Coaching Managers and Directors to Become Effective Leaders in the Healthcare Environment

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**Issue:**
How would you coach new and existing Managers and Directors to become effective leaders in a unionized health care environment? What barriers do we need to overcome to build better recruitment and retention strategies for talent acquisition? What leadership qualities do we want exemplified in our organization?

**Background:**
Welcome to Doctors Medical Center, the largest medical facility serving West Contra Costa County! The hospital has been owned and operated by the West Contra Costa Healthcare District and has served the community for fifty-five years. Doctors Medical Center has earned the prestigious Joint Commission gold seal of approval, which is the three-year accreditation from the nation's oldest and largest standards setting and accrediting body in health care. The hospital employs over 1,000 employees, has hundreds of contracted and temporary employees, and has four active labor organizations.

The Medical Center has received the exciting news that President Obama has awarded $12 million of federal funding, from the American Recovery and Investment Act, to rebuild the Richmond Health Clinic project onsite at our facilities. The Clinic provides primary and preventive health care, well-baby visits, immunizations and other critical services to the underserved community, and has handled over 1 million visits of low-income residents since 1967. This rebuilt state-of-the-art clinic will serve 90,000 patients per year and will create 250 additional jobs to stimulate the local economy and improve health services for residents in West Contra Costa County.

**DMC Mission Statement:**
To summarize, DMC is dedicated to providing high-quality healthcare to meet the diverse needs of our community. Through the allocation of services, we are committed to improving the community's health by providing a full spectrum of services. This will be achieved by:
• Providing a caring team of professionals committed to patient/customer satisfaction and continual performance improvement
• Assuring technologically sophisticated medical care
• Promoting community health education and disease prevention
• Working cooperatively with other healthcare providers
• Operating in an economically prudent manner while assuring full access to all members of the community

DMC Values:

DMC takes into consideration the following in making decisions and taking actions:

• Customer focus
• Professional integrity
• Organization-wide thinking
• Action-oriented decision-making

Research / Methodology:

The Value of Human Resource Professionals as Leadership Coaches

The human resource professional team plays a key role in shaping the culture of its organization by training and to developing future leaders. It has been a rewarding experience coaching the management team to become top performers.

“Top performers are distinguished by their self-motivation, self-awareness, self-regulation, and the ability to influence others. These qualities are known as emotional intelligence. Success in business depends on emotional intelligence rather than academic learning.”

According to Daniel Goleman’s theory, people with high emotional intelligence are self-aware, self-regulated, motivated, and are sensitive to others’ feelings. Coaching Successfully, Eaton, pg. 18)

At Doctor’s Medical Center, these coaching techniques are taught to our clinical managers by our human resources management training programs. Coaching the management team in self-motivation to foster individual desire to excel for oneself and for the organization. Motivation of managers to link their personal and professional goals with the company’s mission and values. All managers should feel linked to the organization and be recognized for their successes and accomplishments in their respective departments. This would increase their desire to seek continuous improvement and increase their productivity goals. We have developed ways to re-motivate staff. Self-awareness is knowing how other managers feel and how they are likely to react to different scenarios. Coaching managers in win-win relationships builds empathy and sensitivity in dealing with difficult situations. Successful managers are aware of their
own strengths, weaknesses, limitations and behaviors. We have developed role modeling and conflict resolution training courses so managers can practice self-awareness skills in a safe environment. **Self-regulation** is the ability to accept and manage one’s feelings. When conflicts arise, the successful manager remains in control and objectively resolves the situation with tact and a calm demeanor. **The ability to influence others** is the ability to model positive behaviors that others will want to copy, adapt, and follow. People with influence project a strong stage presence, confidence and credibility by their demeanor and actions and can persuade and mentor colleagues using their leadership abilities. Successful managers uphold these strong qualities and characteristics even in difficult situations.

**The Value of HR Training to Management -The 8th Habit- Leadership**

Most HR professionals are familiar with Franklin Covey’s Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, listed below:

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
1) Be Proactive
2) Begin with the End in Mind
3) Put First Things First
4) Think Win-Win
5) Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood
6) Synergize
7) Sharpen the Saw

Franklin Covey’s 8th Habit is Leadership: This is the movement from effectiveness to greatness through the importance of leadership development! In order to thrive, innovate, excel, and lead in what Covey calls the new Knowledge Worker Age, we must build on and move beyond effectiveness. “The call of this new era in human history is for greatness; its for fulfillment, passionate execution, and significant contribution. Accessing the higher levels of human genius and motivation in today’s new reality requires a sea change in thinking: a new mind-set, a new skill-set, a new tool-set- in short a whole new habit. The crucial challenge of our world today is to find our voice and inspire others to find theirs.” (The 8th Habit, Covey).

As Human Resource Professionals, we realize the importance of leadership development and training management. The most common workplace scenario is that the most technically competent and productive worker receives the promotive opportunities. Faced with new management challenges, our training classes in leadership development help to ease the transition into their new managerial roles. At Doctor’s Medical Center, new managers are faced with many workplace challenges such as supervision and team leading responsibilities, performance coaching, discipline of employees, opposition from the Unions regarding alleged contract violations, and pressure to meet productivity goals. We provide training in a safe and controlled environment where managers can ask questions, share experiences, and role play confrontational and difficult situations. The purpose of this interactive training is to provide new and experienced managers with the
tools and skills to build confidence and to be comfortable with their leadership roles. It provides an excellent opportunity for managers from across Departments to share information, different experiences and creative approaches to resolve situations. Managers are also able to understand the impact of their personal style on supervision, and the importance of flexing that style to improve relations and communications with staff.

