Balancing Leadership and Management

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The enterprise of pharmaceutical education, an evolving healthcare system, and our stakeholders need the best possible leaders and managers. Webster’s dictionary defines a leader as “a person, who by force of example, talents, or qualities of leadership, plays a directing role, wields commanding influence, or has a following in any sphere of activity or thought;” and a manager as “one that manages” or “a person that conducts, directs or supervises.”

Leadership is not necessarily better than management - they are complementary. Leaders create and deal with change while managers deal with complexity. It has been suggested that a peacetime army can survive with good management, but a wartime army needs to be led. Leadership is about vision, direction, strategies, motivating and inspiring while management is about planning, operationalizing, organizing people and systems, choosing structure and function, allocating resources, and budgeting. The experts say that a leader “does the right thing” while a manager “does things right”. A leader has a “to create” list while a manager has a “to do” list. The literature suggests that we are overmanaged and underled.

Eight basic functions of leadership are creating and articulating the vision, developing a team of highly qualified people, clarifying values, developing an effective strategy for action, achieving a common understanding with others, motivating others in the team, helping others to develop skills for achieving excellence, and measuring critical success factors. Leaders are thinkers, dreamers, change masters, risk takers, decision makers, effective communicators, team builders; they are courageous, energetic, committed, sensitive, flexible, ethical, and optimal users of influence. The strength of a leader is measured by the ability to inspire others to give their best. Leaders view change as a friend, and actively seek input from others about their ideas.

Leaders should articulate a vision, which is realistic and is credible, and based on careful analysis of the input received from within the institution and from key external stakeholders. When a clear sense of purpose, direction, and desired future is widely shared, the individuals can find their own roles, and grow professionally and personally. Leadership should simultaneously meet the needs of today and direct towards the dreams of tomorrow. Leaders should be able to bring together people of different views, backgrounds, culture, education, training, and experience, and still develop synergy, as the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. They should be able to organize internal and external forces and make them serve a common purpose.

Leaders share their influence and power with others, and treat people as they would like to be treated. This maximizes the efforts and productivity of everyone. Leaders also know the relative importance of different needs, i.e. what to pursue further and what to let go. They keep in touch with people, listen, facilitate, teach, reinforce, and reevaluate goals and values. Leaders have a tremendous amount of enthusiasm.

Leaders attract the talented people, align each with the right job, and get out of their way. Managers make sure the desired outcomes are achieved. Leaders look at the big picture while the managers must monitor day-to-day activities, while embracing some uncertainty and surprises. Leaders and managers must have integrity and trustworthiness, and set examples for others to follow. It is important to know that an outstanding leader may not be an exemplary manager and vice versa.

High-level organizational performance requires both leaders and managers. The leadership and management team should seek challenging opportunities to envision a believable future while appealing to the interest, values, hopes and dreams of others, encourage active collaboration, empower individuals and groups, and celebrate and reward the success of each small or big win. They practice what they preach and focus on solutions rather than barriers.

Kouzes and Posner have reported the characteristics of leaders most admired by over 20,000 people from a 20-items survey conducted at executive seminars in America, Asia, Australia and Europe, the majority being from the United States (Table 1).

Many have raised the question: is leadership a born or learned trait? Of course, all leaders would have to have been born with certain traits. The literature suggests that important elements of leadership can be learned - by trial and error, from observation of others, and through education and training. Developing leadership potential involves understanding our own motivation, values, strengths and weaknesses, before we can understand or help others.

Collins has proposed five levels of leadership: 1) highly capable individual; 2) contributing team member; 3) competent manager; 4) effective leader; and 5) an executive. The highest level of leadership (level 5, executive) requires a combination of personal humility and professional will.

Leaders truly believe that they can make a difference and they bring passion to the tasks at hand. Their authenticity is apparent to those they guide or lead. They focus on supporting and serving, not commanding and controlling.

The academy must continue to develop leaders and managers and that training must occur among interested students, faculty, staff
and administrators at all levels. We must use as many teachable moments as possible within our institutions as case studies in leadership and management for our students, faculty, staff and administration on an ongoing basis. The process used in making important decisions should be shared with future leaders and managers so that they can witness key elements of leadership and management behaviors. Leadership has been chosen as the theme for the programming at the upcoming AACP annual meeting to be held in Kansas City. An important mission of pharmaceutical education is to prepare the most talented leaders and managers for the academy, healthcare system, industry, and the profession.

References