

WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

leadership

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES
WITH THE TOP EXECUTIVES IN HEALTH CARE

A FURST GROUP PUBLICATION

*“Leaders
are visionaries
with a poorly
developed sense
of fear and no
concept of the odds
against them.”*

— ROBERT JARVIK, M.D.

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what does leadership look like?



As our nation navigates the uncertain future of health care, one of our greatest needs will be for exceptional health care leaders. It is more than fortuitous, then, that these pages contain the stories and insights of some of the best and brightest in the country.

Furst Group is proud to sponsor the Top 25 Minority Executives in Healthcare for *Modern Healthcare* magazine, a biennial awards program. As part of our commitment, we wanted to probe a little deeper, to allow these leaders to share the philosophies and strategies that have made their organizations successful. And we also wanted to let them delve into some of the thornier areas around diversity, such as retention. Many organizations rightly want to recruit and attract diverse executives, but to truly maximize their talents, more work needs to be done in professional development.

The health care industry has made great strides in the area of diversity, but we still have a long way to go. To provide the very best care to patients and families, leaders must reflect the communities they serve. Great organizations are led by teams of people that are rich in diverse experiences, culture and thought. Furst Group is committed to the goal of our health care leaders bringing this richness of diversity.

WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

At its core, what is health care really about? Quite basically, it is simply about people helping people. It is about people serving their fellow men and women and their families at their most vulnerable moments.

What a responsibility that is! And yet, what a privilege it is, too. If done with integrity and compassion, a bond is formed and a trust gained that can last a lifetime. A community is born.

There are times when traditions and cultural bias prevent individuals from reaching their full potential. We honor each of these leaders because they have demonstrated the ability to break through these barriers and become inspirational leaders.

We live in a time that gives us many reasons to run and hide, to give up in the face of adversity. These executives have chosen, however, to do just the opposite. They have chosen to lead!

They are making a real difference. All of us wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to them for all they do.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Clarke'.

Bob Clarke

CEO, Furst Group



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sherrie Barch'.

Sherrie Barch

President, Furst Group

Leadership begins with career development

Anthony A. Armada is a longtime believer that professional development is a critical factor in attracting and retaining diverse executives. In fact, he says, it's been crucial to his own career.

"I always try to align myself in an organization that believes in development," he said. "I've been fortunate to have coaches and mentors throughout my career who have contributed to my personal development. They have helped my career progression – what I've needed to do in order to reach my aspirations and goals."

He's proud of the fact that so many of his own protégés from his time at Henry Ford Hospital and Health Network in Detroit have been promoted. But his hope is to make diversifying the C-suite a priority nationwide and, with former colleague Marilyn F. Hubbard, he issued a carefully researched paper to that end in the Spring 2010 issue of *Frontiers of Health Services Management* ("Diversity in Healthcare: Time to Get Real!").

"I think some of the more stable organizations in health care have formalized leadership development programs and/or succession planning," said Armada, the 2010 Chairman of the Board of the Institute for Diversity in Health Management and the Immediate Past Chairman of the Asian Health Care Leaders Association. "I believe it's very important for organizations to create coaching or mentoring relationships for young executives with more seasoned professionals early in their careers."

The support he received in that regard was crucial, he said.

"If not for the mentoring relationships, I know personally I would not be in the position I'm in."



Anthony A. Armada

President, Advocate Lutheran General Hospital and Advocate Lutheran General Children's Hospital, Park Ridge, Ill.

Leadership is courageous

If Paula Autry feels more expectations now that she has graced the cover of *Modern Healthcare* magazine, she doesn't show it. Her own demands on her performance are high, she says, and she is well aware that role models are necessary in an industry that is a work in progress when it comes to diversity.

"I haven't looked at it as a burden," she said. "I've come to appreciate that there are not a lot of minority role models in health care, and it's fine to applaud folks who are not only advancing in their careers but giving back to the community."

"In African-American culture, especially, there is a high expectation that, once you reach certain levels of leadership, you're to give back and be visible in the community," she said. "Some of those expectations I put on myself: 'To whom much is given, much is required.'"

If anything, she says she finds flexibility in her position as one of the few African-American female leaders of a health care organization. She has been able to embrace the uniqueness of her background and benefit from the mentoring of diverse advisors to develop her own leadership style.

"My parents raised us to focus on preparation and education," she said. "If you can do that, then race and gender don't have to be an issue."

Qualities like exceeding expectations and being unafraid to take risks were partially inspired by her sister, who became paralyzed as a result of neurofibromatosis surgery but went on to live independently and support herself financially before a medical error ended her life.

The experience reinforced her commitment to patient safety. Today, she says, it is a reminder of the need to keep her workforce deeply engaged to "drive high-quality performance."



