

Developing Your 360-Degree Leadership Potential

Nupur Verma, MD^a, Tan-Lucien Mohammed, MD^a, Puneet Bhargava, MD, FSAR^b

Abstract

Radiologists serve in leadership roles throughout their career, making leadership education an integral part of their development. A maxim of leadership style is summarized by 360-Degree Leadership, which highlights the ability of a leader to lead from any position within the organization while relying on core characteristics to build confidence from within their team. The qualities of leadership discussed can be learned and applied by radiologists at any level. These traits can form a foundation for the leader when faced with unfavorable events, which themselves allow the leader an opportunity to build trust.

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THE 360-DEGREE APPROACH

Radiologists may serve as leaders on many levels—within their practice, among each other, and as consultants to providers outside of radiology, as well as to fellows, residents, or medical students. Leadership may come with either formal or informal recognition, for example with a title such as section chief, vice chair, or chairperson, or when taking charge of a problem. 360-Degree Leadership involves identifying yourself as a leader who simultaneously influences people at every level of the organization, namely those at the same level, those whom we formally supervise, and also those whom we report to (“leading up” within an organization). The concept of leading from the middle of an organization is often poorly understood in radiology and there is a tendency to overestimate the influence of a formal leadership title [1]. Leadership training and the study of the 360-Degree Leader has been commonplace in business

management, with the acceptance that some traits of leadership are learned behaviors [2]. Although the opportunities or ability to achieve full leadership potential are not possible for each radiologist, the core leadership qualities of the 360-Degree Leader may be applied by anyone, at any career level, to better manage their team, stay focused on vision, and navigate difficult situations.

SELFLESSNESS

Scenario: John, a professor and section chief, has recently hired Jane to replace a retiring colleague. John has been asked to develop new magnetic resonance protocols for a recently acquired site. John identifies that the vision of this section is to provide the most knowledgeable care and service to patients and referring providers. He requests that joint decisions be made with clinical providers most likely to request the imaging examinations, and given Jane's recent training experience, she leads the committee. John lauds Jane's experience and foresight, over his, to both the clinical providers and chairman, and he sincerely supports his junior faculty's decisions.

Progressing toward being a 360-Degree Leader requires learned selflessness. Great leaders lift the organization and are willing to expense their own personal interest and acknowledgment—driven foremost by their

^aDepartment of Radiology, College of Medicine, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

^bDepartment of Radiology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. Corresponding author and reprints: Nupur Verma, MD, Assistant Professor, Department of Radiology, College of Medicine, University of Florida, Post Office Box 100374, Gainesville, FL 32610-0374; e-mail: vermnun@radiology.ufl.edu.

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desire to best fulfill the organization's vision [1,2]. In radiology, for example, a good leader values building teams to achieve the departmental goals of service, patient safety, research, and education above personal career achievement, attainment of titles, or direct financial compensation. This conscious discernment requires the leader to be free of insecurity and be able to manage his or her ego.

An effective radiology leader must also be selfless in credit and utilize achievements as an opportunity to provide recognition to energize and uplift team members. Formal acknowledgment from leaders above yourself or directly from the organization, such as awards from the hospital or school of medicine, or recognition by patients, should be redirected toward the team members, particularly those who may be new in experience or lower in rank. The ability to redirect this credit from yourself, as a leader, calls on humility, team spirit, and inclusiveness of the leader [1].

An effective tactic to demonstrate selflessness is to personally genuinely acknowledge team contributions from those you lead, often and publicly. Taking a few moments to do this, for example at the start of quarterly or faculty meetings, conveys the leader's appreciation and value for those they are leading to the individuals as well as their colleagues. Previous studies have shown some of the best tactics to motivate individual members of a team are these nontangible rewards, which need not be grandiose to be impactful [3,4]. A 360-Degree Leader recognizes that by selflessly redirecting opportunities for radiology administrative roles to those with interest in radiology business, or interdepartmental academic collaborations for newer imaging techniques, and by providing recognition, the leader can most effectively encourage his or her radiology team to achieve the organization's needs [4].

TRUST, AND EMPOWERING THE TEAM

Scenario: A bright junior resident who is a physician-scientist with dual doctoral degrees (MD, PhD) is the lead author on a project with more senior colleagues. The lead author feels he knows "the right way to conduct this original study from my experience," but consciously redirects his effort toward allowing other members of his research team to learn and contribute. This takes extra time and effort on his part, but he recognizes that as a leader he is building trust, making his co-authors feel empowered, and having them see his

own skills and strengths in a positive and helpful light rather than with a competitive perspective.

A 360-Degree Leader should recognize, without prejudice, that individuals they lead may be more talented and experienced than themselves. The 360-Degree Leader embraces this actuality and has learned to trust the team members to perform, which empowers individuals to provide their best contribution. Demonstrating this security is particularly important for the radiology leader, where the team members are highly skilled and have had considerable training. This concept of trust in the ability of those you lead can be exceedingly challenging to implement, as for the majority of their education and training radiologists have endeavored to succeed as individuals, and have learned to work diligently toward clearly defined goals, rather than striving toward visions that are more expansive. Concepts that demonstrate trust, such as avoiding micromanagement and enabling autonomy, can be initially disenchanted and takes constraint and practice. The highest value in return is when team members identify the leader's confidence in them and this empowers them to perform at their best [5]. This feeling of worth, autonomy, and call to duty can be invigorating and leads the individual team members to mirror the self-assurance of the leader [6]. The entrusted team members also benefit from establishing camaraderie, which has lasting effects in motivating members by adding a feeling of belonging and equality and pays dividends in employee retention and overall job satisfaction [5,6]. For example, an abdominal imaging chief who trusts his proceduralists to make the final purchasing decision for a new biopsy device helps build the trust of the team in his or her leadership, allows a healthy internal debate regarding advantages and disadvantages of each device under consideration, and helps overall job satisfaction.

Trust also fosters an environment that allows team members to come forward with ideas and suggestions, including oppositional views to those of the leader, which may benefit the organization. The 360-Degree Leader embraces that dissent often coexists with consent in even the most effective team, and by demonstrating consistent trust the effective 360-Degree Leader can assuage the impact of dissent by welcoming counter-point discussion without repercussion. This encourages buy-in by the team by demonstrating shared agreement on decisions, while conversely being effective in identifying potential pitfalls. For example, in the above vignette, a junior

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