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Are Your Future Leaders Already on Your Staff?

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Editor's Note: For additional tools and resources related to this topic, visit the **BSM Café** (www.bsmcafe.com).

With staff recruitment and retention demanding so much time, funding, and effort, it makes sense to take a long and hard look at the people you already employ to see if you can identify employees to promote who already have proven themselves. When searching for leaders or promotion-worthy members of your staff, focus on employees who possess some or all of the following traits and behaviors.

A desire to learn: Look for employees who willingly have absorbed everything thrown their way during the course of their employment. A strong desire to learn and the ability to retain knowledge says a lot about a person's basic personality and is a good indication of future growth potential, both personally and professionally.

Individual initiative: Has this person ever exceeded what was asked of him or her? Has this person ever surprised you (in a positive way) with the end result of a project or assignment? Does this person take the time to analyze and review projects or assignments and ask pertinent questions? If so, this person likely will incorporate initiative into any leadership role.

Ability to multitask: The ability to successfully multitask or juggle multiple assignments is essential to thriving in today's dynamic workplace. To accurately judge a person's ability to multitask and still meet deadlines, it is important to know whether or not this person's plate is full. It is not fair to compare employees who are actually juggling an extraordinary number of assignments with someone who may still have capacity while working on one or a very limited number of projects.

A deadline orientation: Employees who can stay focused on finishing assignments or projects within expressed and established timelines are worth their weight in gold. It is a plus if this person can recognize when a deadline becomes unrealistic or unattainable and is able to come forward and communicate this fact to those in need-to-know positions.

A demonstrated skill set: Take the time to develop a list of the individual skills possessed by all of your employees. Each person has a particular set of talents that might lend itself well to what is needed in your new leadership roles/positions.

Evident enthusiasm: While not all leaders are type-A personalities, they will need an increased level of effort and energy to get the job done. They will need a certain amount of internal motivation in order to lead and inspire others in the practice.

Strong communication skills: The ability to communicate effectively in both directions—up and down the organizational chart—is an essential leadership skill. While this person may not yet have advanced management communication skills, it is reasonable to project that a person who already communicates well with coworkers will be able to develop this skill further.

Longevity: There is something to be said about loyalty in a work setting. The long-term employee often has valuable insights and knowledge about the practice and can be an important asset, provided he or she fits the new job requirements. Of course, some long-time employees are set in their ways and do not want to change positions. However, do not just discard long-time employees out of hand; give them a serious look when it comes to internal promotions. They may blossom with renewed professional energy and enthusiasm or may be looking for new challenges and an opportunity to "rise to the occasion."

A team-oriented attitude: The fact that team players make good leaders is pretty obvious. Unfortunately, individual "stars" often receive promotions over those who put the team first (and share most of any individually earned glory). Look for employees who enjoy the company of others and the challenges and opportunities offered through team efforts.

Match Game

The leaders you need to grow your practice might already be on your team. You just need to take a moment to focus on matching what you need with the skills, abilities, traits, and behaviors possessed by your current team members.



About the author: Allan Walker is director of publication services for BSM Consulting, an internationally recognized health care consulting firm headquartered in Incline Village, Nevada and Scottsdale, Arizona. For more information about BSM Consulting or content/resources discussed in this article, please visit the **BSM Café** at www.BSMCafe.com.



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