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FROM THE EDITOR

You Can and Should Be a Leader – Even if You Aren't a Natural

With a few basic skills, you can expand your influence and make your organization a better place to work.

Physicians are by design expected to be leaders. On the most basic level, a family physician leads the delivery of care in a medical assistant-physician team. On a more complex level, a family physician may run a large health care organization. Often, the larger the organization we find ourselves in, the less we may feel like leaders and the more we may feel like worker bees.

In this issue, we present an article by John P. Franko, MD, titled “How to Lead Up in Your Organization” (page 6), which describes how employed physicians in particular can enhance their leadership skills so their voices can be heard. However, the article is a worthwhile read for everyone because its lessons are broadly applicable.

A key insight is that leadership is teachable. Although some folks may be “natural born leaders,” the rest of us can improve our leadership skills if we focus on the right things and practice them. Franko lists seven areas to work on: cultivating emotional intelligence, understanding the power and politics at play, choosing being effective over being right, becoming more intentional, helping your supervisor, disagreeing without being disagreeable, and not expecting credit all the time.

Of these areas, emotional intelligence is probably the most important. Franko doesn't go into lengthy detail about it, but he offers some background and tips and references *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*.¹ This book is an easy read and essentially a self-help resource for increasing your emotional intelligence. It outlines four critical skills – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management – and provides numerous strategies in each area to improve your competence. (Look for an article on emotional intelligence in the January/February issue of *FPM*.)

Why should you improve your leadership skills? First, it can prevent you from feeling powerless in your organization. Second, it can help you make a positive contribution to how your organization is run. Third, it can help you counteract bad leadership where it exists. **FPM**



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1. Bradberry T, Greaves J. *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. San Diego: TalentSmart; 2009.