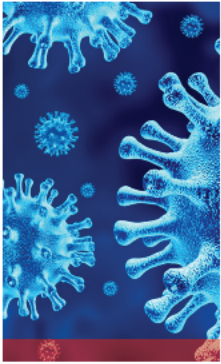


COVID-19: A Time for Servant Leadership



INTELLIGENCE THAT WORKS

COVID-19 has challenged leaders across the US in ways they had never anticipated. Success in this environment requires leaders to modify daily routines and behaviors proactively. During a recent **BRG | Prism Nurse Executive Forum**, panelists identified three servant leadership behaviors—or an intent for leadership to focus on actions to serve—as paramount to success: placing people first, remaining calm and decisive, and focusing on purpose.

Placing people first is vital to an organization during a crisis. During the forum, Kim Richard, MHA, MSN, RN, a chief nursing officer, and Gara Edelstein, MSN, RN, NE-BC, a system chief nursing officer, both with multiorganizational health systems in the Northeast that have been heavily impacted by the pandemic, shared the importance of this principle. These two leaders actively demonstrated perseverance by being visible and accessible to their workforces and displaying empathy, active listening, and appreciation for their staffs. When leaders are visible, acknowledge perspective, give support, and engage staff in decision-making where appropriate, they foster staff engagement, trust, and organizational loyalty.

The second crucial behavior for leaders is to demonstrate courage by remaining calm, decisive, and confident, while understanding that fear is a normal response to a crisis. Leveraging team strengths and transparent communication will instill courage and hope in your staff. A multifaceted communication approach supported by transparency and active listening will lead to a more confident and productive workforce. Collaboration and empowerment will benefit staff and their patients and help yield desired organizational outcomes.

The third behavior leaders should embrace is to focus on purpose. A shared mission, vision, and values encompassing all levels of the organization will encourage performance that is efficient, coordinated, and effective and, during times of uncertainty, will provide direction and stability. Purpose-focused leadership is fundamental to manage a crisis appropriately, decrease negative impact, and identify unnecessary services and new opportunities.

Leaders will be defined by their actions and commitment to their organizations' missions, visions, and values during COVID-19. It will be critical to an organization's success to adopt a servant leadership approach that places people first; exhibits calm, confident decision-making; and upholds a shared commitment to the organization's purpose.

SUSAN SIMS, BSN, RN
Associate Director
BRG | Prism Healthcare

TRACEY SZEWCZYK, MBA, BSN, RN, CEN
Managing Consultant
BRG | Prism Healthcare

KIM VANCE, MSN, RN, NE-BC
Associate Director
BRG | Prism Healthcare

TRACY LOOPE
Associate Director
BRG | Prism Healthcare

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