

# LEADERSHIP

By Ruth McGuire, BSc

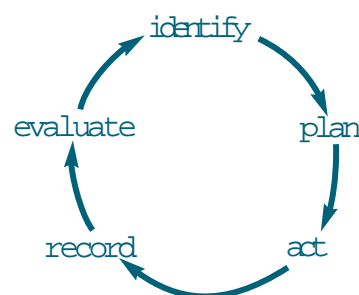
*Most pharmacists probably do not consider themselves to be leaders. But people who want to make things happen must lead, and for those who are, or want to be pharmacy managers, leadership is probably the most important aspect of a manager's role. This article explores some of the requirements for leadership*



## identify gaps in your knowledge

1. What is the difference between management and leadership?
2. What makes a good leader?
3. Are you confident that you are a good leader?

This article relates to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's core competency of "management" (see "Medicines, ethics and practice — a guide for pharmacists", number 26, July 2002, pp105–6). You should consider how it will be of value to your practice.



Opinion varies as to the precise difference between a leader and a manager. Some think that leadership is purely about showing others which direction to take whereas others think that leadership also involves skills such as motivating others. But there is some consensus around the fact that leadership is about people and particularly about relationships. In general, managers operate systems and take charge of functions as well as people, whereas leaders only ever have a direct impact on people — managers execute whereas leaders direct.

Management consultant John Varney from the Centre for Management Creativity believes that we are all, in our own unique ways, leaders, even if this only involves a small role outside the world of work. Within the workplace however, leadership is a key function of management; good managers need to act as leaders in order to make a difference. A leader can bring about change by planning, training, teaching, coaching, setting strategy, evaluating, problem solving, inspiring and even according to one author, showing "love".<sup>1</sup>

### THE LEADER-FOLLOWER RELATIONSHIP

Where there is a leader there is always a follower. The relationship of leader-follower can work on a one-to-one basis, for example, in friendships where one friend is always the one with the ideas or suggestions and the other is quite content to follow. But the leader-follower relationship can also work in a group situation where one person is either given or assumes the responsibility of leader and the rest of the team are the followers. Often people choose and prefer to be in a position where they are led rather than be in a position where they lead. So to some extent, the relationship involves self-selection of both leader and follower(s).

### REQUIREMENTS FOR LEADERSHIP

Good leaders are adept at guiding organisations through change and at inspiring members of staff to deliver their best. The lack of this type of leadership can be costly in terms of staff morale, missed opportunities, productivity, staff turnover and so on. Management consultant Paul Corrigan suggests that because many organisations

and businesses operate in an uncertain environment, strong guidance and leadership are required. He writes: "If you know what is going to happen you don't need too much foresight and ability to run an organisation. But if the organisation also knows what is going to happen then it doesn't really need a leader. Leaders become necessary at precisely the time when it is difficult to see into the future and it is at that time that so many managers become immobilised by simply not knowing what is going on in their business environment."<sup>2</sup>

So is leadership a behaviour that can be learnt or can great leaders only be born and not made? The answer lies in exploring the characteristics of good leadership and looking at how these can be turned from theory into practice.

**Vision** A leader is able to see an organisation as it is and can also see what it could be. In other words, a leader has vision. This obviously implies that a leader must know his or her organisation well and know what will make it stand out from the rest. Visionary leaders start with the fundamental question "What do I/we want for this organisation?" The process of creating a vision requires faith, which has to be underpinned by action. The process will at some stage involve all members of staff and it is the job of the leader to mobilise staff into committing to the vision and working towards its implementation.

A vision statement (much like a mission statement) defines the vision and acts as a goal towards which the leader can direct his or her energies and that of the organisation. Leaders have to ensure that the vision links with the organisation's core values and ethos. The statement should also indicate what action needs to be taken and by when. For community pharmacy managers, a vision statement could be something like: "Our aim by the end of the next year is to become the town's best known pharmacy, delivering excellent customer service and an increased range of services." Once the vision statement has been written, author John van Maurik<sup>3</sup> suggests asking the following:

1. Does the vision really illustrate what I want to achieve?
1. Is it relevant to this type of business?
1. Is the vision clear?— can it be communicated in a way that will convince and excite others?
1. How can the vision be translated into a series of objectives that other people will want to adopt as their own?

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## action : practice points

1. Make a conscious effort to lead by example and make a note of the outcome.
2. Do the leadership quiz on [www.leadersdirect.com/leadership.html](http://www.leadersdirect.com/leadership.html).
3. Form your own vision statement and apply the van Maurik questions.

## evaluate

How could your learning have been more effective?  
What will you do now and how will this be achieved?

1. Can the vision statement along with the essential values it conveys be reflected in everything we do and be a yardstick as well as a guide?

