

# Common Leadership Problems

## Undermine Successful Day-to-Day Operations

By **Margie Satinsky, M.B.A.**

This article is the first of two on leadership coaching for health care providers. It focuses on common leadership problems. The second article, focusing on ways to enhance leadership skills, will appear in the issue of *The Triangle Physician*.

During the past 14 years we've helped many physicians in all specialties start new practices or improve their existing ones. We focus on the nuts and bolts of running a practice: developing the right team of professionals; financial management including but not limited to revenue cycle management; selecting and implementing software; compliance; marketing (including Website content); practice operations; and human resources.

If there's one lesson we've learned, it's that no aspect of running a medical practice flourishes or thrives without strong physician leadership. A physician's ability to articulate his/her vision for the future, to make good decisions and to build and maintain respectful professional relationships carry a great deal of weight in determining the outcome of any business project. A good physician leader creates a healthy working environment and culture that stimulates personal and professional growth for everyone in the practice.

Many of the leadership problems we've observed are common regardless of specialty. We'll identify some of them and then examine ways in which physicians in leadership positions can avoid such problems and/or acknowledge/address them when they arise.

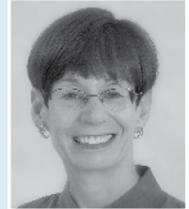
**High Drama:** When practices are starting from scratch or undergoing a major change (e.g. new software system), lack of knowledge and/or fear of the unknown may result in high drama. Angry temper tantrums, finger pointing and name-calling and impatience with internal workforce members and/or external vendors erupt. High drama doesn't solve problems; it creates them. More often than not, it discourages people from working collaboratively to focus on the problems at hand and find practical solutions.

**Lack of Flexibility:** In a business environment, there's rarely one way to address and resolve a problem. Unwillingness to objectively explore multiple options often rules out the approach that makes the most sense from both substantive and financial perspectives.

**Rigid Adherence to Timelines:** Many physicians who want to open a new practice or make a major change insist on a deadline of yesterday. Just because you can't wait to leave your current situation and open your own shop or just because you need to make a major and often costly change in practice operations doesn't guarantee the world will adhere to your timetable.

Architects, builders, landlords, managed-care companies, software vendors and

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professionals who leave one position and accept a job offer each have unique processes. Delays are common and not necessarily deliberate. Impatience, anger and disrespect don't expedite progress and are likely to cause even more delays.

**Inattention to Good Communications:**

Two communications issues we repeatedly experience are: (1) failure to clarify expectations and provide helpful feedback; and (2) failure to check email/phone/text messages on a timely basis in order to keep a complicated process moving. Most business projects are team efforts that require timely input from multiple people. If one person drops the ball, the project stalls, deadlines are missed and work runs over budget.