Paula R. Autry

President and COO, Mount Carmel East Hospital, Columbus, Ohio

Leadership is about passion

As the leader of New York City's public hospitals, Alan Aviles is as thoughtful as one might expect from his legal background, and as direct as the city he serves. Asked about how the health care industry is doing in terms of diverse leadership, he pulls no punches:

"I still go to major conferences or even professional association meetings where the senior-most leadership of our industry is present in abundance. And the number of minorities in those groups is paltry. We have a long way to go."

Aviles, a Bronx native, has covered a lot of ground in his own career. He was the first member of his family to go to college, and his legal career led him to become an assistant attorney general before eventually being named general counsel for New York's hospital system.

"My career has perhaps not been as mainstream as some in terms of the way it has unfolded," he said. "I have largely just tried to always do something I felt passionate about and do it to the best of my ability. I have been fortunate that, at various points, opportunities presented themselves that made sense to me."

At HHC, he's worked to make the organization a national leader in informatics and disease management. He currently is working to ensure more opportunities for diverse leaders through succession planning. "As you rise to more senior positions, it's important to assure that, whatever trajectory you've set for the organization, the leadership that follows will build on that."



Alan Aviles

*President and CEO,
New York City Health
and Hospitals Corp.*

Leadership means everyone

If there is a statistic that John Bluford is proudest of from his tenure at Truman Medical Centers, it might be the fact that employee turnover has declined 64 percent during his time at the helm. As the chair-elect of the American Hospital Association, with its 5,000 institutional members, he has strong opinions about empowering workers at every level of the organization.

"Quite frankly, the people on the front lines really can tell you what will work more sustainably than the people in the C-suites, if they're allowed to do so," he said. "Leadership doesn't have to have a title associated with it. The significant influencers are independent of title or role. The key is to find out who those people are."

One way Bluford and his team did that was by creating a "Corporate Academy" for employees and their families, offering everything from GED classes to masters-level courses. He also increased entry-level pay, which moved the medical centers from the 65th percentile to the 35th in that category.

"Retention," he said, "is at least as important as recruitment."

Truman is both a major academic teaching hospital as well as an urban trauma center, which allows Bluford to trade on skills he first developed as the night administrator at Chicago's Cook County Hospital. But he has no interest in looking back, and stresses the need for health care organizations to adjust quickly to societal change.

"When I first came here in 1999, 12 percent of the babies here had Hispanic surnames. It's 20-25 percent today. We need to change as fast as the demographics are changing."



John W. Bluford, III

*President and CEO,
Truman Medical Centers,
Kansas City, Mo.*

Leadership is about commitment

After years as a nurse and an executive at hospitals and academic medical centers around the country, Ruth Brinkley worked as a consultant for a large health care firm. “I learned a tremendous amount; however, it wasn’t my calling,” she said.

While it was not her calling, she did not immediately leave. Altogether, she spent five years in the position, then another three years in a similar role at Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI). Those two jobs allowed her to soak up information that would help her once she became a CEO.

Brinkley’s journey to Tucson is a long way from her roots in rural, southeast Georgia, where she grew up without health insurance. She saw many family members and friends become ill and die or become disabled because they did not have access to prevention, care and treatment. That is one reason why she identifies with the mission of Catholic health care and the Sisters who founded so many hospitals.

“These women were visionaries. They were courageous and resourceful. One of the things that makes a huge difference to me is that I am a part of that tradition,” Brinkley said.

She encourages health care professionals to identify and articulate their goals – and recommends senior leaders pay attention.

“Executives need to ask mid-career or early-career professionals about their passion and their visions for their careers. And if you’re not asked, let someone know. That is very powerful, and most executives will take the time to listen to, mentor and coach someone who has that passion for leading the delivery of health care.”



Ruth W. Brinkley
West Ministry Market Leader, Ascension Health
President and CEO, Carondelet Health Network, Tucson, Ariz.

Leadership is flexibility

As she ponders questions about diversity, Denise Brooks-Williams looks around her community of Battle Creek, Mich., where a large number of Japanese immigrants have settled, and where social groups and support groups have formed to provide resources for the newcomers. That infrastructure, she said, can be crucial in helping to answer the question of how a health care organization can retain diverse employees.

“Hands down, the biggest challenge for a new executive is getting acclimated to an organization and a community,” she said. “That’s not a negative challenge, but you’ve really got to understand an organization’s culture.”

As leaders tackle sweeping changes in health care, a willingness to adapt and change is needed, she says.

“Leadership will have to be more flexible and innovative. It may not be a change for some, but most strong leaders have needed these skills to adjust to the changes prior to reform.”

One year into her tenure as the leader at Battle Creek, Brooks-Williams says her progress to date has been around relationship-building, both within the health system and in the community at large, where she has published a number of op-eds and been visible and accessible at local meetings.



Denise Brooks-Williams
President and CEO, Battle Creek Health System, Battle Creek, Mich.

