

THE KEYS TO LEADERSHIP



Purpose

The goal of this article is to provide pharmacy professionals direction in developing and applying leadership skills.

Objectives

1. Identify leadership skills and how they can improve the workplace.
2. Discuss how leadership skills can enhance teamwork in pharmacy practice settings.
3. Recall communication and motivation techniques to empower employees.
4. Apply leadership skills to develop pharmacy professionals.

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Great leaders guide, provide influence and advance the skills of those around them.¹ Leadership skills are essential in the pharmacy setting, whether an individual is the pharmacist in charge or someone without supervisory responsibilities. Pharmacists often lead technicians and interns, and as a result, frequently want to improve their leadership skills for personal and professional growth. Technicians and other health professionals also need to use effective communication as they provide support, interact with patients and handle the day-to-day activities of a pharmacy. Additionally, pharmacists are de-

pendent on by many for their medication expertise and disease management knowledge. Therefore, in the pharmacy profession, two leadership skills that must be continually applied to create a positive work environment are communication and motivation.

Communication

Communication is defined as “the process of exchanging information.”² Communication skills are often difficult to master. An effective leader knows the importance of communication and how to communicate with all types of people. At times, a pharmacist may speak with professional jargon to other health care providers on rounds in a hospital, while the next moment they may be speaking with a patient with limited abilities to understand med-

ication. Respected leaders use standard terminology, make direct statements and ask for clarification in all situations.² Pharmacy leaders will focus on the following aspects of effective communication: accessibility, trust, listening and evaluation.

Accessibility

One important aspect of communication is accessibility. A leader shows that they are accessible to the team by sharing and being open with their fellow employees. An effective leader shares information with the team. People can often become insecure and suspicious when they feel as if they are not being told the whole story. In turn, this feeling could cause them to not share aspects of their job with others or withhold information. An environment where the sharing of communication is poor will cause a decline in morale, which results in employee dissatisfaction and high turnover rates. Leaders prove their openness and accessibility with other employees by sharing their value system and learning how others feel. Leaders show they are genuine and honest when they admit their mistakes and make no excuses.³ Using this rule, a nonpunitive and open environment is created. It allows people to admit their mistakes, an important trait to have when considering patient safety. Instead of trying to bury mistakes, people will be more open about them and use them to find ways to improve patient care. A good leader says “our” frequently.⁴ Sometimes managers think saying “my” shows caring and facilitates a team environment. It usually does not and may sound condescending. Good leaders facilitate a team environment by using the words “our goals” or “our team.” One step to determine how well the pharmacy team works together is to consider a collaboration audit.⁴ A leader should honestly answer questions as they pertain to direct reports or those with whom she or he works regularly. If any item on the audit falls below a four (“agree”), a valuable leader will find ways to improve communication.

Trust

Trust is built by proper communication with employees. Trust is a crucial component of teambuilding and leadership. Leaders know trust also shows openness and is the foundation of good communication.⁵

Maxwell describes the three qualities a leader must possess to build trust as competence, character and connection.⁵ A leader is someone who is consistent in character, through good and bad times, and this consistency shows others that they can be trusted. A good leader shows employees they trust others by never taking credit for someone else's work. A leader helps everyone understand that personal gain is never above the group's growth.⁶ When a leader hears something said in confidence, it stays in confidence. Valuable leaders allow people to openly express their opinions and ideas without immediate dismissal. They ensure that what is said parallels their actions.⁶ Employees who trust are more willing to find other alternatives for tasks and work through issues, which in turn, improves employee satisfaction.⁴

If there is trust in a pharmacy, an effective leader should be able to answer "no" to the following questions:⁶

- *Is there ever inconsistency between what I say and what I do?*
- *Do I ever seek personal gain above the shared gain of the team?*
- *Do I ever withhold information [from the team]?*
- *Do I ever lie or tell half-truths?*
- *Am I ever closed-minded?*

If a leader answers yes to any of these questions, adjustments need to be made in order to build trust with co-workers. It will take time to establish trust, especially if other employees have had a negative experience with someone in the past. Trust is considered a form of capital and is an investment in relationships. A management title does not mean trust has been earned.⁷

Trust can sometimes be developed by using teambuilding exercises. A quick and easy teambuilding exercise to emphasize trust is known as the jigsaw puzzle.⁴ A homemade puzzle can be created by drawing on paper, laminating it and cutting out the pieces. Next, pull together the team in a conference room and hand out puzzle pieces to everyone. Each person must assemble a square in equal size to everyone else's. If there are five people, five squares need to be made; for six people, six squares are needed, and so on. Each team member is given a different set of pieces. In order for all squares to be made, the group has to share resources. They must trust that by giving away a puzzle piece, they will get another in return. This simple exercise can be applied to the pharmacy environment. If feasible, employees

should be cross-trained in other staff members' responsibilities. People learn to share information and trust one another by doing so. Another possibility is having each pharmacy staff member rotate daily or weekly on job duties, which will promote their expertise in each job function.

