



CHALLENGES IN ACQUIRING NEW OR EXPERIENCED NURSING LEADERS & NURSING ADMINISTRATORS

Nowadays, hiring any nursing administrator (DON) or nursing leader (RN) brings a challenge to organizations trying to maintain a budget and provide nursing leadership quality. A newly hired nursing leader must perform and have relevant leadership experience and a natural ability to work effectively with other employees. The following considerations encourage informed hiring practice, help hire with more awareness of potential legal and policy concerns, and identify specific leadership qualities.

It can be difficult and important to determine who and why a particular person should be in a nursing leader position. It is better to carefully consider all the ramifications of selecting a nursing leader the first time than to have to take the time and energy to undo a poor hiring decision.

Written and followed hiring processes/policies (in general) with pre-established hiring behavior and screening expectations will prevent the facility/organization from future legal questioning about the hiring process by disgruntled job applicants. Follow the same written, precise hiring policy process that shows written guidelines for minimizing biases and discrimination for EVERY potential employee. These policies should support the facility/organization's philosophical beliefs, including the mission, definition, purpose, goals, and objectives of the facility/organization.

Superb written record-keeping concerning each accepted job applicant is necessary as a part of the job interview. All job interviews are legally challenged (verbally, written, or subconsciously) regarding the hiring process or final hiring decision. The appearance of interview biases or discrimination is always a potential problem when determining any nursing leader! You can trust that somebody will always ask and question employment processes and decisions! Sometimes there are negative comments from existing employees about hiring a specific person(s) to do a particular job. A hiring committee with a set criteria plan and policies for making employment decisions can easily dismiss such comments knowing that they have determined employment decisions by pre-established criteria. The criteria and written records show an obvious effort and concern for the non-existence of personal biases or discrimination.

Recognizing a Nursing Leader---A nursing leader is a registered nurse who assesses, directs, participates, plans, implements, and evaluates outcomes toward meeting patient goals. He/she has the power to stand alone and the courage to make difficult/tough decisions. It is a nursing leader who always strives to be the best of all who serve. This type of person gives his/her "all" for the nursing team's success and positive patient outcomes. It is a person who faces human relationship challenges with courage and acts civilly and with sensitivity regarding the personal decisions that improve nursing care. A nursing leader is often a person with significant and proven successful life experiences related to problem-solving.

A new or inexperienced nursing leader "shadowing" an experienced and successful nursing leader might keep an organization from experiencing, again, past nursing leadership errors. It is always helpful to first mutually synchronize nursing thoughts and behavior patterns that support the philosophy, mission, purpose, and goals of the facility/organization. Teaching appropriate choices and understanding nursing leadership behaviors is important to a new nursing leader's success.

Intuitive powers are an added positive dimension of nursing leadership. It requires listening to the voice from within when attempting to lead others. Intuition is helpful and *improves with leadership experience and chronological age*.

It is integrity and correct decisive actions that identify nursing leaders. Hence, the nature versus nurture question arises: Is a nursing leader naturally “born to be a leader” (nature concept) or “learns to be a leader” (nurture concept)? Some data shows that exceptional nursing leaders show their beginning natural potential as outstanding nursing leaders in their early adult years—usually in their early twenties.

Male or Female Leader--Gender choice can be a dilemma considered by facilities/organizations for a nursing leaders' role. Of course, there are many considerations as it relates to experience and capability. However, it is was an interesting perspective of Madeleine Albright (American Politician and diplomat from 1997-2001—U.S. Secretary of State) that women are often the best choice! She believes that women have an increased propensity over men when it comes to multi-tasking. After all, she says, women are required to multi-task responsibilities of home, family, children, dietary intake, and sometimes jobs. A practice of handling and solving multiple activities and problems simultaneously is required of a nursing leader—and experience in these convoluted activities is the basis of nursing leadership success. However, this philosophy is challenged because we know as experienced nursing leaders that all situations are influenced by the concept of IT ALL DEPENDS!

Men—they have their unique abilities, too. Employees sometimes react positively to a known authority figure, such as a male. Therefore, men have qualities that form the basis of nursing leadership success.

Regardless of gender, leadership abilities are individually unique. Yet, gender, by its very nature, deserves consideration when employing leaders. Be sure your written documentation during the hiring process supports criteria WITHOUT biases or discrimination—including gender, marital status, race, and transgender status.

Importance of Personal Skills---Educationally, nursing leaders are taught the Theory of Leadership and Critical Thinking. However, we all recognize that education is not the only facet for consideration. The ability to work with people with integrity is also a MUST. The acquisition of personal skills and education is not always the sole determinant of acquiring a certain job; sometimes, it seems that the time and need chooses you.

If you are an educator, teach potential nursing leaders how to understand employees and know that every person has different personal human qualities. Nursing leaders will also have a background of success, problems, worries, and “baggage.” We are all human with needs, desires, personal difficulties, and you name it—we all share it to some degree! Therefore, responding appropriately to employees' needs (work and personal) must always be in the equation of becoming a successful nursing leader. A reciprocating nursing leader response will most likely be: “I will do what you expect if you will consider me and my legitimate personal needs (within reason) as I perform the expected behaviors of my job description.” The outcome is mutual respect.

