

WHAT IS YOUR SCALE OF VALUES?

Understanding the importance of values-based leadership in the medical business.

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In order to run successful medical practices, today's ophthalmologists must engage in many activities that blur the lines between their profession as a physician who treats and cures people's eye dis-

eases and the colorful landscape of business management. Ideally, the center of a physician's attention should be a well-balanced combination of both; however, trying to perfect both of these worlds is quite the challenge. Luckily, the four principles of values-based leadership can significantly enhance one's enthusiasm in this quest.

Mastering the ability to lead other people is one of the biggest challenges in the business world; yet a good leader is the heart of every successful corporation. In order to be able to lead others, one needs to be more than an alpha-type personality. It is not enough just to be called *the boss*. Good leadership is target-oriented and flexible but, nevertheless, human. Most important, it is authentic.

ROOTED IN WHO YOU ARE

These personal values can support or promote a company's goals, and their absence can ruin them. Values can guide leaders to make right or wrong decisions when they get down to business.

Becoming the best kind of leader is not about emulating a role model or a historic figure. Rather, leadership must be rooted in who you are and what matters most to you. When you truly know your values and what you stand for, it is much easier to know what to do in a given situation. It always comes down to doing the right thing and doing the best you can.

This logic may sound simple, but it is hardly simplistic. Doing the right thing is a lifelong challenge for everyone. Fortunately, one of us (HMK) has designed guiding principles that can help (see *Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership*).

VALUES ARE VALUABLE

The medical business can be a rough sea to navigate. Just as in any other industry, there is pressure, there are large and

small fish to be caught, there are opportunities you may take or lose, and there is a plethora of success and failure. Doctors can have a reputation for being arrogant and pretentious—seeing themselves as demigods in white and showing off in front of their patients and their staffs. Many of us have witnessed a great lack of service orientation among practitioners in our field. Because of this, physicians tend to fail in a twofold manner: (1) by not valuing their employees and (2) by not valuing their patients.

When you try to stick to the four principles of values-based leadership whenever and wherever you can, you may even start to see those you work with and your patients as part of your higher family. When you read closely enough through the four guiding principles, you will notice that this advice is equally appropriate as you raise children: You want to educate them not for the purpose of selfish pride, but to give them the optimum set of skills in order to manage their missions in life successfully.

Values are valuable! This is true whether you are working on your personality, business strategies, or even family matters.

TRUE BTFs

Everyone should have a BFF—a *best friend forever*—who backs your efforts at being human by supporting and criticizing

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AT A GLANCE

- Good leadership is target-oriented, flexible, human, and, most important, authentic.
- Leadership must be rooted in who you are and what matters most to you.
- A strong values-based leader always puts ego aside and keeps a global view of the feelings of the people who work in the company.
- Make sure you show your staff respect, and consider rewarding accomplishments to keep motivation high.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP¹



NO. 1: SELF-REFLECTION

You must have the ability to identify and reflect on what you stand for, what your values are, and what matters most to you. To be a values-based leader, you must be willing to look within yourself through regular self-reflection and strive for greater self-awareness. After all, if you are not self-reflective, how can you truly know yourself? If you do not know yourself, how can you lead yourself? If you cannot lead yourself, how can you lead others?

NO. 2: BALANCE

Balance is the ability to see situations from multiple perspectives and differing viewpoints to gain a fuller understanding. Balance means that you consider all sides and opinions with an open mind. As a values-based leader, you seek to understand before you seek to be understood. Rather than focusing on the need to be right, you focus on doing the right thing.



NO. 3: TRUE SELF-CONFIDENCE

True self-confidence means accepting yourself as you are. You recognize your strengths and your weaknesses and strive for continual improvement. With true self-confidence you know that there will always be people who are more gifted, accomplished, and successful than you. Despite this, you are OK with who you are because you know you are a work in progress, and you can always get better.

NO. 4: GENUINE HUMILITY

This means you never forget who you are and where you came from. Genuine humility helps you keep life in perspective, particularly as you experience success in your career. Additionally, it helps you value each person you encounter and treat everyone respectfully.



1. Kraemer HMJ. *From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 2011.

“If you think you are already great, your ideas are great, and your motivation is great, add to that combination a great team ... and enjoy your ride down the winning lane.



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in a positive manner. The BFF is a fundamental asset throughout life and should be given lots of credit; naturally, this credit should be equally generous from both sides of the friendship.

Honestly, however, it is not easy to find such a person. The superlative, *best*, is rare when it comes to friendship. This is true not only in interpersonal relationships, but also in business ties.

No man is an island, and so no one is alone as a leader. Quite the contrary; we surround ourselves with employees, consultants, and other helpers to make the best of our business. We build teams around us, and—abracadabra—only then do we become leaders. At this point, it is beneficial to remind yourself of one of Kraemer's top leadership priorities: Your key to success is the people you work with.

Therefore, you need to look for your BTF—your *best team forever*—which will possess BFF-like features. This acronym can help you to remember what is most important for good leadership when it comes to working together with your very own team.

In a BTF, every person knows and feels that what he or she does truly matters for the business and, thus, fully commits to giving his or her best effort. Everyone's input is valued, and that value is reflected; everyone's part in the team weighs the same amount in importance.

You may be an ace at what you do, and you may have piled up impressive knowledge about your area of expertise. Well done, great job; there is nothing wrong with this. Nevertheless, there are always things that sound like a foreign language to you—because you do not deal with them on a daily basis. Yet, these may be things that are essential for your business to become as successful as you already are as an expert.

If you are clever, you make a natural choice: You surround yourself with a BTF—people who know what you do not—and you accept the fact that you do not know all. A strong

values-based leader always puts ego aside and keeps a global view of the feelings of the people who work in the company. The values-based leader speaks about “we,” “us,” and “our” rather than “I,” “me,” and “mine.” The values-based leader spends a great share of his or her time listening instead of chanting slogans. He or she gives guidance and not orders, elaborates clear goals, and creates paths of alignment among employees. It may sound old-fashioned, but leading people also implies serving them and taking good care of the human capital that you have hired—your BTF.

WHAT DO I VALUE?

You must try to see clearly when it comes to your own values. Ask yourself these questions: What is it that I value most in my own business? Is it the creation of more income? A better reputation? Seeing my staff happy and content with our achievements?

This is a moment of truth for many managers, and it should be handled with care. There is no way your values will not affect your team. At the end of the day, your values are the key performance indicators that motivate your employees to pull out all the stops to make your story a successful one, together with you.

Make sure you show your staff respect. Consider rewarding accomplishments to keep motivation high. Money is clearly a motivator, but there are many other ways to align your BTF with your cause, including recognition and extra vacation time. People do not remain with an employer who does not respect them. An open, honest, continuous, and transparent dialogue is not simply a good thing; it is a moral responsibility every executive should be aware of. Do not be afraid of creativity.

We can each choose what kind of leader we want to become, and, by making the right choices, we can influence not only the future of our business but also our personal future. We can even mold the business world we live in to fit our vision, and we can help recover sight of our blind spots, just as we help our patients regain their healthy vision.

If you think you are already great, your ideas are great, and your motivation is great, add to that combination a great team—a BTF—and enjoy your ride down the winning lane. You are on your way to becoming a values-based leader. ■

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