

# Thrust into leadership

**Hanya Oversby** outlines the steps to effective leadership in a medical practice.

Working with doctors who are becoming medical business owners, I find one of the greatest challenges they face is identifying where they fit within their own organisation. Going into private practice they find themselves suddenly thrust into a position of leadership as the director of the business. Yet at the same time they are working in the business, day-to-day, shoulder-to-shoulder with their clinical and administration team. Having an understanding of and applying effective leadership skills can be the key to a successful business.

## LEADER OR MANAGER

As the business owner, the doctor takes on various roles from clinician to manager to leader. One of the important distinctions to identify is that there are different characteristics between leadership and management.

Effective leadership brings together the skills to:

- Create a vision of the future that is inspiring
- Develop effective strategies in

the delivery of the vision

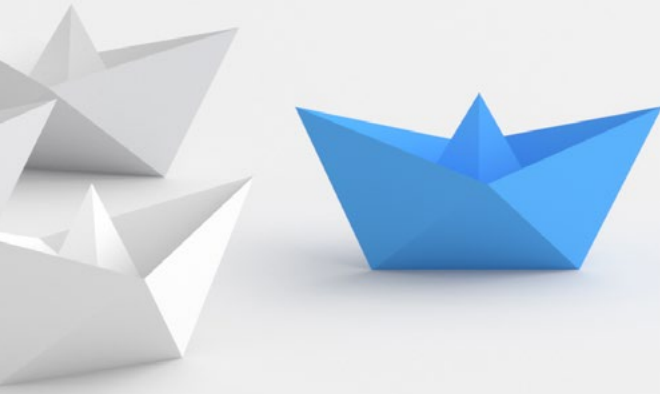
- Set organisational direction and goals
- Establish the business principles
- Build a team and develop the talent to achieve the company vision
- Motivate and inspire people to become engaged in that vision
- Promote innovation and invention
- Empower and mentor the team
- Instigate change and risk engagement
- Have a high level, long term perspective

Effective management brings together the skills to:

- Focus on tactics and organisation
- Implement the business strategic plan
- Administer and maintain systems
- Plan and coordinate activities
- Develop and formulate policies
- Implement and ensure conformance of standards and procedures
- The allocation and support of human resources
- Direct, instruct and manage the team
- Work on the detailed perspective
- Maintain short term focus



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As Stephen Covey says: “Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.”

Within your organisation, your role is most valuable as the leader and the clinician. As a medical practitioner, you have a unique value proposition. The barrier to entry into your profession is very high. You are a unique services provider and not easily replaceable. You need to appreciate this uniqueness and have an understanding that even more than money, your time is your highest currency.

As time is your most valuable commodity due to your unique value proposition, a useful tool is to actually calculate your worth per hour in your business. Once you are cognisant of your actual value to your own business, you need to be careful to use your time effectively and delegate any tasks that fall below your actual value, such as management or book keeping. This way your time can be focussed on roles that are worth your time such as the clinician and the leader.

Leadership roles for a medical business owner can often be frightening and challenging as this

is not a skill that has been directly taught through your clinical training. The key to success is to be true to yourself and know your limitations. Don't pretend to be someone you're not. Identify leadership skills you do possess, and surround yourself with a team that will support your gaps in leadership confidence.

## LEADERSHIP STYLES

There are many different leadership styles and no style is good or bad. Identifying your style is important to have a good understanding of who needs to join your team to support the way you most naturally lead. If you are leading, you will most likely have more than one style of leadership, but having an understanding of your general style will assist you in developing a team around you to support the way you lead, and work towards achieving your goals.

The following are some common leadership styles:

1. **Charismatic** – influences others through the power of personality. They inspire passion and act energetically
2. **Innovative** – can see what is not working and brings new ways of thinking and actions to the situations

3. **Command and Control** – follows rules and has an expectation that others will do the same
4. **Laissez-Faire** – monitors performance and communicates regularly, but does not get directly involved in what is going on
5. **Pace Setter** – is the epitome of what they expect from others, sets high performance standards for all, including themselves
6. **Servant** – puts the needs of others above his or her own. Involves the team in the decision making and allows the team to accept credit for the results
7. **Situational** – Empowering and coaching the team, whilst also providing direction and support
8. **Transformational** – acts as a role model for the team, and expects everyone to give their utmost to the project

Leadership skills can be developed. There have been many books written on leadership and how to lead. I would encourage reading comprehensively. The list of resources on developing your leadership skills is extensive and the key is to constantly expose yourself to information on leadership development.

## COMMUNICATION STYLES

A common challenge in leadership is developing effective communication techniques to inspire, motivate and drive your team towards achieving your vision and goals of your business.

It is important to understand that your team is made up of many different types of personalities and that each has a particular communication style. To work towards having your team communicate effectively with you and each other, you need to have an understanding of the various communication styles:

### The Relater

- Relaters are considerate and sympathetic. They are focused on interpersonal relationships.
- Great team players, as they tend to be cooperative and easy to work with.
- Willing to help others and great listeners.
- They can dislike conflict and may try to appease people and smooth over issues.
- Sometimes resistant to change as it affects others and their routine.