Empathy is another key aspect of trust. Many pharmacy professionals must be empathetic with their patients. Good leaders realize empathy should be extended to everyone. Patients should be treated the same as employees and vice versa. Poor leaders treat employees in an inferior manner compared to a patient, which shows the staff she or he cannot be trusted. Leaders demonstrate empathy by their willingness to tackle any job.³ If something spills, the leader would be the first to grab a mop. A pharmacist might take out the trash instead of having a technician do so or may count out prescriptions if others are busy. Staff who see pharmacists completing tasks outside of a "job description" are more willing to respect and trust that person. A leader thinks win-win instead of win-lose, and does not use "single thinking (my good ideas)" but instead uses "shared thinking (our great ideas)."³ Leaders show empathy by addressing the issue, not the person. Leaders paraphrase employees' comments and ask for clarification. A leader expresses feelings to show care and concern for other employees, treating everyone equally.

Listening

Trust cannot be established without listening. Managers should lead their employees by holding one-on-one meetings to understand their values and ideas.⁷ When someone feels they are being heard, they are more willing to listen to their leader.⁴ Leaders should ask for honest feedback, whether positive or negative, and then act on what is said. If possible, they make changes based on the collective ideas of staff, which often improves morale. Effective leaders learn to actively listen to others. Good listeners do not glance at their cell phone or the clock, or check their e-mail, while someone else is talking. *Good listeners pay full attention to others.* They ask questions, or take out a piece of paper to take notes on what is being said. If a leader doesn't have time to listen at the moment, they tell the other person. Leaders let others know that when time permits, they will return and be ready to listen without distractions. Listening is critical to ensure proper care of the patient and to ensure patient understanding. Pharmacists must use listening skills when counseling patients.

One exercise that leaders can use to

remember to actively listen is to write an "L" in a corner of a notepad during a meeting.⁶ This letter will serve as a reminder to "listen." Writing "LL" means "look and listen," which will serve as a reminder to *actively listen* to teammates. Good communication extends beyond listening. According to Zilz, et al., proper communication includes "creating clear written communications, adjusting to the audience, ensuring understanding."⁸ A good leader should also exhibit "flexibility and adaptability." To improve communication skills, leaders may ask someone else to track the amount of time she or he spends *listening* in a meeting. It should be above 80 percent. A good leader keeps meetings productive. Due to the busy nature of pharmacy, many meetings need to be productive and kept short. Effective leaders encourage participation, maintain order, assign action items and ensure the meeting ends positively and assertively.⁹ Listening and proper meeting techniques will improve employee effort and overall performance.

Evaluation

Part of communicating with employees involves evaluating employee performance. Many times, evaluations are something leaders find difficult to do. Many individuals find them to be "subjective and inexact."¹⁰ People tend to become emotional and some may have a difficult time accepting feedback. A few simple steps can alleviate some fears of the evaluation process. A good leader sets clear job guidelines and goals and communicates them in writing. During the evaluation period, a leader will write things down as they occur and keep them in the personnel file for the time when the evaluation is due. Employees should also keep their own file, thus ensuring all achievements over the evaluation time are recognized. This process prevents distortion in recall since, generally, many people can only remember the most recent events that occurred.¹⁰ Coaching can help employees achieve their goals during the evaluation process. Even if not in a direct supervisory role, every pharmacy professional has the opportunity to provide feedback and encouragement to co-workers. The mnemonic COACH can be used by a leader to remember evaluation steps:⁹

Compare performance with standards and goals.

Offer feedback.

Ask for comments and analyze the performance.

Collaborate on a solution.

Honor your subordinate.

By following these steps, leaders ensure that weak areas do not become problematic in the future. When providing feedback, leaders address observations specifically and in such a way as to not insult the person. For example, a good leader will say “The pharmacy inventory goal was missed by \$___,” while a poor manager will say, “You missed the inventory goal.” Leaders realize it is important to address individual subpar performance because it can affect the morale of the entire team. McGinnis has a few simple suggestions to give a reprimand when necessary:¹¹

1. *Do it immediately.*
2. *Before going further, confirm the facts. Be sure your information is correct.*
3. *Be very specific in telling them what is wrong. Try to criticize their behavior, not their motives.*
4. *Show your feelings: anger, annoyance, frustration.*

Leaders do not take a lot of time in a reprimand; most people will get the message in about a minute. A leader should expect mistakes and coach others to cope with them. In addition, if the person is making progress, effective leaders continue to follow up and provide feedback on each employee's growth. When using the above steps, evaluations become less of a burden with a good leader and communicator.

