

Mentoring Through the Leadership Journey: From Novice to Expert

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The need for high performing transformational leaders in health care has never been more profound. The Institute of Medicine report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* identified the need for strong and capable leadership if the vision for transforming health care is to ever be realized.¹ The report suggests the nursing profession must produce leaders who are equipped to assume leadership positions across policy, politics, organizations, and practice. These leaders will require capacity and high level collaborative skills to design and advance contemporary models of care to deliver on the value proposition of high quality efficient and person-centered care.



The attributes and behaviors that leaders need to support the change in care delivery systems in value-driven environments are different from those in the past. It is no longer enough to create “good” leaders, we need leaders capable of envisioning the future and able to lead others to where they need to be (even if they might not want to go there). This challenges us to take responsibility for individual and professional growth of our emerging leaders through mentorship that focuses on developing high performing leaders equipped to lead the transformation of health care.

Effective mentoring relationships are developed over time and are built upon trust and mutual respect. There is a commitment on the part of the mentee and mentor for both time and presence. There is a strong commitment to the work of professional development and to the success of the individual. Over time, a fully fulfilled mentoring relationship is one that enriches both individuals personally and professionally.

This article describes how we have used the High Performance Programming Model (HPP)² for a mentoring journey from novice to expert and across stages of development and leadership situations. The work here offers the authors’ insights across our 30-year history, which began between a staff nurse aspiring to become a nurse leader and a director-level nurse leader, and continued through development and success as a system-wide nurse executive. Our journey crossed many development paths across the years, and the HPP has provided us a common language, direction, and framework for our journey.

HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMING MODEL

Nelson and Burns² have developed a framework for transforming organizations. Their HPP model illustrates 4 developmental levels: reactive, responsive, proactive, and high performing. These levels can apply to individuals, the organization as a whole, or to a specific work unit. The

model is a nesting model in which each level builds on lower ones, except for the reactive stage, which is disintegrative in nature and unable to provide a structure to support culture change.²

Application of the HPP provides a mechanism to diagnose stages of development for the mentee and serves as a tool to assist and inform the mentor in the development of specific and targeted approach to specific leadership situations. We have discovered that the roles of the mentor and mentee change and evolve at each developmental level. Nelson and Burns' framework, HPP, when used effectively in the mentoring process, can inform the mentoring process to move the individual to the next developmental level.² This model is part of a larger body of work, *Transforming Work*,³ which explores the concept of transformational change and identifies associated principles, dynamics, and technologies. This framework addresses the culture of an organization and how leaders can modify their frame of reference to support change. These levels can be applied to individuals, the organization, or to specific work units.⁴

DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS OF THE HPP

Reactive Level

The reactive organization is one of survival and operating in the past. It is characterized by affixing blame, force-fed communication, top-down leadership, and fragmented infrastructure.² A reactive state is not where a work unit begins, but rather a state of disintegration that occurs due to a leadership failure. Typically, there is little ownership by staff, and the employees are pessimistic and cynical. The staff sees the strategic direction of the organization as management's role. There is a significant mistrust of management. Strong, often toxic, staff personalities are seen and these personalities work for personal benefit through intimidation rather than collective or common organizational goals. Managers tend to employ punitive or corrective action strategies to control the behaviors or adopt a laissez-faire attitude because they are overwhelmed or unable to handle the situation.

Responsive Level

The responsive work unit is operating in the present and is focused on achieving short-term goals. Employees are typically motivated with rewards, which leadership helps to develop and implement.² This environment fosters cohesive teamwork with an ability to adapt as they identify and solve problems. In this environment, the manager still owns most issues. The employees need to understand what is expected of them, and they will operate to meet established standards by "following the rules." Managers' success is measured by the ability to accomplish well-defined, but shorter-term, established goals. This environment feels much healthier than the reactive environment, and many feel they have achieved an environment for success; however, for true transformation to occur and be sustained in today's environment, a more expansive frame of reference needs to be developed.⁵

Proactive Level

At the proactive level, the focus moves to the future. The department goals and work become more aligned to broader and strategic goals. Employees begin to feel empowered to make changes, take risks, and create change. Ownership of autonomous practice and interprofessional relationships are developed. Departments rely less on leader-imposed rules and policies. Leadership is not relied upon to solve problems but rather to build shared vision and facilitate opportunities for leadership at the staff level to emerge. It is at this level that mutual trust and respect are developed, and at this level, transformation begins to occur as people begin to realize their true potential.

High Performing

Organizations or departments that evolve to a high performing level focus on transforming their work to achieve high standards of excellence. The environments embrace change and have a high level of energy and creativity. Focus expands from advancing the organization to include advancement of the profession. Innovation is seen as a way to define and create response to a changing environment. Leaders provide ways to support, nurture, and encourage these efforts.

DEVELOPING THE LEADER

Reactive to Responsive

It is not recommended that a novice leader begin by trying to lead a reactive unit, as it can be quite daunting. Once a leader has some experience, however, successfully leading a reactive unit will develop essential leadership skills. This type of unit requires the leader to adopt various approaches depending on the situation and the follower. Thus, the mentoring activities with leaders in a reactive leadership situation or leading a reactive work unit are situational. A model, which is especially helpful when developing at this level, is the Hershey and Blanchard Situational Leadership model.⁶ This model demonstrates 4 basic styles of leadership that vary with the ability and willingness of the follower. They are commonly referred to as S1 "telling or directing," S2 "selling or coaching," S3 "guiding," and S4 "delegating." Most leaders at this level are comfortable with a S2 leadership style of coaching or selling, but a reactive unit or situation typically requires more of an S1 approach. This is not necessarily an autocratic style, but rather one that sets clear expectations and holds others accountable for meeting those expectations.

A good leader has the ability to lead situationally in any of the 4 styles, depending on the follower and the situation, which the mentor can help to develop. In a reactive work unit actions are driven to address the immediate situation and to move swiftly to creating planned activities to evolve to the next stage of development. During this development stage, the mentor/mentee activities are targeted around building confidence and competence to operate as situational leaders and recognizing the appropriate leadership style for a given situation.

The work of the mentor is to help the leader clearly understand the situation they are trying to influence and how to adjust behavior in response to the situation. The mentor's ability to

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