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Great expectations

Being an effective team leader and team player are one in the same

BY MONICA WOFFORD, CSP

SURELY IT DIDN'T HAPPEN IN THE MATERNITY WARD. No nurse walked around with a stamp identifying certain newborns as being "leaders."

But somehow, years after you left the crib, you still have the label of "leader" seemingly, if not invisibly, imprinted on your forehead. Maybe it came from your community and the positions you've held. Maybe it's from having the title of doctor of chiropractic, or maybe it's from being the owner of your own practice or head of your own household.

Regardless of the cause, you're a leader, and with that position comes great responsibility, often great rewards, and certainly great expectations.

Employees, patients, family members, and friends in your community now look to you to lead them in one of many directions. They each have different expectations, and different perceptions of what leadership looks like.

The leadership role

So, what does it mean to be a leader? What do you do with or about your new or existing leadership role?

1. Determine expectations. What do you expect of yourself in leadership? Do you expect to lead, guide, motivate, and direct?

Look up "lead" in the dictionary and you will see at least 10 different behaviors described by the word "lead."

Now, if you look up "leader" you'll note that its definition is "one who leads." So is leadership really all about what you do and the many things

expected of you? Perhaps, but it also relies on what you expect of others.

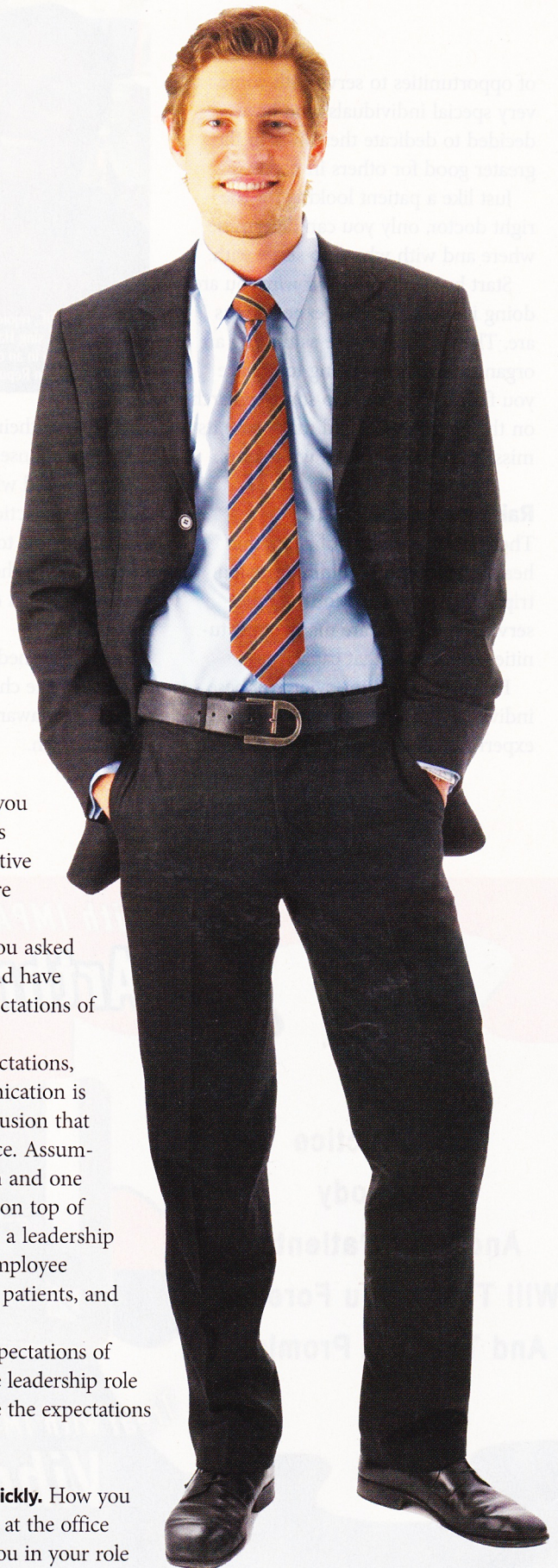
Employees may expect you to make fair decisions on pay and promotions, while patients may expect you to make fair decisions at a time other than their scheduled appointment.

These are easy differences, but only if you've given this some thought. Have you examined what others expect of your respective leadership roles, or are you merely making assumptions? Have you asked what they expect? And have you shared your expectations of them with them?

In the case of expectations, the secret to communication is seeing through the illusion that it's actually taken place. Assuming creates an illusion and one assumed expectation on top of another could lead to a leadership breakdown, higher employee turnover, disgruntled patients, and a grumpy you.

Determine their expectations of you in each respective leadership role you take on and share the expectations you have of others.

2. Be willing to shift quickly. How you handle being the boss at the office probably won't help you in your role



as president of your local Rotary Club.

No Rotarian will respond well to "Improve this behavior or our next step will be termination." The guidance and advice you share with patients will be different than the guidance you share with an employee who's bringing his or her personal stress to the office.

In leadership, although some skills will overlap and carry over into multiple roles, you'll benefit from being willing to recognize the varying leadership behaviors that apply to each role, and being able to shift those behaviors quickly in each scenario.

"Shifting" can also mean having to "check your emotions at the door." When you enter into a leadership role that includes working with volunteers, you must shift your use of consequences involving pay or time off to something more meaningful to the members.

The truth is that when you leave

one role to go to another, there are some behaviors that you might want to check at that figurative door.

3. Bring others with you. If you were asked what it took to be a good leader, there are many accurate answers that describe desirable leadership behaviors including being a good listener and visionary, and having confidence and integrity.

However, the one key element a leader needs in order to be effective is *followers*.

If you are highly skilled, but have no followers, then you're ... alone. Leaders are not loners. They bring people with them through development, delegation, mentoring, teaching, guiding, motivating, and directing.

You've never heard of a leader coming forward to say, "Well, the truth is I did it all by myself." In fact, it's usually the other way around and they

admit they had help.

So come clean now. Leadership doesn't happen just because you own the business, got the title, or are running the place. It happens when you realize you can't do all of it alone.

The brighter business card and bigger office may make leadership appear glamorous; however, leadership is a serious and multifaceted responsibility.

With the right skill, a lot of desire, and a little practice, you can be an effective and fantastic leader. Are you ready? ☺



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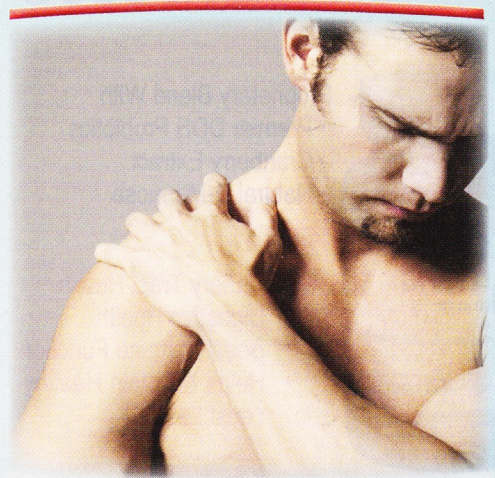
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