Effective communication is the key to building productive relationships. During his acceptance speech of the Webb Award by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), Paul Abramowitz summarized relationships and communication as the primary aspects of leadership, highlighting these 10 elements:¹²

1. *Paying attention through active listening.*
2. *Displaying understanding by mirroring ideas.*
3. *Giving others credit for their ideas.*
4. *Welcoming feedback and an honest exchange of information, without threat of punishment.*
5. *Staying accessible.*
6. *Being polite and courteous in everyday interactions.*
7. *Expressing gratitude for hard work.*
8. *Seeking to discover and nurture the unique skills that each person brings to the workplace.*
9. *Showing a willingness to trust.*
10. *Sharing with and opening up to others.*

Motivation

Along with communication, motivation is another core element in leadership.

Motivation is required to get a job done, but also is a factor in employee satisfaction. Motivation is described as a “...state wherein an individual feels compelled to act for any number of reasons or needs.”⁹ Manipulators are not the same as motivators. Manipulators will try to get others to do things in their own best interest, not in the best interest of the person doing the task.¹¹ This idea again ties in with trust. If leaders try to persuade someone to do something to make themselves look better, the employee will not be motivated and trust will be lost. An effective leader shows enthusiasm and inspires others.¹³ A leader finds the reasons that people stay motivated in their job and maintain employment with a company. If those reasons cannot be found, employees will easily find reasons to leave. There are many ways to help employees stay satisfied and motivated in the workplace through recognition and personal development.

Recognition

Wishon-Powell described intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. For example, salary and bonuses are extrinsic motivators. Psychological needs are intrinsic and are thought to be of higher value. “Nonmonetary factors such as (a) favorable working conditions; (b) relationships with co-workers, leaders and company owners; and (c) recognition and self esteem are ranked as most important among employees.”¹⁴ The simplest and easiest way to keep employees motivated is for a leader to provide recognition. It could be as simple as a “thank you” or more formal by presenting a service award. Many leaders think showing praise to one employee is akin to playing favorites.⁴ However, showing praise just exhibits how much a leader cares for and appreciates another employee. A note of caution: recognition should not be taken to an extreme. For example, a manager working with a friend and showing that person most of the praise is a poor leader. In addition, someone who compliments the boss constantly is not seen as a leader, but rather someone who is trying to get ahead and obtain personal goals, not the team's goals. An effective leader ensures that all recognition is genuine and deserved.

Extrinsic motivators like compensation can also be used as a form of recognition. Compensation can mean other things besides salary.¹⁵ In these tough economic times, many pharmacy departments and businesses have limited resources. Other motivating options for leaders besides monetary rewards could be buying lunch, granting an extra day off, buying a Starbucks® coffee card or giving a greeting card to an employee or the whole

team. These incentives may result in employees performing at a higher quality, and it produces employee longevity with the same company. A leader should be creative by focusing on the likes and interests of each individual. One way to ensure the leader knows the likes and dislikes of the team is to have each employee rank a list of rewards they would like to receive.¹⁰ The rewards should be reasonable and obtainable. Then, at the time the employee is to be recognized, the leader can choose something from the list.

Other incentives, such as a flexible work schedule, can be a huge motivator. Leaders may allow employees to make their own schedules, without micromanagement. Perhaps the pharmacy staff would prefer working 10-hour shifts rather than eight hours. Flex-time and schedule adjustments go a long way in ensuring employee satisfaction and motivation. This change is easy to implement and requires little time and action by a manager who is also an effective leader. As long as there is no interruption in workflow or responsibilities, adjustments in a schedule can often be permitted. Empowering people is an important concept in motivating employees. Remember: “Leading isn't about controlling, it's about releasing.”³

Effective leaders realize a team consists of many members who all have different talents and abilities. A good leader asks what employees like to do and discovers the needs and beliefs of each individual.^{11,15} She or he assigns tasks to those who are the most motivated in each area. If there is a task no one wants to do, it should be divided up as fairly as possible. Leaders set clear deadlines to ensure those involved know what is expected of them. A leader demonstrates confidence in others' abilities by stating phrases like, “I know with your abilities you'll be able to get this done,” or “We can work together as a team to get this job done by the deadline.” By exhibiting confidence in their staff, effective leaders are able to help others to achieve their full potential.¹¹ One tool a leader can use to get to know staff members more in-depth is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®).¹⁶ This exam can easily be found on the Internet, or the entire department can participate in a facilitated training session. It is designed to measure psychological preferences by answering a series of questions. These questions address how people perceive others and make decisions. Each person is evaluated in four areas to determine their dominant attitude, how they function, their lifestyle and overall being. The results will show if a person is an introvert or extrovert, who uses senses vs. intuition, thinking

vs. feeling and judging vs. perceiving. If the pharmacy staff takes this program together, they will learn more about each other and their motivations to understand how they could work better as a team, thus achieving more goals.