“We’ve been successful in re-establishing some trust with the community around the organization’s performance, and that’s an attribute to working closely with the medical staff,” she said. “It’s early, but we’re moving in the right direction.”

Leadership is positive

When Danelo Canete and a friend, a fellow Filipino native, were visiting Valley Forge, they heard a young boy say to his father, “Look, Daddy, two Chinese.”

To which the dad replied, “Son, they’re just as American as you and I.”

Canete recalls: “I said to myself, ‘God, I love this country!’”

Canete rose to become the U.S. Navy’s top medical officer for the Middle East in the 1980s, and some of his reflections on leadership are certainly tied to his 24-year career:

“Pick good lieutenants and you’ll have a good organization.”

“I seldom see failure. I see a way around failure.”

He recently traveled from Hawaii to Chicago for a reunion of his Filipino medical school, which honored him with an award for leadership. The school, the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, will mark its 400th anniversary next year and is 25 years older than Harvard.

Yet while his life has brought him accolades, being a good cardiologist means more to him than the C-suite.

“I became a CEO as part of a plan to have a doctor-owned hospital managed by doctors,” he said. “My goal in life has never been to be a CEO. Practicing cardiology is way more fun, and I don’t have to fire people.”



Danelo Canete

Cardiologist and former CEO, Hawaii Medical Center, Honolulu

Leadership is being a good listener

Kevin Churchwell comes from a family that values achievement. His father was a pioneering journalist; his mother was a Nashville public school teacher for 30 years; two of his brothers are Vanderbilt cardiologists. His accomplishments speak for themselves, but if you ask him to name an underrated facet of leadership, it has nothing to do with speech:

“Patience and the ability to listen,” he said. “We all have a tendency to want to be first or have the answer. The ability to listen is an active process that requires work. Our job as leaders is not to provide all the answers but to create a forum where great ideas and thoughts can be generated by those who work with and for us.”

He says his work environment is quite conducive to developing those very traits.

“Being around children really helps that listening and patience part of leadership,” Churchwell said. “It also helps ground you to what is truly important about what we do every day.”



Kevin Churchwell

CEO and Executive Director, Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn.

Churchwell had served as chief of staff and as medical director of Pediatric Critical Care Services among other roles before being tapped to serve as interim CEO for a six-month period in 2007. Since the “interim” tag was removed, he says he has enjoyed the opportunity to develop his skill sets in public speaking, finance, operations, advocacy, and fundraising. Yet he wishes the health care industry would get

more imaginative in its placement of diverse executives.

“I see a pigeonholing in the opportunities that diverse executives sometimes get a chance to review,” he said. “Urban hospitals and medical centers are profoundly important to our national health care, but it should be part of the myriad opportunities that talented and forward-thinking executives are offered.

“We should not take the easy way out.”

follow the leaders



Executives Rank Their Top Qualities of Leadership

We asked executives three questions around the topic of leadership to get a better feel for what traits they have in common. Their top answers are listed below. Call this a primer, if you will, for young and mid-career health care executives on what it takes to lead:

What have been the most critical areas for professional development and growth for your career?

1. The ability to coalesce with peers nationally.
2. Succession planning.
3. Continuous learning.
4. Opportunities for growth into board positions.

Whom do you consult for professional development advice, such as career steps, offer negotiations or opportunity assessment?

1. Mentors.
2. Executive coach.
3. Peers.
4. Executive recruiters.
5. Board members.

When you are adding leaders to your executive team, what qualities are most important to you?

1. Emotional intelligence.
2. Cultural alignment.
3. Raw talent.
4. Previous experience.
5. Experience in equivalent-sized organizations.
6. Educational preparation.

Leadership is committed to personal growth

Richard Cordova isn't shy about telling people he just turned 60 – or that he needs to reinvent himself.

“I don't want to be the person who tells people they have to reinvent themselves every five years and then neglect to do it myself,” he said.

With health care changing rapidly, Cordova says it's important for executives to keep up.

“Given all the change that's going on, you have to figure out how you will lead your organization,” he said. “You can't do the same things you've done before. It's not going to work.”

Cordova has, in fact, adapted to numerous roles in his career before coming to Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. He made his mark as Executive Administrator of the Community Health Network in the San Francisco area that included being Chief Executive Officer of San Francisco General Hospital. He also was a founding member of the San Francisco Health Authority, a Medi-Cal managed care organization, before heading to Kaiser Permanente Health Plan and Hospitals to run its Southern California Region as President.

He credits his mentors for making a major difference in his life and says he is committed to helping young executives on their own journey.

“I had mentors who took me places I would otherwise never have access to, and I try to do the same. When I attended the ACHE Congress recently, I took four young people with me. They followed me around for three days, and they were wide-eyed. They met all my peers. They met Tom Dolan (president and CEO of ACHE). Giving our young people experiences like that is what we should be doing. It is what has helped to develop my career.”



