Tips for Becoming an Effective Team Leader

You find yourself in a leadership role in the residency program . . . now what? This can be an uncomfortable and intimidating position, but leadership skills are much like other skills in that they can be developed. And, in addition to developing clinical skills and medical knowledge, it is now essential that residents develop the necessary leadership skill to successfully manage teams who deliver patient care.

An overall definition of leadership is the process of managing, coaching and influencing other to help them to achieve desired outcomes. The ACGME core competencies that are embedded within leadership qualities include professionalism and interpersonal / communication skills.

Three-Steps to Begin Developing Your Leadership Skills

**Step 1: Assess your leadership abilities** - To become an effective leader you much first, assess your leadership abilities to determine your strengths and weaknesses. This can be done with a simple skills assessment instrument that can be found free on the Internet or with reflection on the following qualities:

- Ability to see the big picture
- Listen objectively
- Tolerance of others perspectives
- Organization
- Set manageable objectives and monitor progress towards those objectives
- Identify individual and team motivators
- Delegate to appropriate individuals
- Facilitation of the problem-solving process (versus giving someone the answer)
- Effective at keeping an conversation on track
- Ability to gain rapport and credibility with a wide variety of people
- Effective at questioning that gets people to open up
- Ability to persuade others
- Be humble and give credit

**Step 2: Identify a mentor** - Once you have determined your leadership strengths and weaknesses, find a mentor who possesses the skills that you desire (preferably someone who is strong in the areas where you have assessed yourself as being weak). Your mentor can assist you with questions or problems that you may have regarding your team.

**Step 3: Identify your leadership style** - It is important that the resident determine what type of leader that they are as well as to understand the various styles/traits of leading a team. Why? Effective leaders know that different situations and individual personalities
require different leadership styles. To be most effective, leaders adapt their leadership style to suit the circumstances or the person. To determine your predominant leadership traits, take the Leadership Qualities Inventory then score yourself (both are available within this module).

**The Fundamentals of Leadership**

Modern leadership styles, especially when dealing with independent adults, must be more facilitative, empowering, and participatory. This means that leaders must be able to communicate, be approachable, provide encouragement, and tolerate differing opinions of the team members.

Therefore, effective leadership requires mutually agreed-upon goals among the team members then feedback consisting of the periodic comparison of goals and behavior followed by prompt comment when behavior meets, exceeds, or falls short of agreed-upon goals:

1. **Set goals**
   a. Your personal goals and practical behaviors to achieve them
   b. Establish team goals for the month (individually or as a group)
   c. It is essential to the team process to ensure everyone clearly understands the goals. Offer to clarify if there is any confusion.

2. **Give positive feedback when team members do something correctly**
   a. Immediate praise after observing behavior commensurate with goals will reinforce goals and expectations and helps maintain behavior.
   b. Give positive feedback even when you observe any step in the right direction (it doesn’t have to be perfect!!) – this helps to maintain behavior.
   c.

3. **As with positive feedback, give negative feedback as soon as possible**
   a. To ensure the behavior is corrected immediately (so it is not repeated), provide ongoing feedback when you see something performed incorrectly – if you wait, this incorrect behavior is likely reinforced
   b. A single criticism is more easily received than a list of criticism given at one time.
   c. Negative feedback should be only directed at the behavior (devoid of personal comments)
   d. Ask the resident for a self-critique – this can be a very effective method for negative feedback. It will likely give you the insight you need into why the behavior occurred thus making it easier to correct.

Team Leader
Techniques that Help Build Teamwork

1. **Remove individual competition** – competition can kill collaboration. If you want the team to work together, you need to not single out employees efforts and instead look at team performance and team metrics.

2. **Delegate clearly** – give clear instructions so there is no ambiguity on who is to do what and when.

3. **Define the structure of supervision** – make it very clear who is in the lead position and who is accountable and for what.

4. **Create group incentives for excellence** – typically for medical students and interns, publically recognizing good behavior can be an excellent motivator. This, however, is not intended to buy good behavior.

5. **Clearly define expectations and what excellence looks like** – this is an essential step. If your team does not understand clearly what excellence looks like to you, how will they ever attain it - especially if the team has differing perspective of the behavior?

6. **Empower the team to make and implement decisions** - empowering the team to contribute ideas can build strong cohesion among the group.

7. **Deal with conflicts immediately** – don’t let conflicts linger to grow into bigger conflicts. Deal with them immediately and be consistent with your approach.

8. **Promote acceptance of a variety of viewpoints** – differences in backgrounds, ages, experience levels and educational levels, can influence the foundations used to make perceptions and judgments.

9. **Encourage open communication** – The best leaders are excellent listeners and the most effective teams are strong communicators. When communication breaks down, so does the team.

10. **Articulate a clear set of goals and objectives** (and, this may be team developed goals and objectives, too) – clearly defined goals and objectives will serve as the roadmap for the rotation as well as providing a strong framework for assessment of the learners (benefiting both you and the learners).

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3. Suite101: Effective Team Leadership: How to build teamwork and avoid conflict with coworkers (http://leadership-training.suite101.com/article.cfm/effective_team_leadership#ixzz0jmWUmE2z)