

Leadership

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As new graduates move from isolation to participation, they become part of the power structure, working alongside with administrators and other healthcare providers rather than under them. There are several reasons to cultivate leadership roles. One is to enhance the professional status of our profession. Other key elements in leadership are personal assessment, a supportive work environment, diverse strategies for influencing others, and planning for action.

Personal assessment is important because each individual brings a unique combination of experiences, skills, and values to the leadership role. A supportive work environment plays a crucial role in leadership, which develops when a facility places a high focus on professional development, collegiality, autonomy, and open communication. Staff development can help laboratory professionals identify and develop the diverse strategies that will work best for them. With these preconditions in place, new graduates will be prepared to focus on a workable plan of action. On the other hand, offering laboratorians increased responsibility can have far reaching ramifications. Issues of structure, role of clarity and violation of norms create difficulties in implementing these new roles.

Throughout this process, the lab administrator's role is critical. Administrators serve as primary role models, teaching leadership through actions as well as words. They support the committed, encourage the reluctant, and pave the way by finding resources and removing barriers. They must function as one among equals, and the skills of team building, group process, and collaboration become more important than control and coordination. Administrators must also develop highly refined conflict management skills to keep the laboratory functioning smoothly.

Well, how should administrators and new graduates work out that kind of relationship? Administrators are usually concerned with protecting certain prerogatives, such as exercising the ability to make key decisions, representing the laboratory to the community, and knowing what activities were going on in the laboratory. For their part, graduates are concerned with maintaining relationships with peers, protecting their responsibility for working, and avoiding conflict with higher management. Both should utilize strategies to shape the relationship. For example, administrators can compliment employees, solicit their advice, and suggest tasks. On the other side, employees can use ways to assert their ideas without creating conflict. Overtime, however, the relationship should evolve from an emphasis on self-interest and interpersonal communication to symbiosis and a focus on the tasks to be accomplished. Resolving tensions and developing trust are essential first steps in developing productive partnership. A workplace should help both sides cultivate the skills needed for this task. Creating such a healthy relationship within the laboratory should maintain qualified laboratory practitioners in the profession

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