Director's Forum

Things I Wish I Had Known Before Becoming a Pharmacy Leader

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The *Director's Forum* series is designed to guide pharmacy leaders in establishing patient-centered services in hospitals and health systems. This month's article is intended to provide tips and guidance for new pharmacists who suddenly find themselves in managerial roles. While this can be a challenge, there is a network of colleagues within the profession who have also experienced this transition.

WHAT IS AN ACCIDENTAL LEADER?

As for most clinical pharmacists, it was likely never your dream to be a manager. You went into pharmacy school because you wanted to help people or you enjoyed working with patients. You envisioned yourself on rounds dispensing clinical advice, counseling a newly diagnosed diabetic patient over the counter, or maybe precepting pharmacy students on rounds. Your vision may have transitioned through the years, but it likely always kept you grounded to your roots in clinical training. Managers were a group of people you could distance yourself from when you disagreed with a particular decision or policy. You may have gone so far as to think of these managers as not understanding or supporting clinical activities, caring more about the budget than the patients, or forgetting what it was like to be on the "front lines."

Over the years, you have worked on several clinical projects, many of which were of progressive size and profile. You developed a reputation as a respected and trusted clinical leader on whom the staff could rely to champion a cause. You may have even been asked by the pharmacy management to mentor junior clinicians and provide leadership to an ad hoc group such as the critical care clinicians or the medicine faculty. Although you were not given a formal title, people respected you and aligned with your efforts to produce success. Then one day, you learn that a key leader in the management structure is leaving and you are being asked to formally assume a management role.

Just like that, 25 employees now report to you. People come to you with complaints about everything from schedules to parking spaces and formulary

decisions. You sit down stunned in your new office and realize that you have officially become a "carpet dweller." You start to ask yourself how are you going to handle a group of pharmacists and technicians and get them to work together as a team.

TAG. YOU'RE IT.

Even though leaders in pharmacy rarely take the helm with such drama, many pharmacists find themselves in leadership roles unexpectedly. The current shortage of pharmacy leaders is more than 4 times the shortage of pharmacists. With an additional 70% to 80% of leaders expected to retire in the next decade, it is not surprising that pharmacists find themselves assuming some form of leadership in their career. Over time, many successful clinical practitioners are given progressively increasing levels of responsibility and find themselves in a leadership role without even realizing that is what was happening. Upon reflection, this should come as no surprise; highly trained pharmacists are looked upon for leadership within their clinical circles and to provide guidance on patient care decisions. These individual patient interventions often segue into requests to set clinical directions for patient populations, such as cardiology, and then for broad patient populations within the medical center. Other pharmacists become passionate about solving a particular problem and, seeing no apparent champion for the cause, take up the effort. After a couple of successive campaigns, they find themselves being asked to officially assume the role of leader. With the growing void of formal leaders in the profession of pharmacy, these "accidental leaders" are becoming prevalent within

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the professional ranks. Given the relatively small number of pharmacy management training programs, these accidental leaders represent the majority of pharmacy leaders, each of whom has a similar circuitous leadership career path. With almost certainty, if you are a pharmacist who is good at what you do, you will be asked to take on leadership responsibility.

The ability to manage people has almost nothing to do with the technical savvy that has led you to this point in your career. While you may need to train employees and share your wisdom, the more pressing task ahead is to earn their trust and motivate them to perform exceptionally. It's scary but true: As a new manager, you're starting from scratch. You cannot fall back on whatever got you this far.

Pharmacy schools do not have the room or flexibility in their curriculums to adequately ensure management and leadership competencies. Anxiety generally sets in when the newly promoted pharmacy manager realizes that the role of formal leader is much different from the role of freelance advocate. This article is meant to provide tips to the new pharmacy leader on how to deal with common challenges encountered during the transition. It is a compilation of wisdom regarding inevitable leadership issues that were not formally taught in pharmacy school.