Richard Cordova

*President and CEO,
Childrens Hospital
Los Angeles*

Leadership is taught by example

Paul Diaz's family has ties to health care – his grandfather had been a surgeon in Cuba – but his road to the top was not a foregone conclusion. As one of three sons being raised by a single mother who worked in the business office of a Miami hospital, his path had challenges from the start. But he can still tell you the names of the men who ignited his passion for service from childhood and guided him to maturity – a scoutmaster named Bruce Garwood, and Arthur Pugh, a hospital administrator at his mom's work.

“Since Mom was working, she saw scouting as a way to channel us. Scouting really provided a framework for life success, forming certain behavior patterns. We learned a sense of process,” said Diaz, who achieved Eagle Scout status, a level he shares with most recent U.S. presidents and many senators.

Pugh taught him about caring. “I used to do rounds with him twice a week, helping to interpret,” he said. “He would go to every single patient room to make sure they were getting everything they needed. That was a formative experience in how to run a hospital.”

Perhaps that is one reason that Diaz and Kindred Healthcare have invested so heavily in professional development and succession planning, from its Executive Fellows to its Rising Stars programs.



Paul Diaz

*President and CEO,
Kindred Healthcare,
Louisville, Ky.*

“I think people get way too caught up on relevant experience for hiring. I think that hurts diversity,” he said. “Give me somebody smart, someone who has good people skills, who's a team player, a person of integrity – and I can teach them any of my businesses in a short period of time.”

WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE?



the future is now?

Changes to the American health care system present compelling challenges to leadership

Will leadership have to change significantly to handle the changes that the overhaul of the U.S. health system is presenting them? Herman Gray, president of Children's Hospital of Michigan, isn't so sure.

"I don't believe the basic behavioral and attitudinal attributes of great leaders change much, nor will change much," Gray said. "Leading and inspiring others to follow a shared vision will continue to be essential."

But changes to the system do alter the playing field, he added. "It is clear that we are entering an era of increasing transparency, accountability, efficiency, and cost effectiveness – as well as an increased emphasis on outcomes," he said. "Leaders will need to acquire or enhance their skills to meet these changing demands."

Systemic changes require systemic planning, says Sam Odle.

"Health care leaders will have to be more concerned and astute at managing the health of communities and populations of individuals versus random interactions with a hospital or doctor," said Odle, EVP and COO at Clarian Health in Indianapolis. "Leaders will truly have to use system thinking to create the successful health care enterprise of the future."

Richard Cordova, president and CEO of Children's Hospital Los Angeles, wonders how much turnover in the C-suite is coming.

"Certain CEOs may be saying, 'I'm done. I can't live through the next change. Maybe I should hang it up.'"

"It's going to be fascinating," he added. "Like a lot of execs, I started my career in the 1970s. We've been through managed care, through consolidation and capitation. We're cycling through again. We're using different words, but a lot of the principles are the same."

One adjustment leaders will have to make is in their relationships with physicians, said Ruth Brinkley, president/CEO, Carondelet Health Network in Tucson, Ariz.

"While the basic principles of leadership will still hold true, each health care executive must focus more time and effort on quality and safety and learn to work more effectively with physicians. We need to bring them into substantial and meaningful leadership roles, as much of health care delivery in the future will necessarily involve 'partnering' or working with physicians in new ways.

"Many of these physician leaders will have to be mentored and developed, much as our other leaders have been mentored and developed."

But some question whether the most problematic topics have even been broached at this point. John Bluford, chair-elect of the American Hospital Association and president and CEO of Truman Medical Centers in Kansas City, Mo., said he thinks the government essentially ignored – for now – some of the major issues.

"The process took a pass on end-of-life care and health care related immigration issues," Bluford said. "We need to address both very soon to make a difference."

That's one reason why Alan Aviles says the current changes are a much lower hurdle than what's ahead.

"The second phase may prove to be the most challenging," said Aviles, president and CEO of New York City Health and Hospitals Corp. "How do we address cost containment and better align the reimbursement system with driving overall improvements in effectiveness and quality of care, and improve patient outcomes over the long-term?"

The stakes are high for the country – both politically and financially.

"That's going to be a very heavy lift. It's going to impact the vested interests of a lot of huge stakeholders," Aviles said. "Politically, it's going to be very difficult to make the sort of changes that are necessary. It may require us to get a lot closer to a full-blown crisis – which will come if the cost of health care continues to increase at a rate that continues to exceed the growth of our overall economy."

Leadership is patience

Many CEOs have taken circuitous routes to their destination, from law to the military to nursing, but few rides have been as colorful as Pauline Grant's. She is a native of Jamaica who worked for her country's government before moving to Florida in 1979 and becoming a health care administrator for the Seminole tribe. She came to North Broward in 1993 and worked her way up.

