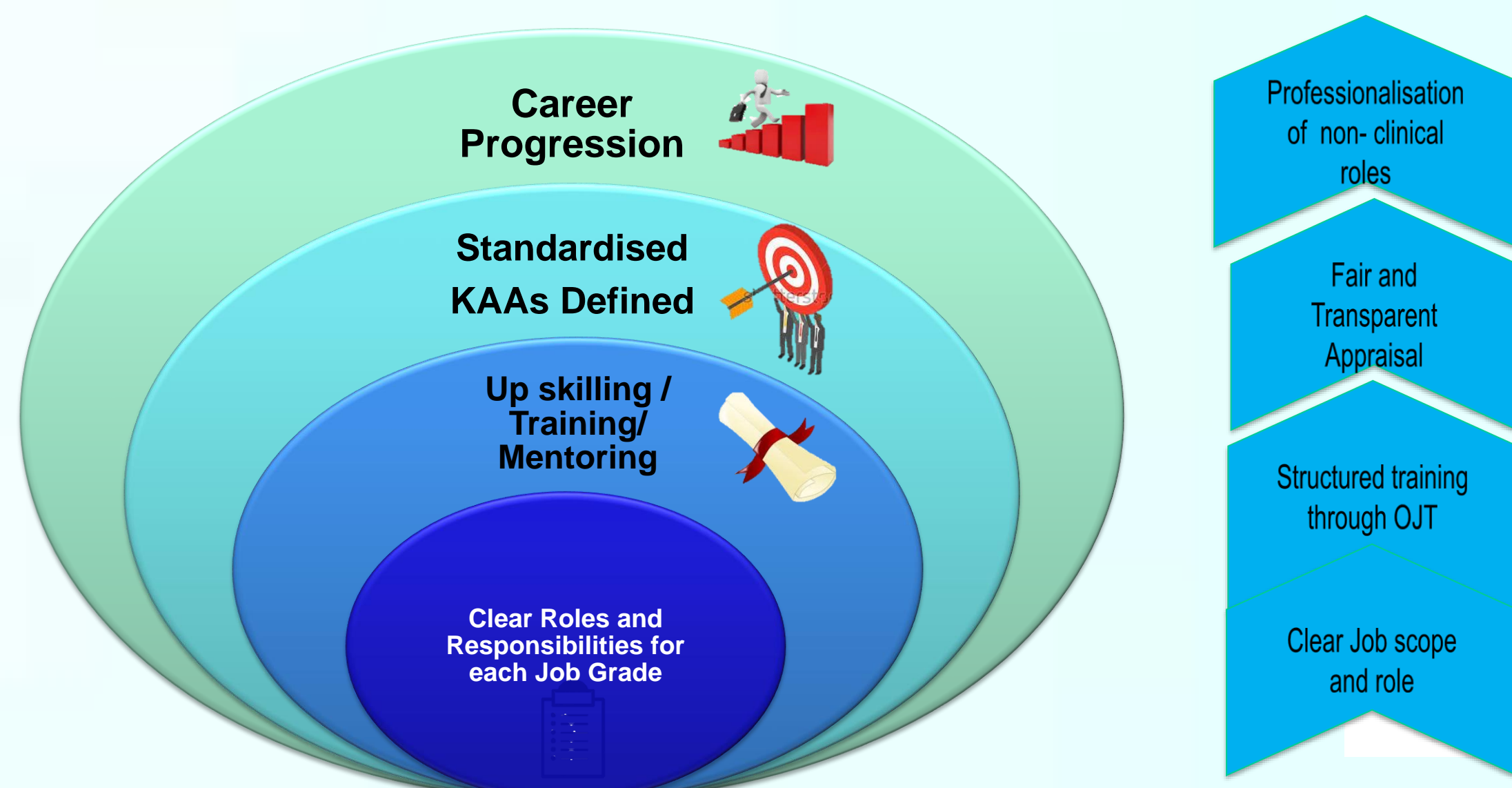
National Healthcare Group, Polyclinics (NHGP) went through rapid transformation using IT & automation to improve patient's journey, effectively freeing up to total of 45.6 headcounts to focus on patient-centric services.



