

A Few Thoughts on Leadership

As the presidential election nears, US citizens are asked to assess who will lead the country in the right direction. Over the years, I have been a keen observer and student of effective leaders. On the surface, leadership seems glamorous and appealing, but ultimately, strength in that role exacts a tremendous price: rejection, loneliness, and failure come with the job description. Doing the right thing no matter the circumstances is never easy. Great leaders are deeply committed to developing those around them, and they aspire to serve others rather than to aggrandize themselves. They are humble yet ambitious team players who will persevere through the most difficult situation. Greatness is not a function of circumstance but a conscious choice.

Exceptional leaders focus first on getting the right people in the correct seats on the bus and the wrong people off the bus. The "who" for the job is much more important initially than the "what" that needs to be done. The right people do not require tight management or galvanizing; they are already motivated to produce the best results and to help create something important. Great vision without great people is irrelevant. As Stephen Case, AOL's cofounder stated, "A vision without the ability to execute is probably a hallucination." Figuring out where to drive the bus comes last and depends on the rapidly changing circumstances of life.



The US health care system and economy are central topics in the current national debate. No panacea or easy fix is on the horizon, and difficult, unpopular decisions are undoubtedly required. The Affordable Care

Act has already been upheld by the Supreme Court. How will this legislation affect the practice of ophthalmology? How can we physicians best serve our patients under this new law? Will the upcoming election serve as a referendum on this controversial piece of legislation?

As physicians, we have a unique opportunity to help lead health care discussions. If we want to preserve this role and our credibility, however, our commitment to our patients and to

society must be unquestionable. We must demonstrate our character and integrity in every aspect of our lives. Our medical decisions must be genuinely motivated by a desire to enhance patients' care rather than our profits. How we treat our peers and medical staff and even how we relate to industry speak volumes about who we are and for what we stand. Our patients will follow our lead if they believe we are committed to them. We have the tremendous privilege to help shape the future of medicine for the generations of patients and physicians to come. Let us take this opportunity to demonstrate our ability to positively affect the lives of our patients, our profession, and our society. ■

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