"I am probably atypical; I've grown up here," she said. "The whole organization has been very good to me. So perhaps my challenge has been figuring out how to survive in large organizations, which can sometimes be political. There's a lot to be said for longevity."

Grant is forthright in saying that diverse executives have a lot of expectations placed on them, but she views that as an opportunity to shine.

"Being a minority, you have to work harder at gaining that credibility, and you have to work hard to keep it," she said. "But I see it as an opportunity. I look for the positive to make it work for me."

But she advises the young executives whom she mentors to develop their patience and to focus on the moment and task at hand.

"Whatever I set out to do, I have focused on doing it well and to have those deliverables to show what I've achieved," Grant said. "If there is a mistake that some people make, it's perhaps looking beyond the job they are currently in. Rather than do that, why not be really great at what you are doing right now?"



Pauline Grant
CEO, North Broward
Medical Center, Deerfield
Beach, Fla.

Leadership means knowing yourself

Earlier in his career, Herman Gray used to downplay some of his own "soft skills": inspiring individuals, motivating groups of people to action. Nowadays, he views those as some of his key strengths.

"All of us are leaders in some part of our lives," he noted. "I think you're much more effective when you know what's in your tool kit. One of my biases in leadership development is to know what I am really good at and maximize it."

Gray also urges young executives to be true to their personalities. Being an advocate for children has helped him change in this area, he says.

"I see now that I am fundamentally a pretty quiet person. I've learned to use that to my advantage. When I am fundraising, I'm comfortable in this kind of role – this is a service we provide with dignity and great value. Helping others, especially vulnerable children, is what I believe to be a sacred mission that has fundamentally changed who I am."

With both an MD and an MBA on his CV, Gray has plenty of credentials. But he views relationship-building and trust in your staff as just as important.

"For me, the higher you get in an organization, the more important those relational skills sometimes become," he said. "Sometimes you have to make decisions, and you yourself have inadequate information. Your success at doing that is based on your collective wisdom as an organization and what your values are."



Herman Gray
President, Children's
Hospital of Michigan,
Detroit

Leadership is knowing your community

George Hernandez Jr. can talk at length about the details of health care law in Texas' 254 counties – he spent a number of years as the University Health System's general counsel and worked as an assistant district attorney for 12 years as well.

"I grew up in San Antonio, and that gives me an advantage," he said. "The big part of my job is understanding the community's needs and being able to respond within a defined budget to try to address the health care issues of the population."

Knowing the lay of the land – and the boardroom – is crucial at the C-suite level, he says.

"What is unique about the job is not taught at seminars," he said. "It's how you put together teams to work on issues, and how you communicate with the board when it comes to governance and management interplay."

Hernandez's analysis of his community and health system has apparently worked. He helped set up CareLink, a county program for the uninsured that has attracted attention from major universities who'd like to study it. UHS is the only Magnet health system in southern Texas and has been honored for its work in information technology as well as training and development.

"When I became CEO, we started a leadership academy for the director level and a management one for other workers. I'm very big on training and development of staff. Our succession planning and our current operations will be much better because of our system's emphasis on training and development."



George Hernandez Jr.

*President and CEO,
University Health System,
San Antonio, Texas*

Leadership should reflect its community

Hank Hernandez's previous career had fewer issues around diversity. As a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Army who rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, a spectrum of color at all ranks was a given.

"Much of the military really is diverse," he said. "When you look at the troops, they come from all over the United States – a great number of the population of the armed services is made up of people of color."

So Hernandez has been intentional about focusing on diversity in health care. That's one reason he was part of a small group of minority health care executives who founded the National Forum for Latino Healthcare Executives and is actively seeking positions on national boards for minority executives. But as the country diversifies, he says health care organizations need to look at increasing the ranks of minority senior leaders because it's simply good business.



Hank Hernandez

*CEO, Las Palmas
Medical Center,
El Paso, Texas*

"Much more needs to be accomplished relative to retention and professional development, especially grooming individuals to attain the highest levels within existing corporate organizations," he said. "Hospitals and health care systems must look at this practice as a strategic business tactic that ensures that diverse executives reach the highest levels."

Beyond that, the broadening of the insurance pool makes it all the more important that leaders can identify with their communities, Hernandez says.

"Increasingly, more diverse population groups will now have greater access to health care and, as such, senior leadership positions must be reflective of the communities in which they serve, both locally and on a national level."

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attract.
recruit.
retain?

Keeping and developing diverse executives is sometimes overlooked.

The position has been filled. The new hire, a diverse executive, is in place. Mission accomplished? No, says Sam Odle, EVP and COO of Clarian Health in Indianapolis. It's just begun.

"Companies have to go beyond recruitment," he said, "and be committed to having a development plan for their minority leaders not only to assure their success but also to assure the organization has the benefit of them being there."