A good leader will be able to induce other staff members to share the vision, and work towards turning it into reality.

**Strategy** Strategy setting is linked to vision in that a plan is needed to turn a vision into reality. An organisation's strategic plan charts its course and maps its route. One model suggested for working to a strategy is based on the following five steps:

1. *Analysis* Gather information to find out where your organisation is in terms of development and perception by people both inside and outside the organisation
1. *Formulation* At this point the strategic plan comes into being. The plan could involve the input of other people but however it is conceived, it should address the direction of the organisation and the vision for the organisation's future
1. *Evaluation* This tests the vision and checks whether it is realistic and achievable in all or only some of its parts
1. *Implementation* This stage turns the strategic plan into action with people and resources. Targets are set, and roles and tasks identified
1. *Control* Once a strategic plan is up and running, some monitoring and control is necessary to keep the plan on course. It may be at this stage that the plan needs tweaking or adjusting

**Standards and core values** Leaders should set the standards for an organisation and ensure that what is considered acceptable or desirable is communicated to all staff within the organisation. One of the best ways that leaders can set standards is to lead by example and demonstrate that they adhere to the standards that they expect from everyone else. For example, one standard might be always to return telephone calls within a day. Does the leader always do this? Another standard might be always to start meetings at the scheduled time. Again, is this something the leader always achieves? Another standard could be that customers should not be kept waiting longer than two minutes once they have walked through the door. Higher standards lead to better performance within an organisation and low standards lead to poor performance.

Values form the basis of standards for behaviour. Core values are those beliefs that are central to the operation of any organisation. They determine what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. For example, how do staff within your pharmacy really feel about keeping customers waiting? Does one of your core values have something to do with valuing people and their time? And what about laying blame? Is there a value among staff based on tolerance for honest mistakes?

**Developing others** It is now generally accepted that people are an organisation's most important asset. One of the key functions of a leader is to see the potential in others and to have a vision for where people could be as opposed to where they are now. One of the most desirable attributes of any leader is the ability to motivate and inspire others.

Going back to basics, developing others starts with selecting the right people for the right jobs. It is about using the most appropriate

methods of recruitment. Once people are recruited, there is no single leadership style that can be used to develop staff. Traditionally, there were only two recognised leadership styles: autocratic leadership and democratic leadership. An autocratic leader leads by authority (and sometimes, coercion) whereas a democratic leader tends to delegate authority and use his or her expertise to influence employees. However, leadership is now seen as much more diverse and in fact, many large companies now use a model of leadership based on the work of Ken Blanchard, called the "situational leadership" model. Blanchard suggests that there are four basic leadership styles<sup>4</sup>:

1. *Directing* The leader provides specific instruction and closely supervises the worker
1. *Coaching* The leader directs and supervises but also explains decisions, solicits suggestions and supports progress
1. *Supporting* The leader facilitates and offers support but shares responsibility for decision making with workers
1. *Delegating* The leader delegates responsibility for decision making and problem solving to workers

The difference between the styles lies in the degrees of independence and support given to a worker. For example, directing would be appropriate when dealing with a work experience youngster who needs to be told in clear terms what has to be done and how. Coaching would be appropriate to use in a relationship with a locum pharmacist who can make his or her own decisions. Blanchard's model for leadership style is known as "situational" because it is about the context within which a person works. It is about applying the right leadership style to the right people within an organisation. Leaders therefore have to determine the level of support and independence needed by others. Situational leadership is not an easy model to follow because it takes hard work and effort on the part of leaders to get to know others, assess their potential and implement strategies to help them maximise that potential.

Supporting others is not only a top down process, it is a two way process because every leader is essentially a follower in that they are accountable to someone else. For example, in a broad sense managers of any business are led by customers because their needs and demands influence the supply of services and products.

**Self-development** Quite often leaders can become so focused on developing others that they forget about themselves. Leaders need continual personal and professional development and have to take responsibility for their own self-development.

One route to identifying a development need is through an independent organisational appraisal. This will highlight strengths and weaknesses and perhaps skill or knowledge gaps within an organisation. If the budget will not allow for this kind of appraisal, an alternative would simply be to talk to staff about the organisation. Because an organisation is often a reflection of its leader, problems within an organisation will be a mirror reflection of the leader's own attitudes and behaviour. In such a case, the way to change the culture is by the leader changing his or her behaviour.

Leaders are not perfect and will make mistakes and it is to be hoped that they will have the insight to learn from their mistakes. This perhaps illustrates the need for leaders to be honest about their limitations and to accept that at times they will fail. Leaders also have to accept that criticism comes with the territory and that the issue nevertheless is not about being liked as a leader but about being respected.

## REFERENCES

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