KICKED OUT OF THE CLUB

The first thing to realize when you become a manager is that people will treat you differently. This is especially true of managers who were promoted from within the ranks. No matter how much you try to be one of the staff, you are not. People will no longer share stories with you, invite you to selected events, or joke around with you. If it is any consolation, you will treat them differently as well. By necessity, you will withhold information from them, avoid certain topics, and limit your exposure in events in which you can be accountable for the ramifications.

Further, you will start to see the organizational landscape differently. You will have access to information that is not available to the staff. You will better understand why decisions were made that previously seemed ridiculous. It will change you in ways that are not always easy to explain to the staff. They might see you as having gone over to the other side. You will now have the responsibility of supporting this new team in addition to representing them and the department to upper management.

New managers often struggle with how to deal with rumors. People will make up stories. People will make up stories about you. This can be startling to

a new manager. You can lessen this through transparency, but it will still happen. Some stories will be amusing, some will be malicious. Some will come from expected disgruntled sources, others from unexpected trusted ones. But it will happen. The challenge is to keep focused and avoid the distraction. You will find yourself down a rabbit hole chasing them if you are not careful. Management will teach you more about human nature than you would have expected. One element of human nature is that people will attempt to fill information gaps when they exist. If they know the first part of the story and they know the last part of the story, they will speculate on the middle, which leads to rumor.

In dealing with the new team, provide them as much information as you can. Otherwise there will be rumors. One element of human nature is that people will attempt to fill information gaps when they exist. The best defense against this is to provide as much information as possible. While communication is certainly time consuming, it can actually save you time in the long run.

NEW TEAM

Your first challenge as a manager will be to get to know your team and to present yourself as their new leader. Your new team will most likely be made up of a mix of staff who are new to you and your peers. You may want to review your employees' personnel files before you meet them to get a sense of their background, experience, previous assignments, and special skills. You'll also learn personal information that may help you establish a rapport with them more easily. Above all, reserve judgment on a new group of employees until you have worked together for several weeks.

If you are supervising employees with whom you have not worked with before, it is important that you invest time in talking with them and learning about the issues they may have. Many new managers feel that they need to keep an "arm's length" from staff. They often find themselves overwhelmed by their new responsibilities and, as a result, they sacrifice time spent with the staff. The net effect of the intersection of these realities is that the new manager becomes isolated from the problems. You cannot lead if you are not there. If people are not talking to you about the issues, they either believe that you cannot help them or they do not have confidence in your ability to lead. Either way, this is a failure of leadership.

Consider meeting members of a new group on their own turf instead of calling them into your office.

As you try to maintain an “open-door” policy, there are still people who will feel uncomfortable coming to you to share their thoughts, so it is important that you go to them. Sound out their feelings about work problems, their suggestions for improvements, and their opinions about such matters as work layout, equipment, training, and other issues that you may need to deal with once you have settled into your job.

The odds are that several staff members were also considered for your promotion. Since they were not selected, they may express jealousy or resentment. In addition to addressing former peers' resentment, you must resist their attempts to manipulate you, compromise your performance standards, or otherwise bend the rules “for old time's sake.” You will be challenged to be fair but firm and to do what's best for the entire organization and for the management team of which you are now a part. This doesn't mean you should become aloof or withdrawn or appear to let your promotion go to your head. It does mean however, that you are no longer one of the staff.

Coworkers who were not competing for the position would have undoubtedly been asked to make a recommendation to administration regarding the selection of the new supervisor. This can also create some apprehension as some of the staff may have been somewhat equivocal about their selection. It is important to address these undercurrents early and head on. One of the best ways to do this is to hold a meeting with the key personnel in the department. Express your gratitude for their confidence and endorsement and your commitment to working to improve the department. While this may seem simple, it acknowledges their support and establishes the foundation of the team. Be objective, be fair, and be focused on making the most of your new career opportunity and confirming higher management's opinion that you were indeed the best candidate for the job.