The development plan must be given careful thought, executives say, because diverse executives face extra demands on their time that majority executives don't have to deal with, like serving on a "diversity committee" to help recruit other candidates.

In academic circles, for example, "diverse executives are disproportionately asked to join admissions committees," said Donald Wesson, vice dean of the Texas A&M University College of Medicine at Temple. And in an atmosphere where research is a necessity for advancement, the time crunch could potentially hinder the careers of diverse leaders, he said.

"If organizations don't understand the needs and aspirations of these highly qualified health care executives, then retention will become an industry-wide challenge in this emerging global economy and society," agreed Christopher Mosley, former president and CEO of Chesapeake (Va.) Regional Medical Center.

Time also is a factor when it comes to work-life balance, which is a key for keeping your best people, said Denise Brooks-Williams, president and CEO of Battle Creek (Mich.) Health System. "I'm a mom with an 11-year-old and a 13-year-old – that's probably not the traditional profile of a CEO," she said. As such, she and the organization have adjusted some meeting times that typically had started at 6:30 a.m., when Brooks-Williams was getting her children ready for school.

And a well-planned onboarding process is essential to retention, says Eugene Woods, CEO of St. Joseph Health System in Lexington, Ky.

"In areas of the country where there is a lower percentage of African-Americans, the person may need additional support," he said. "That's why we assign an assimilation coach. I think the first 90 days are critical."

Concerns outside the work environment also can play a role, said Herman Gray, president of Children's Hospital of Michigan. Diverse candidates sometimes have distinctive questions:

"Where am I going to go to church?"

"Where will I find a social circle of friends who have shared experiences?"

"Does the town have a local chapter of the Jack and Jill social organization for children?"

"Are the local schools ready to handle how diverse children may change the social dynamics?"

Leadership needs to adapt

In 2006, “Massachusetts enacted perhaps the boldest state health care experiment in American history, bringing near-universal coverage to the commonwealth with Paul Revere speed,” the New York Times wrote. As the BCBS leader in the state, Cleve Killingsworth had a close-up view of the situation, a vantage point that gives him some interesting thoughts on the nation’s move toward similar policies.

“People will need to be much more collaborative and strong proponents of change,” he said. “Costs are going to get out of control and payers are going to demand much better clinical outcomes. This means that work of the CEO in health care is going to be much different.”

Killingsworth, a Chicago native, earned a management degree from MIT and a master’s in public health from Yale. He came to BCBS after a stint running the Health Alliance Plan, an HMO in Michigan. He encourages diverse executives not to be afraid to relocate to further their careers.

“Every time I moved, I ran something I hadn’t run before and tried to do it at the next level. Your opportunities may not be in the company you are in.”

But while encouraging individuals to take risks, he suggests that team-building and creating collaborations may be an executive’s most critical skill.

“People need to be effective in groups and skilled in getting things done,” Killingsworth said. “There are many problems ahead that we have never encountered in the past. Therefore, being able to extract the best from a group of individuals is going to be critical.”



Cleve Killingsworth

Former Chairman and CEO, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Leadership puts safety first

Patient safety – and employee safety – has been attracting a lot of attention these days, and it’s where Johnny Kuo made and continues to make his mark at Gracie Square, a New York City hospital focused on patients with mental health and substance abuse issues, which features a unique, specially designated inpatient program for Chinese, Korean and Japanese patients.

“It’s not just a ‘big issue’ to me; it’s really a requirement, a standard practice – patient safety comes first,” said Kuo, an MD who is board-certified in infection control. “It’s important that all staff go through a formal educational component to understand the whole process and how to take care of these patients.”

About five years ago, he said, Gracie Square was having some issues with patients, especially elderly ones, falling and injuring themselves. Kuo spearheaded a program to investigate and address the problem. He concluded the needs were twofold: physical changes to the hospital and its equipment, and more manpower to address the staff-to-patient ratio. The hospital spent more than \$1 million, and incidents dropped 76 percent in six months.

But Kuo remains worried that health care organizations may be reluctant to address safety issues because of the current financial environment.

“I am concerned that there may not be enough attention and investment in the areas of patient safety and quality care, maybe because there is no direct correlation between such investment and short-term revenue,” he said.

Although he is only 48, Kuo already places a high priority on succession planning as a key to ensuring diversity in the C-suite. “Leaders have a responsibility to groom and prepare future leaders,” he said.



Johnny Kuo

COO, Gracie Square Hospital, New York City

Leadership is always learning

Cynthia Moore-Hardy's career has been a steady progression, from nursing to administration to 13 years at the helm as president and CEO. Yet there is a constant to her journey, she says.

"The key thing never changes. You have to be continually learning."