Goals should be set by an effective leader who establishes high standards. She or he does not need to be popular with everyone. A person with a “laissez-faire attitude” who tries to please everyone conveys that the business is not worth caring about.¹¹ People will not stay motivated with such a leader. Leaders keep on top of new ideas and challenges to inspire the staff. A leader of a pharmacy may also want to keep a file of ideas.⁸ These ideas can be on anything work related, such as a new dispensing system, advances in patient care or improvements in pharmacy management. This type of file allows one to have resources at his or her fingertips, instead of relying on memory to find an answer. A written file of ideas may include information from meetings or articles and could be tried and implemented as time permits. “Filing ideas” is one way a leader can improve motivation in the workplace. The names of those co-workers who have expressed an interest in that subject can also be included in the file. These ideas can also be discussed during the job redefinition process described below.

Personal Development

Personal development is important in motivation. Employees need to feel they have opportunities for advancement and achievement.¹⁷ If a person is in a position where she or he cannot advance higher, an effective leader finds out what else they want to learn or how they want to grow. The employee's interest may be in an educational class or a way to further expand their job duties.

A simple exercise to complete with employees who may be bored with their current position is known as “job redefinition.”¹⁸ Before a meeting, the leader will have each employee write their job tasks in letters large enough to be seen when posted to a wall. The employees should be prepared to state which tasks they do and do not like, which they would like to keep and what other functions they would prefer to do. The leader should create an environment which is open and allows the employees to feel comfortable to speak freely. To facilitate this communication, the leader may want to go first. Next, decide which duties can be completed only by one person and how the current task can be changed and/or improved. If possible, also address which employees may like to

switch current duties and if the tasks listed still need to be done.

A job “redesign” is a simpler version of the redefinition process. It creates the environment of accountability, while ensuring employee autonomy and growth. Employees can create new job titles, revised job descriptions and criteria for performance evaluations. To be considered, an employee must show that the new job will meet the quality and vision requirements of the organization. Several California hospitals introduced this process. During a three- to five-year period, 482 employees participated with a 57 percent lower turnover rate than those who had not participated in the redesign process.¹⁰

Feedback

People will continue to be motivated when they receive feedback. Whether it is positive (such as their cost savings idea was accepted) or negative (the project was stopped due to lack of funding), it is important for people to know the current status of things discussed. If the status is still unknown, a leader will inform the others involved. A leader should always be “looking ahead and feeding back.”⁷ One way to provide feedback is to perform an “appreciative inquiry.”¹⁹ This activity is unique in the fact that it evaluates the positive: a task or project that went well. The team will consider questions, such as the following:

- *How and why did [the team] achieve a positive result?*
- *What is present in the environment that supports the employee's success?*
- *What personal strengths do [the employees] have that allow them to do well?*
- *What can [the] organization do to promote more positive outcomes?*

The obvious advantage to this exercise is that it focuses on things that have gone well; the organization is being proactive and is no longer problem solving. People value leaders who focus on the positive and are enthusiastic to try new things.

Motivation is a key factor for building a better organization. A leader must know how to motivate others. A good way to remember how to motivate others is to consider Ponder's six principles of motivation:⁹

- *People prefer positive rewards over punishment.*
- *Misused rewards cause people to act improperly.*
- *Meaningful contributions inspire people.*
- *People will pursue a worthy and achievable goal.*

- *People must believe and value your promises of reward.*
- *People want their leaders to act like leaders.*

Conclusion

Leadership skills are important for every pharmacy professional and are essential for running an efficient pharmacy. Communication is vital at every level to ensure proper patient care. Motivation keeps staff interested in their jobs and happy with their work, which is a reflection on the pharmacy itself. The core components of motivation and communication are being accessible to the team, demonstrating trust, listening to the staff, providing fair evaluations, allowing personal development to flourish and showing recognition. Successful leaders realize several of these steps can be applied to every situation. Whether someone is the top level manager, or just part of the team, individuals don't have to be managers to be leaders.