New pharmacy managers sometimes struggle with the realization that not all of the pharmacy staff has the same career expectations and professional values as they do. New managers are often promoted because they are overachievers, with high expectations for themselves. They are by definition in the alpha range of the normal distribution curve. Many struggle to manage the middle to low range employees on the bell curve. These employees do not have all the same beliefs, biases, and hopes as the manager does. They do not want to advance in their career, they do not want to work weekends to get ahead, and they do not define themselves by their career accomplishments. Within any group of employees, there will be some overachiever

employees, but many will simply be 9-to-5 employees. People who work hard, but have no desire to take work home, read journals in the evenings, attend conferences, participate on committees, and climb the corporate ladder. Those who have begun climbing the corporate ladder are sometimes surprised to look back, only to see no one following them. The thought that pharmacy is simply a paycheck to these employees is professional blasphemy to the new manager. Every pharmacy has these employees, and you have to incorporate them into the team and motivate them as well. This may sound obvious. But many new managers, flying high on the they-are-just-like-me assumption, wind up systematically alienating every one of these employees.

It is important to understand 2 important realities. The first is that not everyone is a star. There are simply some employees who will never stand out and who, as best as they try, will only be average. The second is that to some employees, pharmacy is a job and not a career. This is not to say that they do not work hard or that they are not valued members of the team. They simply see the profession as a means to an end and not an end to a means. These 2 facts can be difficult for a new pharmacy manager, whose whole professional perspective is that of going above and beyond, to appreciate.

Perhaps you've established a solid track record as a pharmacist. This is great, but most of your skills won't necessarily help you handle others. That's an eye-opener for many hotshots who're promoted into management. They figure that they're unstoppable, only to find that all their specialized training doesn't matter much when they go face to face with their staff.

If you must make an assumption, here's a safe one: your employees are all different. They can listen to the same speech and hear different messages. What frightens you might excite them, and what motivates you might bore them.

Acknowledge the diversity among your team. Don't project your image onto others. The more you can treat each individual separately, the more you'll grow to marvel at the wide range of attitudes and behaviors that your employees bring to work every day.

DIFFERENT IS BETTER

As a new leader, it is important to appreciate the subtle differences of managing a team of professionals. Pharmacists are highly trained practitioners who function daily as independent contractors, and they expect that their expertise will be valued and sought out. As their leader, not only do they not expect you to have all the answers, they don't expect you to make all of the

decisions. They see themselves as experts, and they expect you to ask for their opinion. Ironically, some of the best leaders actually know less than their employees about the inner workings of the business. The true test of your success as a leader is not what you know or do not know, it is how you relate to your employees and how you go about helping them find answers.

As a new manager, it can be difficult to embrace team diversity. A common approach of a new manager is to isolate differing team opinions and shrink the inner circle that provides feedback on new ideas. By limiting the group to like-minded leaders, it is easier to gain harmony and avoid conflict. The reality is that you want divergent opinions. Whether you realize it or not, you have blind spots. You need people who can help you avoid hazards in your blind spots.

Learning to embrace diversity is a sign of managerial maturity. There are many leadership style assessments available, all of which use different euphemisms to describe leadership characteristics. The main learning point is that you will have on your team a person who is a polar opposite to your style on the scale. Whatever it is, you need them. They complement and protect you from your own weaknesses. The very thing that frustrates you about a person in their role is often what makes them good at their job, and you need them to be good at their job. Make sure that your teams are balanced. Leadership growth is not necessarily about fixing your weaknesses, but rather building teams that supplement them.

HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

As a new manager, you must accept one hard fact: You can't do it all. Some accept this early; most arrive at this conclusion painfully. Your success depends on the contributions of your employees. If they grow and continually sharpen their skills, then they'll not only become more valuable assets but they will also perform their work with more enthusiasm, curiosity, and confidence.