The jewel in her career could well be TriPoint Medical Center, which opened in the autumn of 2009 in Concord Township, the first new hospital to open in the region in decades. TriPoint is state of the art in terms of technology and also includes features like healing gardens, artwork, natural light, family areas, and even a waterfall, to be as patient-centric as possible.

"It's one of the most exciting things we've done, opening a new hospital on a Greenfield site," she said. "It allowed us to start with no preconceived ideas.

"It's very inspiring in terms of leadership and in working together as a team."

As CEO, her past as an RN is a definite benefit, she says.

"For me, being a registered nurse is helpful with hospital operations in working with the frontline staff. I've actually taken care of a patient, so I get it."

She's also worked hard to stay approachable. As she sought staff input when planning for the new hospital was under way, she visited workers at every level of the hospital, asking them what steps could be taken to make their work more efficient, and doling out treats, like nuts or dark chocolate, when someone made a suggestion.

"Part of being a good leader," she said, "is learning to be a good listener."



Cynthia Moore-Hardy

President and CEO, Lake Health, Painesville, Ohio

Leadership is mentoring without agendas

If there is anything that today's leaders agree on, it is the power of mentoring and the difference it has made in their careers.

Many of them enjoy giving back to the community and especially to young physicians and college students. Yet Christopher Mosley, former CEO of Chesapeake (Va.) Regional Medical Center, cautions that mentoring must be a well-thought-out process and that mentors have to be quite careful in approaching the relationship.

"Mentoring is not about the mentor; it's about the mentee," Mosley said. "It's helping people pursue their highest aspirations. It's about surrendering what you think they should do so the person can achieve what is unique to them. It is all about learning, growing, making mistakes, and recovering in the safety of the company of a mentor who cares about you. Proper chemistry and a clear understanding of what mentoring is all about is important."

Mentors also have to be careful to put accomplishments in their proper context for mentees – it really is the organization and its patients that matter most, Mosley said. "I don't think leaders accomplish much of anything by themselves. It's the teams I have been on that have been very successful."

In his own interaction with emerging leaders, Mosley says he's learned to avoid being the man with all the answers.



Christopher Mosley

Chief Administrative Officer, Jackson Memorial Hospital (Jackson Health System), Miami

"Often, what they get from me is a series of questions. I think the best mentors ask questions. They don't give advice.

"Where are you trying to go?"

"What did you learn from this situation?"

"Where is the growth opportunity for you?"

Leadership is collaboration

Sam Odle finds his 35-year climb in health care to be “a natural evolution,” from flunking out of college, to becoming an X-ray technician, to finding he loved health care, to going back to school and ascending to the C-suite.

He’s learned a bit about the industry that way, and he believes one of the most overlooked qualities in leadership is vision – not dictating it, but getting your team to discover it together and coalesce around it.

“The ability to work with a group to create a shared vision is essential in the complex world of health care that does not lend itself to command-and-control tactics,” he said.

Odle is concerned about the professional development of diverse executives and believes some of those building blocks can best be achieved outside the organization.

“One thing I’ve always encouraged young minority executives to do is get involved in the community – United Way, Boy Scouts, Heart Association,” he said. “That allows them to practice their leadership skills in a non-threatening environment. They can chair a committee, give a talk, organize a benefit. It’s an important developmental tool for young executives.”

The other way senior leaders can help the next generation is to take a risk and give them high-profile assignments. In the 1990s, Odle said, his boss put him in charge of negotiating physician contracts. If physicians had a question, Odle’s supervisor would tell them, “Talk to Sam.”

“That established my confidence and also established my image in the eyes of the medical staff as somebody who would be fair, somebody they could go to,” Odle said. “That really makes you valuable to the rest of the management team.”



Sam Odle
EVP and COO, Clarian Health, Indianapolis, Ind.

Leadership is entrepreneurial

Prem Reddy likes challenges. That’s why he has relished the task of building his 13-hospital company and adds, “We’re still in acquisition mode.”

He is proud of the fact that Thomson Reuters ranked his company as one of the top 10 health care systems in the country – “the only for-profit company chosen and the only one west of the Mississippi.” And employee turnover is low. “You have to have a competitive compensation and benefit package – we’ve been lucky.”

Quick turnarounds are his specialty. “We purchase bankrupt hospitals and turn them around to be successful,” he said.

Although his corporation is privately owned, he says he still feels pressure to perform better because of diversity.



Prem Reddy
Founder and Chairman, Prime Healthcare Services, Victorville, Calif.

“Being a minority – and also coming from another country – you do need to work harder and do better than your counterparts,” he said. “Certain fields are dominated by white men – health care more than any other industry that I know.”

As a diverse executive, Reddy says his company experiences more scrutiny than similar organizations.

“When regulators come for inspections, they look at us more closely. It’s not burdensome, but it is noticeable.”

But Reddy said he is looking forward to changes in health care law.

