

# Ten Techniques for Effective Practice Leadership

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Good doctor-managers -- individuals who inspire the best efforts of their staff to produce positive results for their practices -- are the keys to a practice's success. Not surprisingly, considerable research has been conducted regarding how to describe "good doctor-managers" so that their characteristics can be objectively measured and identified. Imperical research suggests that good doctor-managers are able to fulfill their need to influence others' behavior for the good of the whole practice by adhering to all or most of the following techniques:

1. Manage by objectives and results. Used properly, management by objective can be a useful tool in establishing, implementing, and evaluating the progress of challenging, specific practice goals.
2. Motivate employees by giving them meaningful work to do. A staff has a built-in need for achievement. The job should basically be interesting. The work should be challenging. Individuals should be given the opportunity to experience a sense of achievement when they complete a task. They should be recognized for a job well-done. Finally, they should be given the opportunity to increase their level of job-related responsibility.
3. Focus your attention on improving your communication skills. Overcome and resolve the major barriers to effective communication. Develop clarity in what you write and say. Improve your listening skills; think clearly; improve your memory; and provide appropriate feedback.
4. Identify and implement an effective approach for conducting performance appraisals for your staff. Determine the results an employee has produced relative to the objectives and criteria agreed upon between you and your staff. Use the appraisal to reward and reinforce effective performances and to move employees with less than satisfactory performance in the direction of more acceptable behavior.
5. Delegate authority and responsibility. Believe in yourself and in the help and support of your staff. Most employees will be inspired and motivated when given the opportunity to do something that they perceive to be important.
6. Build a team. Make each staff member feel like they are a part of the practice. Enable all employees to understand their role in the work environment. Enhance each employee's comprehension of how the practice operates and why (the related rules, values and procedures; and share with them the "Big Idea" of chiropractic).

7. Solve problems creatively. Develop the ability to recognize a problem. Generate alternative solutions to the problem. Decide on a solution. Plan on how to implement the solution. Implement the solution. Evaluate the successfulness of the solution.
  
8. Establish procedures for effective decision making. Carefully consider what a decision is and what it means to make it. Implement steps to ensure that the practice's approach to decision making will result in quality decisions that are made within an acceptable time frame, and generate appropriate levels of employee acceptance.
  
9. Manage your time effectively. Time is a very valuable asset. Prioritize your time to the tasks you deem most important. Beware of and avoid time wasters.
  
10. Assess your leadership qualities. Analyze your strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Build on your strengths and work to overcome your weaknesses. Read a book, listen to a tape program, attend a seminar or conference -- grow.
  - Manage by objectives
  - Delegate
  - Make work meaningful
  - Set decision procedures
  - Build a team
  - Assess/change leadership style
  - Improve communication
  - Manage time
  - Solve problems
  - Appraise performance

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NOVEMBER 1991