Once you realize the long-term benefits of delegating, the next step is to communicate what you need your employees to do in a clear, effective manner. The way that you delegate will largely determine whether your employees truly take work off your plate or make work for you.

New managers sometimes let the rush of authority go to their heads. They suddenly feel awash with entitlement. They start to view themselves as special, different, superior. They may exempt themselves from standard rules of decorum, such as saying "please" or

"thank you." They can also develop a sense of isolation, a feeling that they need to keep information to themselves, to make all decisions in a vacuum. It is this self-imposed exile that can create the feeling of having the world on one's shoulders. While there is certainly some information that is confidential, the reality is that most decisions involve information that is not sensitive. These decisions should be made in the open, with as much transparency as possible. This is not to say that leaders should abdicate their accountability, but rather that the decision path should be participative.

New managers often have little practice giving instructions. They may wind up repeating themselves, talking down to workers, or assuming too much when explaining what has to get done. Such pitfalls can turn delegating into a disaster.

Here are 5 of the most common mistakes that rookie managers make when trying to delegate.

1. **They delegate as an afterthought.** New managers sometimes delegate as an afterthought. The delegate at the last minute when they realize they are not going to make a deadline. As a result, they delegate in haste, explain details quickly, and fail to gain consensus.
2. **They delegate rarely.** This results in employees not having the necessary confidence to execute complex assignments independently. Employees may need extra time to process instructions and gain confidence that they understand how to follow them. If you deny them the opportunity to absorb what you say and ask questions, then you increase the odds of a misfire when they take over.
3. **They do not accept failure.** New managers need to allow for failure. Employees need to know that if they fail, there is a safe place to land. Failure is a part of learning and can lead to creativity and innovation.
4. **New managers feel the need to script every detail of an assignment.** A surefire way to make employees feel dumb is to treat them like children. Don't delegate with the assumption that they're too slow or stupid to understand simple directions. If you needlessly repeat obvious points or speak in a condescending tone, you can alienate your staff. Clearly articulate the needed outcome, not the individual process points. Let employees identify the best way to get there. This allows for creativity and pride in ownership.
5. **They fail to explain the bigger picture.** Employees like to know how the assignment fits into the bigger picture. This may include an explanation of how

the assignment is part of a larger strategic initiative or why it is important for their development.

The key to giving good directions is to invest the time to communicate effectively. Treat delegating as a chance to build rapport with your employees. Chat with them about what needs to get done, how they intend to do it, and why it's important. That may mean spending 10 minutes rather than 2 minutes assigning a task, but the extra effort up front will surely pay off.

Once new managers become comfortable with delegation, they can overlook an important aspect of delegating – the need to spread the work around among the members of their team. Every worker brings strengths and weaknesses to the job. It can be easy to get in the habit of delegating to the same person on the team and not giving others a chance to develop. Sometimes it is just easier to give an assignment to someone that you know will follow through. This can lead to a perception of playing favorites or the belief that there is no opportunity for growth for others. Your “go-to” staff can burn out. It is healthy to spread assignments around to staff, even the ones who are reluctant to accept new responsibilities.

YOU CAN'T KNOW IT ALL

One of the hardest lessons for new pharmacy managers to learn is to say, “I don't know.” Pharmacy students are taught this lesson repeatedly in pharmacy school. If you don't know the answer, don't guess. Pharmacists look up answers, consult references, and formulate methodical clinical courses of action. They often report back to the team with a recommended decision and are revered for their ability to synthesize complex information and set a direction. In general, the better a clinician is at demonstrating clear leadership in these forums, the more likely they are to be promoted.

In management, it is not possible to be the expert in all areas. The effort required to achieve and maintain competency in all areas of management is beyond what one person can achieve. Pharmacy clinicians often find it difficult to maintain their clinical area of expertise after assuming a leadership role. Management is demanding and will consume all your time. You will have the ability to have an impact on larger populations of people than you did before, but it is not the same rush you had on rounds when you made a critical intervention. You will need to accept this.