“I think the president’s team is making the right steps to produce cost-effective health care delivery,” he said. “It will improve the quality and minimize the fraud and abuse. Without reform, we’ve been treating 30 million uninsured Americans. Health care is viewed as an entitlement, but at the same time hospitals are footing the bill. So reform is a good step in the right direction.”

Leadership is more than managing well

Make no mistake – leaders need to be good managers. But Bernard Tyson wants you to know it's much more than that. "I liken it to different views from inside of a car," Tyson said. "The leader is looking out the front window and seeing what's on the horizon. The manager is looking out the side window, trying to get it done, and the world is moving very fast."

For 30 years, Tyson has had a number of different views of health care as he rose in the ranks at Kaiser Permanente, which has annual operating revenue of more than \$42 billion. Tyson himself leads 8 presidents and is responsible for a workforce of 150,000 people.

Tyson considers his own role to be "75 percent leader, 25 percent manager." As a manager, he says diversity is a good business model and is pleased that each of his 8 presidents are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Half of this group are also women.

"The leader," he said, "sets the vision, strategy and policy, the direction and the expectations. The manager sets the procedure to get the job done. The leader owns the 'what' questions and the manager figures out the 'how' questions. They are very much intertwined but are two distinct overall responsibilities."

The role of the leader is susceptible to clichés, and Tyson says a true leader shouldn't be afraid of breaking the mold.

"People expect the leader to set the strategy, engage others and make it happen – and rightfully so. But one aspect that may be overlooked is a leader's ability to listen, to gain insight from multiple perspectives and a willingness to become vulnerable.

"They may not be responding as the norm would want them to in learning and getting information. Yet it allows them to be even more effective in understanding the direction for their team."



Bernard J. Tyson

*Executive Vice President,
Health Plan and Hospital
Operations
Kaiser Permanente,
Oakland, Calif.*

Leadership is effective

Early in Donald Wesson's career, he says the traditional model of leadership was that of a Gen. George Patton figure leading an army up the hill. "That model got the accolades, but it didn't seem to get things done," he said. "I find team-building much more effective in getting things done than the lone-wolf approach."

And those teams need to be diverse to be most effective, Wesson noted.

"The first thing for us to do is to make sure we take the question out of its moral context and move it to its effectiveness context," he said. "Even in 2010, the greatest argument is a moral one: that our leadership should look like America. From my standpoint, the real reason is that diversity makes our organizations more effective."



Donald Wesson

*Chief Academic Officer,
Scott & White Healthcare,
Temple, Texas
Vice Dean, Texas A&M
University College of
Medicine at Temple*

As an example, Wesson cites one of the largest studies of kidney disease that has been undertaken, one that he helped to design. Wesson pushed for the study coordinators – those who would be responsible for recruiting and monitoring the predominantly African-American patient population – to likewise be African-American. His suggestion was optimally implemented when the initial subject recruitment rates fell far below that necessary to complete recruitment within the allotted time.

When his recommendation was put in place, enrollment soared and the study remains one of the best and most durable in its field.

"Having a diverse leadership was effective in getting the study done," he said. "It's been a real resource for the nation scientifically in terms of kidney disease."

Leadership is authentic

A couple of years ago, Eugene Woods admits that his work-life balance was out of whack. His wife told him so. His team confirmed it. “In fact, achieving and promoting work-life balance is one of the criteria upon which Catholic Health Initiatives evaluates CEOs, so that we model that balance for our employees,” Woods said.

So Woods picked up the guitar again and formed a band called “The City,” which has already raised more than \$10,000 for charities. He also started doing karate with his youngest son, and both are a couple months from earning black belts.

Such transparency is striking among leaders and perhaps is one factor in Woods’ success in overseeing CHI’s seven Kentucky hospitals. A crucial element of leading organizations, Woods says, is “authenticity.”

“Employees need to know that their leaders are genuine and grounded individuals because it is what forms the basis for trust,” he said. “And if your organization trusts you as a leader because they feel you are ‘real,’ I believe that the sky is the limit in terms of what you can accomplish.”

Authenticity also is what Woods sees when he looks at the history of Catholic hospitals in Kentucky, founded by Sisters with little more than compassion and determination. That deep sense of mission inspires leadership, he says.

“It keeps me connected to the real reason I am privileged to serve in what we call a ‘ministry,’ which is to promote social justice, human dignity, and the common good.”



Eugene A. Woods

CEO, Saint Joseph Health System, Lexington, Ky.

Senior Vice President, Catholic Health Initiatives







résumé

credentials

values

leadership influence

critical thinking

results-driven

perseverance

cultural fit

customer focus

character

Finding the right leader to fill your C-suite void is critical. A misstep could turn a prudent return on investment into a significant waste of time and money. Furst Group looks deeper, searching beyond the obvious to discern less tangible, but more critical competencies. We know where and how to find the leader you need.