

McNally & Associates

LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS

Coaching a New Director

Coaching is a leadership development strategy that has the power to enhance individual and organizational performance, support succession planning and help health care leaders meet professional and personal goals. One of my clients is a VP at a community medical center and during a recent coaching session he asked for some assistance on coaching his new Director who manages an ancillary department. The director has strong financial and program development skills, but is struggling with building physician relationships. The CEO received some complaints and wants the problem fixed. Here are some of the ideas we discussed.

The first step is to give the director specific feedback. Observe him interacting with physicians in medical staff meetings and offer your candid observations. Initiate a conversation to assess his level of awareness of the problem and his perception of what's getting in the way. Ask him to talk about he is currently working on physician relations. Help him to identify how his financial and program development skills can be transferable to building relationships.

Next, clearly state your expectations about his role in fostering good physician relations and what success would like. Then, assess his confidence and competence in developing and maintaining physician relationships and support him to develop needed competencies. Determine where the gaps are and brainstorm some ways to develop the competencies. Role model the relationship competencies you're looking for in working with physicians. Spend time discussing how relationships have been developed in other aspects of the job. List the skills that he used to cultivate other relationships. Use these same lessons or concepts to explore which strategies can be applied to developing the relationships with the physicians.

After the director's awareness is heightened about the improvement opportunity, develop a concrete action plan. Work with him to strategize an approach for building relationships with the "top 5" physicians to start. Help him think about each physician's needs and how to tailor an approach. Look for opportunities to build on his ideas and offer new perspectives. Suggest that he consult with other managers that are well regarded in working with physicians. Encourage him to keep notes about his interactions with physicians and where he experiences barriers to effective communication. When he demonstrates progress, be sure to appreciate his efforts. Close the feedback loop by asking the physicians for feedback about the director. Many times perceptions take longer to change when "catching up to reality" so be patient!

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