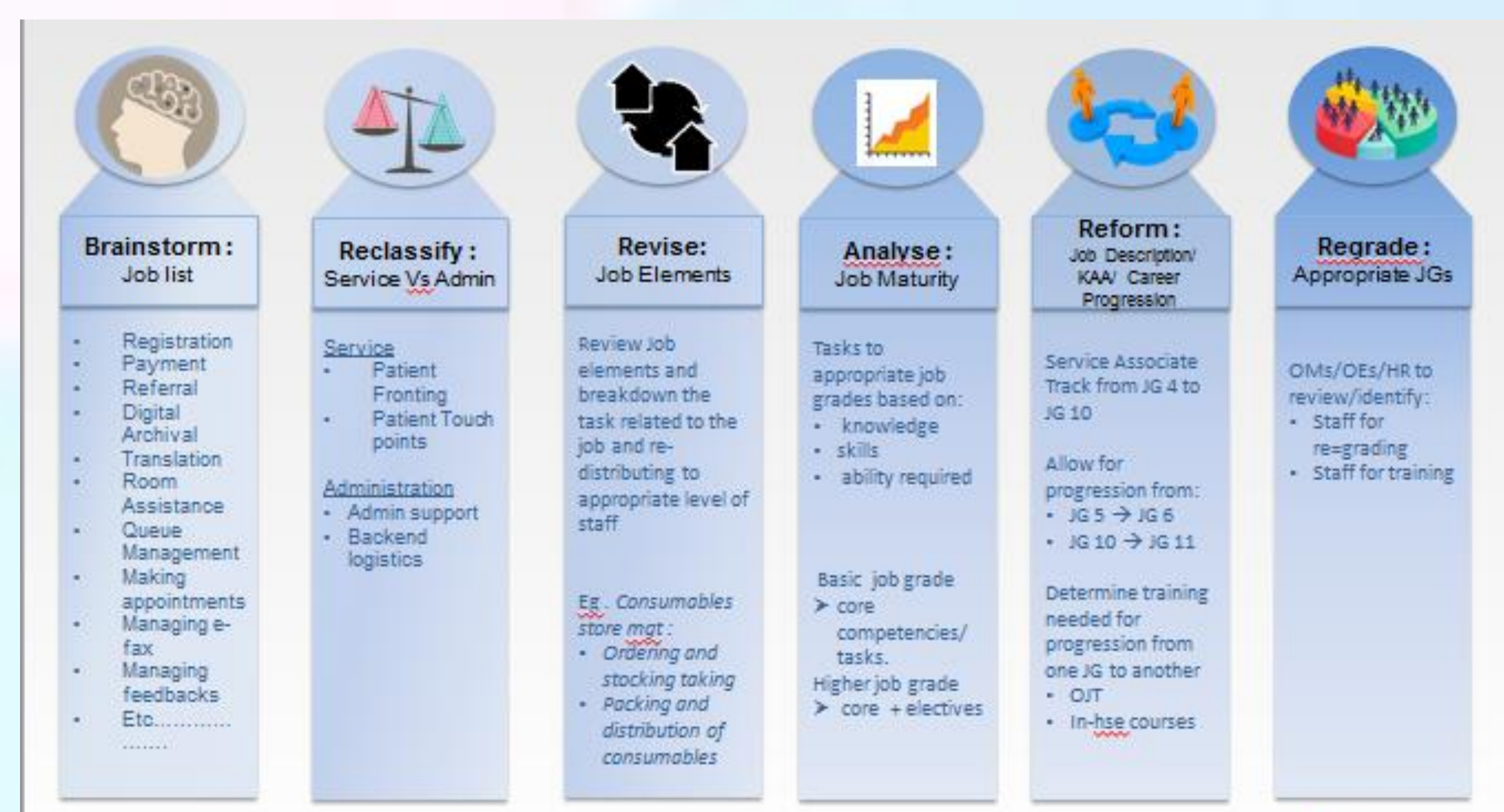
With same number of staff

- Manage the year-on-year increase in patient volume
- Provide patient focused quality services
- Expand staff's job scope through job re-design