Spending time interacting and listening to staff can pay off major dividends. Managers who ask for advice or opinions demonstrate wisdom by admitting that

they don't have all the answers. Moreover, your team members will be more willing to overlook your mistakes if you give them a fair audience and respect their opinions from the first day.

YOUR TEAM INCLUDES “UP”

Your new team includes upper management. You now have the responsibility for keeping upper management informed and for enlisting their support for your department. Bosses like information. One of the cardinal sins of a new manager is to blindside the boss. As a general rule of thumb, if there is a chance for the bosses to hear about it on the street, they need to hear about it from you first. This is true for both positive and negative information. If it is critical, use multiple forms of messaging. Sensitive or emotional information should not be conveyed in e-mail. Send an e-mail asking for time to talk urgently. Leave a post-it on their desk and follow-up with a text.

It is essential that each new manager understand the best way to communicate with their boss for both routine matters, as well as urgent. Some new managers fear these interactions. This can be a sign that the relationship is not a leadership partnership. Managing a boss is easier when everything goes well. But during a crisis, tensions can rise as tempers flare. For this reason, the ground rules must be clear prior to tense situations.

IT'S ON YOUR SHOULDERS NOW

There are ramifications that come with being in charge. At times, new managers can succumb to organizational bullying that can lead to lasting professional implications. This is particularly true if you are also the pharmacist in charge (PIC). New managers are often startled to learn that, at times, they will be asked to violate their professional or personal ethics. It is essential that you understand the professional obligation of a PIC as defined by the state in which you practice and that you take this role seriously.

In general, pharmacy managers report to non-pharmacists. These senior leaders are experiencing their own pressures to achieve budgets, improve efficiency, and control costs. Pharmacy is expensive. Pharmaceuticals are expensive and pharmacy labor is expensive. It is not unreasonable for pharmacy costs to represent 20% of an institution's overall expenses. As such, you are a target. Pharmacy is a source of continual conversations regarding potential savings. Some you will be invited to join, others you will not. These conversations will result in recommendations for workflow modifications that are inconsistent with professional

practice. It can be difficult for a new manager to hold the line on a demanding boss who is expecting changes that are inconsistent with pharmacy best practice or contrary to state regulations. As incredulous as it sounds, it will happen. Managers will be asked to cut staffing to levels that are unrealistic and unsafe, substitute products that are not A/B rated, check packaging runs of medications rather than individual doses, or sign off on chemotherapy medication preparation remotely.

As the PIC, the state has put you in charge. The state does not care about your organizational structure or whether you had the appropriate authority to control the medication use system in your institution. You are in charge legally. Failure to exert this state-granted authority can result in a loss of your license, a fine, and a series of other consequences. Higher ups in the organizational structure may not appreciate the extra skin you have in the game regarding organizational decisions. These situations may include:

1. Pharmacy operations occur within the hospital or institution under the institutional pharmacy license that may not report to you. This creates exposure for you. If you do not have the ability to oversee all aspects of the operation, you are vulnerable to any practices that are not compliant with any regulatory expectations. Hospital organizational structures can create situations in which service lines such as oncology or services such as investigational drugs do not report to you. Make sure you are aware of any medication-related activities happening within the organization.
2. Academic activities can also create risk. Faculty, or any pharmacist operating within the hospital, is doing so under the hospital license. Even though they may not report to you directly, you are still legally responsible for their compliance in the eyes of the state. Independent research may also create exposure if medications are being procured and dispensed without an independent license. It is essential that you perform your due diligence and ensure that research licenses are current and restricted medication lists issued by the state are being followed. Further, all faculty practicing in the organization must provide a copy of their pharmacist license for proper display.
3. All medication practices within the enterprise should be monitored. Organizations periodically implement policies assigning medication control to other disciplines such as nursing. It is important to understand that organizational policies do not super-

sede the authority given to you by the state and will not shield you from failing to perform your duty.