Sometimes, nursing leaders need to learn that the balance of leadership firmness and leadership kindness is a balancing act that demands constant weighing of work and personal behaviors. Therefore, NURSING LEADERSHIP POWER is related to how a nursing leader can effectively relate and empathize with other nursing employees in stressful situations and how nursing leaders can support each other's personal needs while getting the job assignment/description accomplished. We have to admit that empathetic kindness in serving all others (including other nurses) is a major hallmark of the nursing profession!

Hiring Inside the Facility/Organization to Administrative Positions---Any hired nursing leader must perform and have relevant leadership education and experience. Whether it is wise always to promote a nursing leader to an administrative position *within* the same facility/organization is questionable.

The promotion of a nursing leader who knows others' strengths and limitations sometimes gives a new nursing administrator an edge on success. The challenge is to find a nursing leader recognized by other nursing leaders as knowledgeable about the processes/policies and can be considered a role model as a nursing administrator. In other words, does a nursing leader have what it takes?

The nurse leader's internal facility/organization's elevation of responsibilities to a new and more demanding nursing administrator position is not *always* successful! Furthermore, taking on a new role with new expected administrative relationships with the same employees is often very difficult. It causes a necessary change in the degree and kind of employee fraternization (usually a need for curtailment of employee fraternization). Effects of job promotion within a facility/organization recognize the need for any newly assigned and promoted nursing leader to an administrative position to withstand internal turmoil from disheartened employees who did not get a promotion---and accept it gracefully. It requires the advanced nursing leader to a nursing administrative position to change old relationships into new and unfamiliar behaviors. Some non-promoted employees often think someone else (often themselves) within the facility/organization should have been the one promoted to an elevated position. Internal stress occurs, and alliances are blurred.

One significant detriment is the possibility that the promoted nursing leader has formed past employee relationships and exhibited behaviors as a nursing leader that has exposed possible personal areas prone to staff manipulation or coercion. Going from an employee cohort with overtly friendly employee behaviors to a more responsible and accountable nursing administrator's role with new job expectations is very different from past employee behaviors. It can be somewhat threatening and daunting (and even confusing).

It is always tempting by a facility/organization to "reward" a nursing leader for longevity or compliance with a new administrative promotion. Too often, this "reward" is detrimental to both the employee and the facility/organization. This person has often learned well to be a *follower* and not a true nursing administrative leader.

Some facilities/organizations do not consider the many ramifications of making such an administrative advancement. Often the hired person is a likable person within the facility/organization but not necessarily a qualified person for a specific administrative job. A nursing administrator role should cause careful, extensive, and time-consuming scrutiny. There is a policy in some facilities/organizations where nursing leadership employees are the most likely promoted due to compliance and longevity. The term is often stated as a policy, "We always hire from within!"

Be aware of work-related friendships and family relationship ties for the nursing leader for whom administrative advancement is considered. Excessive employee friendships and apparent nepotism within the facility/organization are not usually the most outstanding traits for most administrative positions.

Hiring Outside the Facility/Organization to Administrative Positions ---Consider hiring an experienced, advanced academically educated, or a proven successful nursing leader who is *not* currently employed by the facility/organization. The successful pursuance or attainment of advanced higher education by any nursing leader shows tenacity and forbearance. Experience and proven abilities are often a “gold mine.” Yes, the recruitment of outside expertise might cost more and should cost more. This person might have a varied applicable positive experience in human relationships and getting a job done. The creative and critical thinking abilities might be a positive surprise with excellent new ideas beyond your imagination.

Absolutely—Consider hiring an excellent nursing administrator from another source than the existing facility/organization. Sometimes, no person in the facility/organization will meet the job’s rigorous requirements. When hiring from outside the facility/organization, there is less chance of a social entanglement with current staff and emotional employee ties. Objectivity is increased. Manipulative employee behaviors are less likely to occur when employee familial and close friendship ties are absent.

Use your intuition when hiring. Is this person secure in nursing administrative leader skills, fair, trustworthy, and philosophically congruent with the philosophy and goal(s) of the facility/organization? Does this person have a healthy ego that will allow/permit personal criticism? Is the essence of the appropriate use of personal power evident? Determine, if you can, if the potential administrative employee is a true leader and not a follower! Determine a way of scoring your impression(s) or knowledge of each prospective employee applicant according to the following.

Leader	Follower
Exhibits calm amid the chaos	Exhibits nervousness amid the chaos
Directs activities with goals in mind	Performs activities only as directed
Supports and rewards positive behaviors	Accepts rewards often with skepticism
Directs and makes decisions with concern for consequences	Performs as requested with no obvious concern for ultimate consequences
Is responsible for outcomes	Limited responsibility for outcomes
Practices, knows, & determines policy direction	Depends on leaders to give direction
Understands and utilizes legal knowledge	Depends on the leader to make a legal judgment
Problem-solving skills follow a pattern for calculated outcomes	Problem-solving occurs on a limited scale without great concern for overall outcomes
Calm and ability to direct during a crisis	Dependent on the direction during a crisis
Listens to and hears communication implications	Listens to words and performs accordingly
Seeks respect and recognized integrity	Only tries to be liked by others

(Read more at leadershippoweronline.com)

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