Covey’s roles of leadership are four qualities of personal leadership put together that comprise of vision, discipline, passion, and conscience. (The 8th Habit, Covey).

1) **Pathfinding (vision):** **Jointly determine the course.** The successful leader has the ability to ask for management and staff input in creating the overall vision of the organization. Our CEO requested participation from all management staff throughout the hospital. It was exciting and rewarding to be part of the executive management retreat to create and reshape the future vision of our organization. We utilized Peter Drucker’s book entitled “The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Our Organization” to update and realign our vision to that of our customers.

2) **Aligning (discipline):** **Set up and manage systems to stay on course.** The successful leader has the ability to align to an organization’s mission, values, and goals. They have the ability to set up internal tracking systems to measure productivity and to meet their targeted goals. They are smart and strategic thinkers, and can set up both short term and long term goals for future successes. They are able to make structural and organizational decisions that are aligned to their goals.

3) **Empowering (passion):** **Focus talent on results, not methods, and then get out of people’s way and give help as required.** The successful leader has the ability to engage others with the tools to succeed in their jobs, to create a high sense of trustworthiness, to let them perform at their full potential, and to be on standby for guidance as needed to get superior results. They are able to empower all the players on their team, to affirm the worth and potential of each individual contributor, and to unite everyone together to form a strong cohesive team.

4) **Modeling (Conscience):** **Set a good example.** The successful leader has the ability to exhibit positive personality attributes that others would want to readily follow, and to be the voice of influence to others around you. The Medical Center is fortunate to have many talented forward thinking leaders in management roles. There is a lot of positive energy, strong work ethic, unity and teamwork between departments in a highly productive environment.

Companies that outperformed their industry peers excelled at four primary management leadership practices, which is emphasized in our leadership training programs:

1) **Strategy**-Devise and maintain a clearly stated, focused strategy. The recommendation is to have in mind what the desired outcomes and results are, and create a pathway to your end result.
2) **Execution**-Develop and maintain flawless operation execution. The recommendation is to conduct critical research and planning before implementation of projects.

3) **Culture**- Develop and maintain a performance-oriented culture. The recommendation is to create recognition programs to reward those employees who accomplish special projects outside their scope of work, and for those that volunteered for extra work assignments.

4) **Structure**-Build and maintain a fast, flexible, flat organization. The recommendation is to create an organizational structure whereby communication is easier to flow throughout all Departments, reach designated management, and the workflow processes are faster and easier to obtain approvals.

Both the qualities of personal leadership and the leadership practices are highly successful roadmaps practiced within our healthcare organization.

### The Value of HR Concentration on Retention Strategies:

Although retention is the ability to hold onto talented and experienced employees and has a measurable impact on the company’s overall performance, it is often overlooked. Most Human Resource Professionals spend the majority of time on recruitment and hiring and not enough time on the retention. We employ hundreds of nurses, therapists, pharmacists, and clinical staff that are difficult to replace due to specialty skills and credentials. Recruitment is enhanced by the use of sign-on bonuses for difficult-to-fill positions, specialty certifications and licenses such as cardiology nurse, anesthesiology nurse, pharmacist, and radiology technologists.

Staff can easily go to work at another hospital in the Bay Area. So what keeps them happily employed? Retention has been a major focus at the Medical Center. Successful organizations have strong human resource training programs where professional growth is offered for all levels of employees ranging from clerical support, technical workers, analysts, and management. At the Medical Center, we concentrate our on management training programs such as leadership training to coach and mentor managers to effectively lead their departments, build positive morale and to build cohesive teams.

We also offer other soft skills training programs for managers such as a course on cultural sensitivity and diversity, customer service, harassment in the workplace and quality improvement.

“The practice to find and to retain the best employees by creating a virtuous cycle; build a great workplace with a unique culture, then use the workplace to attract the right people, then use those people to strengthen the culture, and use the culture to hold onto the people is known as the Engagement Cycle.” (Pogorzelski, pg. X)
We also offer a number of cultural and team building activities:

- An open door policy to strengthen the bond between departments and staff.
- Our CEO holds management retreats to realign his annual goals and pass on key initiatives. There are over 100 managers at the Medical Center and it is important that each feels a personal link, a personal investment and contribution to the overall successes of the organization.
- A voluntary Employee Association Group plans annual social events to engender close working relationships between employees.
- We give recognition and rewards for employees with tenure and over ten years of service.
- Special celebrations are held to recognize major milestones, passing State or Federal audits or new project accomplishments.
- Hiring processes are designed to give internal candidates the first opportunity to apply for internal promotions as positions become available.
- We abide by the golden rule of customer service: patients, visitors and staff are treated with the utmost respect as professional colleagues. “Respect, recognition, and engagement are the essence of finding keepers. Treat people well. Day by day manage the relationships with workers characterized by mutual respect, shared values, and authenticity. It’s not easy work, but the results are worth the effort.” (Pogorzelski, pg. 213-214)

**Conclusion:**

The greatest accomplishment for Human Resource professionals is the satisfaction of receiving positive reinforcement and feedback from management when they have completed a comprehensive training program. The greatest sense of fulfillment is when you coach managers in leadership and then see that they are able to pass on their knowledge, skills, and practical experience to their departments. Through employee engagement and participation we can transform the workplace with highly efficient and effective leaders who serve as role models who mentor new managers.

Human Resource professionals are key contributors to attracting, acquiring, and advancing a skilled workforce. These professionals play a critical role in shaping and changing the culture of an organization by training, coaching, and developing its future leaders. We are proud of our successful management training programs and proud of the contribution of our human resources team in building strong leaders and cohesive management teams! It has been a truly amazing journey and a rewarding experience coaching the management team to become top performers in the health care environment!

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