HOW TO MAKE THE GOAL

The best idea is not always the one that is supported. Support comes from political alliances and strategic alignment. Understanding this can help you avoid disappointment during budget season. If you want to advance an initiative, you will need to understand who in the organization will support it and who will not. These connections are not always apparent and should not be taken for granted. You may even need to campaign for your initiative.

Alignment is the art of ensuring that your initiative is headed in the same direction as a larger health system initiative. The key is to fully understand the organizational initiatives and ensure that your work will support and help execute the larger effort. This will bring your initiative into the larger conversation and attach your budget request to larger capital projects. Large organizational initiatives such as Magnet status or HIMSS Level 7 will consume available resources. If your project is linked to their success, you will get traction. This can start with simple adjustments such as relabeling your project the Magnet Pharmacy or Level 7 Pharmacy.

A common mistake is to assume that organizational initiatives are static. They change constantly. Actively and continually gathering intelligence around these shifting priorities is essential to accessing strategic windows that may only be open for a short period of time.

YOU'RE IN CHARGE

Your new responsibilities for your department and staff plus your responsibilities to upper management may seem like enough to deal with. But don't forget, you also have a responsibility to yourself. You need to protect your time and energies if you are going to be effective as a manager.

Manage Your Time

One of the biggest challenges you face as a new manager is how to manage your most precious resource—your time.

Most new managers work exceptionally long hours. They begin their work very early and conclude very late. Work finds them on weekends and on holidays. Deadlines do not adhere to business hours, and critical events do not understand the concept of being off. Yet, despite this, perceptions will circulate about the ease of life in management and the long lunches and time

spent on e-mail each day. A manager understands that arriving late in the morning often means that early meetings were held off site, but the front-line employees assume that the manager is working a short day. The manager's reality usually consists of no lunches and long days, rather than long lunches and short days. Many work hours are spent off the clock and away from employee observation.

The new demands on your time can be both overwhelming and startling. This paradigm can challenge your decisions, your sense of competency, and your sense of personal value. It can be particularly hard to keep up with e-mail, voice mail, and daily emergencies. At the end of the day, new managers wonder how they can be expected to get anything done. The concept of strategic planning and vision setting seem very distant and unachievable. To survive this, the new manager must learn to manage time effectively to prevent or minimize problems and distractions.

Organize Your Work

Many new managers almost immediately get bogged down in the amount of information that arrives at their office. Between paperwork, e-mail, and messages, it is almost impossible to keep afloat. Until they develop a system, new managers can struggle and end up so consumed that they ignore their team members.

Paper Strategies

- Set guidelines for sorting, prioritizing, and answering all the mail that you receive. Not all mail needs to be actionable. Just because a paper crosses your desk, you do not have to move it to the top of your "to do" list. You should manage your paperwork, not let it manage you.
- There may be work that you simply cannot get to. This is OK. This is why prioritizing the input is so important. Priority will likely be driven by deadlines, by the importance of the project to the core mission, or by the source of the assignment. As each new item arrives, compare its priority against other items already categorized. When an assignment is given to you, ask where it ranks in terms of other specific jobs on your plate.
- Handle each document only once if possible. Don't let correspondence stack up. When you dedicate time to working through paperwork, make a decision as to what to do with the item. Don't be afraid to delegate items, throw items away, or make a conscious decision to not work on them in favor of other items that are more important.

E-Mail Strategies

- Maximize the use of your e-mail tools. Set rules that will flag you when you when key people like your boss send an e-mail.
- Use filters. Set them to route routine e-mails into a folder where they can be read later.
- Use e-mail flags as reminders to follow-up on items by due dates.

To relieve you of the necessity of responding to all e-mails immediately, set ground rules for how people should contact you with urgent items and publicize this to your team.

