

How Managers Can Lead Rather Than Just Manage

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Once healthcare was safe but relatively ineffective. Today it's trending toward efficiency but is more dangerous. The Institute of Medicine published *to err is human*, forcing the healthcare industry to take notice. 10 years later, medical errors still lead causes of death in the US. A plethora of resources are deployed on quality initiatives to improve the efficacy. Cuts continue to force doing more with less. No one joins healthcare for the great hours and wonder-

ful pay, it's a calling rather than a career. Providers don't wake up and say "I think I'll do a poor job today." Systems and processes are failing employees. The answer is hiring strong leaders. Managers are hired with expectations of leadership. The table below, from *Strategic Leadership*, outlines differences between managers and leaders.

Col. Malone describes management as working with things to accomplish a task and leadership as working with people to accomplish a task. The majority of managers are promoted into the role by seniority and technical skills. A great nurse is promoted to a nursing manager, but what does a nurse manager do? A nurse works with things to accomplish a task. A nurse is a professional, educated position. In the table, most nursing attributes align with

managing (they manage a patient's care), which is appropriate.

Leaders see the big picture, working toward improving effectiveness and efficacy. Rather than waiting for problems to occur, leaders monitor metrics for early signs of developing issues and take quick action.

Leaders are coaches and mentors. They ask more questions and provide fewer answers. Front line staff know how to improve workflows but need to be asked. Leaders need to remove barriers. Providers thrive on reacting to urgent events yet this can lead to errors. Statistically, errors occur when clinicians are rushed and multi-tasking.

What does this mean tactically? How does a manager lead rather than manage?

| Managers | Leaders |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Administer | Innovate |
| Maintain | Develop |
| Control | Inspire |
| Short-term view | Long-term view |
| Ask how and when | Ask what and why |
| Initiate | Originate |
| Accept the status quo | Challenge the status quo |
| Do things right | Do the right thing |

Create a culture of teamwork. Focus on management systems, on targets you can see, like behaviors, expectations, tools and routine practices. Culture may allow operating on autopilot. A distinct culture also makes it easy to identify countercultural behaviors, practices, or events.

Hire confident leaders to manage departments. Do they need to be a nurse to manage a nursing unit? Maybe, but when managers are technical experts they manage tasks instead of leading people and processes. Often nurse managers appear in scrubs providing bedside care. They cannot truly lead a department if they are managing tasks. Here are frequent management mistakes in hospitals.

- Excess supply inventory has built-up because “someone ran out one time”
- Longer or extra breaks are allowed for “morale purposes”
- Problems are worked around today and “tomorrow can take care of itself”
- Employee suggestions are ignored because “improvement is the job of experts”
- Process metrics aren’t calculated since “we never do anything about recurring problems anyway”

Improve efficacy and safety of healthcare by allowing professional staff to manage themselves and allow managers to become true lead-

ers. Train them to...

- See abnormality
- Make sure processes are well defined, stable and clearly documented
- Confirm that resources are available to respond in real time, now and at all times

Leave responding to emergencies to CODE teams. Lead, mentor, coach and foster a culture of teamwork in units. Healthcare can change one unit at a time.

Theories abound on methods for discovering and developing leaders and leadership skills. Every industry views certain technical skills as key to strong leadership and applies an accumulation of skills as the scale for leadership. Healthcare historically applied that norm and the result has been technically skilled “managers.” Fundamental attributes of leaders include the ability to ignite passion and the desire to do the right thing. Methods for achieving results may vary from one facility to another but the ability to motivate staff to success is only visible under strong leadership.

Actions to consider going forward.

- Recruit for proven leaders and the next generation of leaders. The ability to motivate individuals to move outside a comfortable place into an unknown place may not be a sign of risky behavior as much as an indicator of a true motivator.
- Provide an environment of learning and growth. Leaders consistently challenge others but challenges themselves even more to embrace change.
- Acknowledge failure is acceptable when motivation is the impetus.

Moving an organization from managing staff and process to leading staff begins with a foundational infrastructure. Recruit for leadership and provide the space and tools for them to them to bloom.

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