Job Re-design Goals

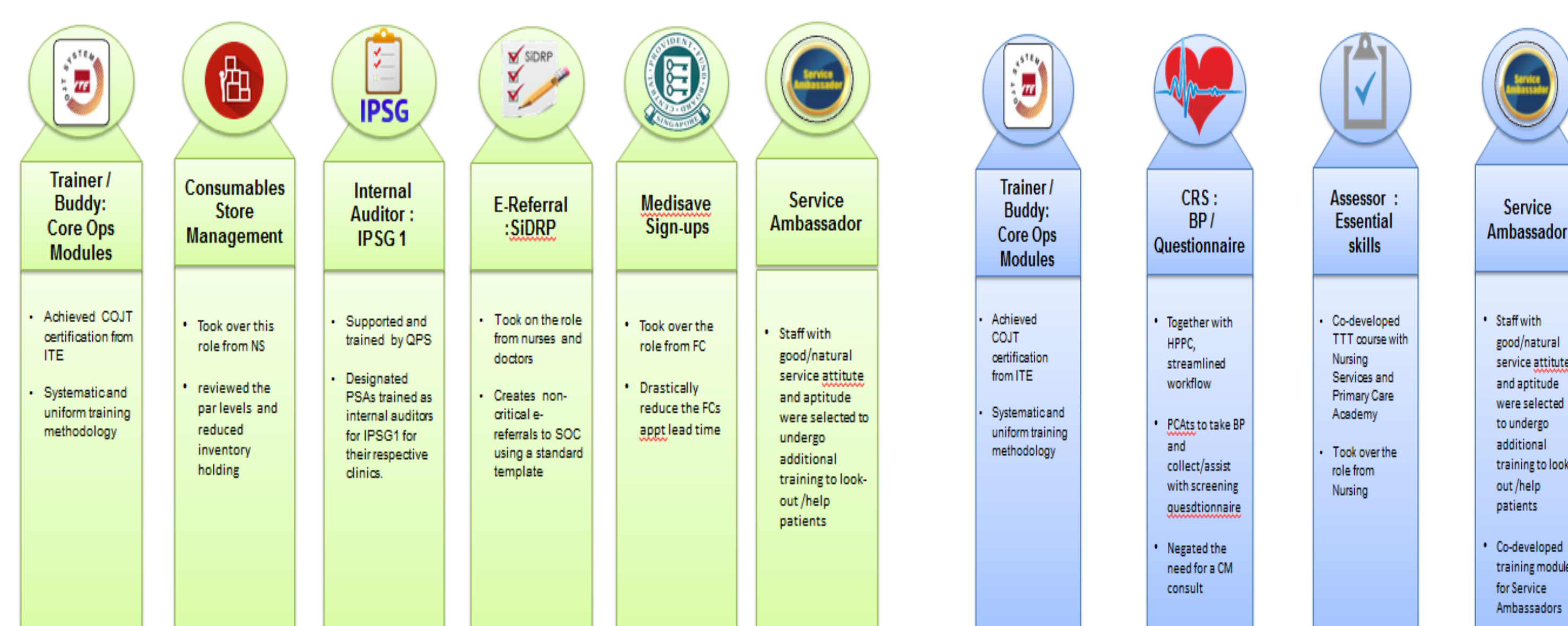


Job Re-designed- The Process



Ancillary Staff : Taking on Extended Roles

➤ Patient Service Associate (PSA) taking on value-added /expanded roles ➤ Patient Care Assistant (PCA) taking on value-added /expanded roles



Result

- 1) With the acquisition of new knowledge and deeper capabilities, employees were able to command a higher salary and benefits package in a high demand industry such as healthcare.
- 2) Cost avoidance through ancillary staff job re-design :

S/N	Tasks	Tasks previously managed by	Task currently performed by	Manpower cost avoidance
1	Management of Consumables Store	Nurses	Patient Service Associates	\$ 27,957.60
2	Creating referrals (specific) to Specialists Outpatient Clinics	Doctors	Patient Service Associates	\$ 385,278.00
3	BP/BMI measurement, administer Coronary Risk Screening questionnaire	Nurses	Patient Care Assistants	\$ 4,835.72
4	Assessor for Essential skills	Nurses	Patient Care Assistants	\$ 16,509.00
5	Medisave Signups	Financial Counsellors	Patient Service Associates	*
Total				\$ 434,580.32

* performed by same level (JG) of staff



Sustainability

- Annual refresher training and competencies assessment are carried out for essential skills.
- Consumables store audits and annual stock take to ensure the store is managed proficiently by designated staff.
- Quarterly progress meeting and updating with staffs involved in SOC referrals and Medisave schemes.