Manage Your Emotional Health

New managers are often surprised at the petty behavior of professionals and the impossible situations in which they find themselves. From outside of the looking glass, decisions can seem easy. Your vision is often obscured, your time to make decisions limited, your information incomplete, and your emotions imposing. You may be asked by senior leadership to make an unpopular decision with which you disagree and to assume the party line in all communications related to it as if it were your own.

Managing people can be tough. There is no minimizing the effort, lessening the importance, or overlooking the emotional strain that this will place on you. Even seasoned pharmacy managers can find this aspect of the job exhausting. It can be tough to make and live with difficult decisions, but it is even tougher to deal with difficult employees. You will find yourself navigating power struggles, disciplinary actions, operational disputes, building and managing teams, building and repairing relationships, and feeling lonely.

There are certainly employees who will drain your enthusiasm and consume your time. The key to protecting these precious resources is to limit the amount of time that you spend with these people. The real excitement and rewards come from spending time with the people who routinely step up when needed, provide suggestions for improvement rather than just criticism, and, at times, literally carry the department on their backs.

Traditional management philosophies will tell you to spend time with each employee equally and to not play favorites. Nonsense! It is important to understand that your time in itself is a reward. It is generally very difficult for new managers to protect themselves from the time and energy drainers. Underperformers like to visit your office to recount the daily drama and make you part of their personal storyline or the subplot of issues in the workplace. It is important to realize the incremental return that you are likely to receive on

your invested time. An underperformer already has the lowest output on your staff. You might invest an hour of your time counseling an employee in hopes of getting a 10% increase in production. This may be enough to get their performance to the median or it may still be below expectation. Either way, by the very nature of their low output, this marginal improvement will represent a very small absolute change given the fact that they are already on the bottom of the employee productivity list.

In contrast, the self-selected achievers who are internally motivated do not give their extra effort every day because they expect large financial rewards or other types of monetary reimbursement. Rather, they expect their caring and dedication to be rewarded by acknowledgment, the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their future and the workplace, and respect for their knowledge and ability. Many enjoy a challenge and feel rewarded by the opportunity to work on issues that matter most. By spending an equal amount of time with the underperformers, you are essentially making the statement that all effort should be rewarded equally. This is not to say that they underperforming employee should not be addressed. They should simply be addressed through the disciplinary process by documenting their failure to meet performance standards.

Manage Your Work/Life Balance

New pharmacy managers often struggle with work/life balance. Simply defined, the amount of time they spend working begins to creep up to the point that they no longer have a personal life. This can quickly transition the positive opportunity of their new role into a miserable reality. Understanding the evolution is easy. Preventing it is hard.

New managers often feel that they must exceed expectations to justify their selection into their new role. This self-imposed pressure to achieve can drive them to work long hours and to tackle every task that is presented. This can create acrimony in their personal lives, further contributing to the stress. Juggling a busy career while raising a family can be overwhelming. The sheer energy required to manage the competing interests of work and family can lead to physical and emotional tensions. Studies have shown that work/life balance pressures can affect well-being, manifesting into health problems like migraine headaches, anxiety, and immune system suppression.

Work/life balance is as much of an important self-development skill as any clinical or leadership con-

tinuing education. Improper work/life balance will burn out a manager, resulting in illness or a job change. This does not help the pharmacy team. Pharmacy management is a marathon, not a sprint.

The following are some tips to maintaining a reasonable work/life balance:

- Set professional and personal goals and protect them. Codify them, write them down, and pursue them equally.
- Take an inventory of your activities and determine which ones are unnecessary or unimportant. Then adjust your schedule accordingly to create more time for the items that matter.
- Create firm boundaries between time devoted to work and time allotted for personal activities. Personal time should be guarded from work distractions such as the constant checking of messages or e-mails. Commit to leaving the office at a specific time and adhere to it.
- Schedule buffer time. This is protected time that you use to think and accomplish tasks. You should not spend all your time reacting to the next crisis or emergency.