Important Information Regarding Pharmacy Technician Continuing Education Credit

Due to new guidelines established by Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), certain changes must be made to the process by which MPA accredits continuing education for pharmacy technicians. MPA may choose to designate programs or home study articles as PTCE-accredited, rather than ACPE-accredited.

However, even though MPA may accredit a program for technicians, it is the technician's responsibility to determine whether the subject matter is acceptable to the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) for recertification. Programs designated by PTCB to be appropriate for technicians pertain to the following topics: medication distribution and inventory control systems, pharmacy administration and management calculations, programs specific to pharmacy technicians, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, pharmacy law and pharmacology/drug therapy. Programs relating to functions outside the scope of practice for pharmacy technicians will not be accepted by PTCB. This is a knowledge-based activity.

PTCE

Michigan Pharmacists Association is an approved provider of Pharmacy Technician Continuing Education (PTCE). PTCE Program #112-000-10-801-H04-T, 1.0 contact hour. Initial release date: 3/5/2010, Expiration date: 3/5/2012.

ACPE

Michigan Pharmacists Association is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) as a provider of continuing pharmacy education. ACPE Program #112-000-10-002-H04-P, 1.0 contact hour. Initial release date: 3/5/2010, Expiration date: 3/5/2012.

Continuing Education Self-Assessment Questions

- The key elements of communication include all of the following EXCEPT:
 - accessibility
 - trust
 - listening
 - evaluation process
 - recognition
- An example of how a leader would prevent accessibility is:
 - sharing with the team
 - being open and honest
 - using words like "my team"
 - making no excuses
- Maxwell described qualities required for trust to exist, which includes:
 - competence.
 - character.
 - connection.
 - all of the above
- The amount of time a good communicator spends listening in a meeting should be above which percentage?
 - 50%
 - 60%
 - 70%
 - 80%
- Which of the following describes the evaluation process steps?
 - COACH mnemonic
 - McGinnis' suggestions
 - MBTI® mnemonic
 - Ponder's six principles
- Abramowitz described 10 elements that summarized communication and relationships, including all of the following EXCEPT:
 - paying attention through active listening
 - staying accessible
 - collaborating on a solution
 - showing a willingness to trust
 - expressing gratitude for hard work
- Which recognition motivator is considered extrinsic?
 - Favorable working conditions
 - Bonuses
 - Co-worker relationships
 - Self-esteem
- Which form of recognition will undermine teamwork and is used by poor leaders?
 - Buying lunch for the staff
 - Complimenting the boss
 - Giving a greeting card
 - Presenting a service award
- Many character traits are important when motivating employees. One trait of a good leader is:
 - enthusiasm.
 - a "laissez-faire" attitude.
 - having control of the employee.
 - single thinking.
- Which of the following can be used to provide personal development to a professional staff?
 - MBTI®
 - Providing incentives
 - The job redefinition process
 - Allowing flex-time
 - Giving a salary bonus

The Keys to Leadership

- The passing score on each test is 70 percent. Upon successful completion of the test, MPA will mail you a continuing education statement of credit. A failed test may be retaken only once without additional cost within 30 days upon notification of a failing score. There are no refunds for failed tests.
- The quiz may be taken anytime until March 5, 2012. Membership status will be certified using MPA records. Checks must accompany quiz — MPA will not bill you or correct the test unless the proper fee is enclosed.

- This article offers 1.0 contact hour of continuing education. This lesson was developed specifically for pharmacists and certified pharmacy technicians.
- Send the answer sheet with your check made payable to: **Michigan Pharmacists Association, 815 N. Washington Ave., Lansing, MI 48906.** Please allow four weeks for processing.

March 2010 Enrollment Form
ACPE No. 112-000-10-002-H04-P
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Name _____ MPA ID# _____

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I enclose: Member Fee.....\$6 Nonmember Fee....\$12
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PCE EVALUATION — Circle the appropriate rating **number** for items 1 through 4.

- What is your evaluation of the article you read?
 Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent
- The author's coverage of the subject material was:
 Incomplete 1 2 3 4 5 Complete
- How useful will the content of this article be in your practice?
 Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very
- To what degree did the article meet the stated objectives?
 - Identify leadership skills and how they can improve the workplace.
 Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very
 - Discuss how leadership skills can enhance teamwork in pharmacy practice settings.
 Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very
 - Recall communication and motivation techniques to empower employees.
 Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very
 - Apply leadership skills to develop pharmacy professionals.
 Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very

What other topics would you like to see presented in MPA's home study articles? _____

Answer Sheet Instructions

Please write the letter of the correct answer to each question in the space provided.

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