How to communicate with the Relater

- Spend the time to establish rapport. Share some personal experiences or common interests.
- Avoid aggressive or pushy behaviour.
- When discussing issues, focus on the inter relationships among the staff and how this will benefit or affect them.

### The Socialiser

- Expressive and high spirited.
- They value relationships, acceptance and personal prestige.
- Animated and expressive.
- May get side tracked on to other stories or opportunities.
- Enthusiastic and great motivators.
- Focused on the big picture – sometimes at the expense of details.
- Intuition based decisions.

- Not afraid of conflict and enjoy spirited discussions – sometimes enjoy being the “devils advocate”.

- Love change and challenges.

How to communicate with the Socialiser

- Engage ideas, be patient with digressions.
- Focus on concepts and trends and what it might mean for the future.
- Provide opportunities for innovation.

### The Thinker

- Technical and systematic – they value logic and thoroughness.
- Will tend to focus on facts and technical data while communicating.
- Methodical way of approaching problems and tasks.
- As they are ordered in their approach, they tend to work well independently.
- Detail oriented.
- Uncomfortable with conflict and believe facts and figures should override emotion.
- They need time to adjust to change.

How to communicate with the Thinker

- Present your ideas in a logical fashion – be evidence based.
- Try not to rush the Thinker during conversation.
- When dealing with change, focus on the reasons for the change and the results that will be achieved from the change.
- In group settings engage them directly – they tend to sit back – this can be a problem when the group has made a decision and they have not “bought in”.

### The Director

- Tend to be bold and direct – big picture focus and competitive.
- Get right to the point and use few words – this may seem intimidating to others.
- Concerned with goal setting and achievement – sometimes seen at the expense of others.
- Can multitask and like to be involved in several things at once.



- Tend not to be detail oriented and will overlook the detail.
  - Unafraid of conflict and may seem stubborn in defending their ideas or beliefs.
  - Enjoy change and being at the front.
- How to communicate with the Director
- Be precise and succinct – present key points and have details as back up if requested.
  - Show how your ideas are in line with their goals.
  - Be aware that their direct nature may put others offside.
  - This is important when a director has made a decision and YOU have to implement it across the other personality types.

## THE CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership comes quite naturally to some people. For others it is a challenging prospect. It is important to understand that a good leader can lead from any seat. You do not necessarily have to be at the forefront of your organisation. Identify key leaders in your own team and work with them to fill your own gaps in leadership as you identify them. Create a trusted circle of influence around you to enhance your own role as a leader.

Working with your trusted team,

some of the common leadership mistakes can be:

1. Not providing feedback – this must be done often for both positive and constructive feedback
2. Failing to define goals creates confusion and frustration
3. Misunderstanding the motivation of your team
4. Hurrying recruitment – not taking time to carefully consider the needs for the organisation
5. Not delegating

## LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT PERSONALITY, IT IS ABOUT BEHAVIOUR

Effective leadership requires you to act in a way that you would like your organisation to model itself on. In fact this behaviour will probably be different to your social behaviour, but it is important to set the standards and tone for your organisation.

Effective leaders should:

### Be the role model:

- Do what you say you are going to do
- Be prepared to be accountable
- Be willing to take on some of the hard things you ask others to do

### Create and guide a shared vision:

- Construct a vision statement and have others included in the process

- Use this vision as the reference for how and why things are done in your organisation

Identify your leadership team:

- Work and collaborate with others to plan or solve problems
- Set up key communication tools and reporting
- Give attention to who and what is working well
- Educate your team leaders

### Continuous Improvement:

- Always review how things are going
- If something is not working well, don't see it as a failure, but as an opportunity to review, change and improve
- Look beyond your own industry for successful business models

Leadership will be an ever-evolving challenge for doctors as business owners. There is no one solution to effective leadership. You need to carefully evaluate yourself and identify your gaps. Continuously educate yourself and be open to changing the status quo.

*“The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born—that there is a genetic factor to leadership. That's nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born.”*

Warren Bennis ©

## RECOMMENDED READING/VIEWING

### Books:

- James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner *The Leadership Challenge* 1987
- Stephen Covey *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* 1989
- Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink* 2005
- Malcolm Gladwell *The Tipping Point* 2000
- Malcolm Gladwell *The Outliers* 2008
- Paulo Coelho *The Alchemist* 1988
- Warren Bennis *On Becoming A Leader* 1989

### TED talks:

- Seth Godin *Tribes We Lead*
- Rosalinde Torres *What it takes to be great leader*
- Simon Sinek *How great Leaders Inspire Action*
- Drew Dudley *Everyday Leadership*

### Websites:

- alessandra.com
- wisetoast.com
- mindtools.com