Create an environment at work that helps you maintain a work/life balance. Do not assume all responsibility for the problems at work. Instill a sense of ownership in your staff, so they will share the burden with you.

AVENUES OF SUPPORT

As challenging as your new management position can be, there are avenues of support.

In personnel matters, often the perception of the new manager is that the Human Resources department is there to support them as managers. The reality is that the HR department is there to protect the organization. If this happens to place them on your side of an issue, then you will have their support. If it happens to place them on the side of the employee, you will not. It is foolish to assume they will back you unequivocally.

The amount of time necessary to invest in relationships to support the department can be smothering. Done right, it can consume significant personal time, pulling you from your family. By establishing, positive relationships with nursing, supply chain, medical staff, human resources, information technology, and others can greatly assist you in working with your staff and successfully implementing your departmental strategy.

Mentors

One of the most important oversights of new pharmacy managers is not to recognize the need for mentors. This point is often better understood by pharmacy students and residents than new managers. As noted, the skills you need to be a successful manager are different from the skills that made you successful in your previous role. Accept this and seek mentorship.

Mentoring is a personal relationship with someone who will tell you what you do not want to hear. They are not there to be your best friend. They are there to provide a true north. At any point in time, you should be providing mentorship and receiving mentorship.

Further, new managers often make poor selections for mentors. They are afraid to ask for mentorship and sacrifice quality for convenience. You would be surprised at how willing people are to mentor. Successful people enjoy sharing what they have learned. Do not artificially constrain yourself with available mentors in pharmacy only, but rather seek mentorship from a variety of sources, companies, and industries. You should have mentors for each aspect of your career or career aspirations. If your pharmacy role includes student teaching, budgeting, politics, and professional associations, seek mentors for each of these. As much as it is unrealistic for you to be an all-star in all areas, it is also unrealistic for your mentor. As a rule of thumb, you should have no less than 4 mentors at any point in your career, and these will change over time.

Networks

Accidental leadership happens everywhere. You will find examples in any size of hospital or organization. This is particularly true in hospital and community pharmacy. Most hospitals in the United States have fewer than 200 beds and, as such, they do not have any middle management in the pharmacy. Similarly, most community pharmacies are small operations that only have one management representative on site.

The reality is that accidental leaders in pharmacy are more the rule in this era of disruption and transformation than the nonaccidental, MBA-prepared leaders of a very short time ago. You are not alone.

You only need to ask around to find peers who unexpectedly transitioned from “doing a job” to “being in charge.” The support network is larger than you think.

One of the greatest blessings in pharmacy management is the network. It is a living gift available to anyone who can use it. Pharmacists share. Other professions use terms like *proprietary* and *intellectual property*. Pharmacists are a rare breed; they will work on a complicated workflow process and then readily share months of work with a stranger in another state. They will present their work at national meetings and hand out detailed explanations at poster sessions on how they solved the problem. Take advantage of this. It is unlikely that you have a single problem on your strategic agenda for which a colleague has not already worked out a solution. Develop a network, and use it.

CONCLUSION

As a manager, your success no longer depends on just your technical abilities and pharmaceutical knowledge, but rather it also depends on whether other people do their jobs well. Success comes from working through other people. For some, this sense of dependence is unsettling. It may represent a whole new approach for those who established themselves as take-charge clinical pharmacists who could solve all of their challenges independently. The best managers embrace this new challenge and build trust with each employee one day at a time, learning how to woo even the most difficult types of workers to push harder, think differently, and stage experiments that help them produce better results. They set high standards.

Although being a pharmacy manager is a tremendous challenge, it also brings unmatched rewards. Many new managers wish they had made the transition much earlier in their careers. The perception of a mundane and routine existence is quickly replaced by the reality of a vibrant, fast-paced exciting new contribution to the profession. Each day is different and challenging. The experience will change your perspective, expand your skill sets, and irrevocably divert your career. ■