

Leading Courageously In a Fast and Ever-evolving Healthcare Industry



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Assessing Talent. Smart.



Leading Courageously and Bringing Others Along

Optimizing leadership skills and building a deep pipeline of executive-ready talent is more critical than ever, given a fast-and-ever-evolving healthcare environment. With the introduction of new laws, regulations, care coordination, and payment models, new leadership styles need to be implemented to effectively lead and manage in the new paradigm. However, alongside the need for modern leadership competencies is the need to address an impending talent shortage of leader ready talent. In fact, executive turnover is expected to increase due to a high number of leaders eligible for retirement, combined with a shortage of senior leader ready talent.

To survive, and thrive, healthcare organizations must take advantage of all its institutional talent. Yet, this can only be achieved if leaders widely embrace the need to address the issue of leadership development. Healthcare organizations, like many, are slow to invest resources to identify and develop next generation talent. This is problematic in light of our research that shows a significant gap between what directors do well and what is needed to be a successful executive. This is a classic case of "what got you here, won't get you there".

Preparing Director-Level Talent

The most obvious place to leverage existing talent to fill future executive leadership vacancies is your Director-level talent. Executive roles are the next natural stepping stone for Directors, but in what ways do they need to change or develop in order to succeed in the new role? This question is vital to address given that the skills required of a Director are vastly different than the skills required of a Senior Executive.

Understanding the skill gap between Directors and Executives is the first step in aligning development activities to the required behavioral competencies of Executive roles. Development plans should help Directors build upon their strengths and pinpoint the competencies that will grow them into successful Executives.

Key competency gaps between leadership levels

XBInsight collected competency data on Directors and Executives in several healthcare industries (pharmaceutical, biotechnology, staffing and hospitals). After conducting sophisticated statistical analyses to identify competencies where Executives scored significantly higher than Directors, a vital skill gap between the two groups was uncovered. Directors are most competent in managing people and Executives in managing ideas.

Key executive level skills that need to be addressed in Director-level roles:



**Leads
Courageously**

Communication

Gains Buy-in

Inspires Others

The Leads Courageously competency, according to our data, is even more important in healthcare than in other industries, because of the amount of ambiguity and change. This competency is one that many directors do not have an opportunity to develop in roles that are typically focused on operations and quality.



Leads Courageously

The largest gap between Directors and Executives is in Leads Courageously. As a major part of their roles, Executives must make tough decisions and do so with confidence and conviction. They need to engage audiences in high-stakes meetings and be persistent in the face of adversity and dissension. They also need to be willing to share opinions and needs with clarity and conviction, even if these opinions are unpopular.

To develop Leads Courageously...

Use scenario planning to ask Directors to develop multiple plans taking several levels of risk and incorporate differing assumptions about growth. This practice allows Directors to think more like owners of their function.

Assign Directors to be executive sponsors for initiatives that extend past their functional responsibility. This develops the ability to think broadly and to provide insight and leadership.

Provide training in change leadership focusing on creating a “burning platform” and compelling vision of the future.

Engage in formal business reviews to allow Directors to share the state of their unit with peers and senior leaders. This can result in increased accountability and input into working on challenges to attain metrics.

Leading courageously is the first half of the equation. Strong leadership rests on committed followers. There are a cluster of three competencies that represent bringing others along. In executive roles, the challenge is to win the hearts and minds of the organization so that people clearly understand and embrace the organizational strategies. The following three competencies are critical to building the engagement and buy-in that fuels change.

Communication

While our data shows that Directors tend to be excellent listeners, Executives take this a step further and are balanced, articulate communicators. They speak clearly and concisely, use expressiveness to convey important points while communicating, accurately communicate complex information, and adjust their style and delivery depending on the audience.



To develop Communication...

Host and sponsor communications workshops focused on delivering formal presentations, including topics such as messaging, using stories and effective use of presentation software.

Assign Directors to evaluate cross-functional processes providing a diagnostic of strengths and improvement opportunities to provide experience formulating and articulating a point of view outside of their comfort zone.

Provide opportunities for directors to speak about their departments in less formal settings, such as “Lunch and Learns” or “Coffee Breaks” to help them develop their communication approach.

Gains Buy-In

While Directors tend to direct, Executives gain buy-in for important decisions and initiatives. To do this, they identify alternative strategies and gather input from all stakeholders, attempt to create win-win situations, listen to others, and negotiate within and beyond the organization to reach the best outcomes.



To develop Gains Buy-In...

-  Train leaders in Social Styles, or another behavioral style model, to identify ways that directors can leverage their own styles to best convince and motivate people who have different styles.
-  In strategic exploration or problem solving meetings, develop a process that allows for guilt-free brainstorming, where any idea can be discussed without repercussion or criticism. Directors often need to learn to think out loud and to influence their peers.
-  Host a hands-on, interactive training course on negotiation with an emphasis on creating a win-win situation by understanding the goals and concerns of stakeholders.

Inspires Others

Our research shows that Directors tend to be optimistic—keeping positive about the future, expressing belief in those around them and helping others see the positivity in any situation. This optimism can be refocused in a way that it helps develop the critical Executive competency of inspiring others. Executives tend to understand the organization’s strategic vision and communicate this vision in a compelling and enthusiastic way throughout the organization.



To develop Inspires Others...

-  Encourage directors to model the company’s mission and vision in their decision making. Challenge them to have an “elevator speech” about these statements.
-  Ask directors to create their own team vision statements that align to the company vision. Hold them responsible for creating a culture in their function that is motivated by service to the customer or patients who will be impacted by their work. For example, everyone is a care giver; everyone’s family member is a patient.
-  Ensure that Directors have opportunities to build their network within the company. Create regular exposure to the bigger picture of service that the organization provides.

The Bottom Line

The bottom line is what brings success to a Director is qualitatively different than what brings success at the Executive level. With this knowledge in hand, healthcare organizations must then identify which of their current Directors should begin the development process by undergoing an assessment to benchmark and uncover their specific competency gaps.

Using this vital insight, healthcare organizations can help transition the strengths of their current Directors into competencies required for Executive-level positions. This development approach allows organizations to build pathways that will result in a broader, more engaged talent pool, which ultimately results in a succession-ready organization.

