To Implement Change, Healthcare Executives Must First Lead with Intent

Leadership is a choice. It takes a purpose-driven, passionate and forward-thinking leader to truly embrace the multi-faceted role of inspiring, guiding and being responsible for ensuring the safety of a healthcare workforce and its patients. In leading by example, he or she is held accountable for implementing a path of improvement, setting new standards while upholding core values, and inspiring a workforce that ensures patients are receiving high-quality care around-the-clock.

“When we lead, we accept responsibility for these goals. When we lead with intent, we commit to act and to take a stand to advance our work and honor our values,” writes Deborah Bowen, President and CEO of ACHE. In “Leading with Intent,” Bowen explains that leaders are united by a shared sense of purpose, which she describes as, “a strong and clear answer to the question: Why do we do this work? Healthcare leaders choose their profession because they care deeply about making a difference and improving health. It is their calling.”

To lead effectively, lead deliberately

An exemplary healthcare leader will pursue continuing education in order to adapt to change, take advantage of new tools, gain insight from clinicians and patients, and form strong, strategic partnerships. ACHE has a strong history of leading, and Bowen explains that the key to effective
leadership is taking an intentional approach. She writes that the most effective leaders are “active, facilitate momentum and take intentional steps to make a difference in the areas that matter to them. They are focused on what they do and say and on how they model the behaviors they seek. For them, leadership is a choice. At ACHE, we call this ‘leading with intent.’”

To master the art of leading with intent, you must first clarify your purpose, solidify what you stand for and take action. To meet the goal of delivering high-quality care, it’s crucial for leaders to create the momentum to implement a system that reinforces advancing safe, effective and efficient healthcare.

Merging skill and will to lead with intent

‘Leading with intent’ requires a marriage of skill and will, according to Bowen, who adds, “It is dynamic, adaptive leadership that does not occur by happenstance. It requires us to be grounded in our core tenets and values yet nimble and able to adapt to new situations, contexts and environments to effect meaningful change.”

“Leadership is fundamental to developing and – more importantly – sustaining a culture of safety, but there is a real need for practical knowledge around how to lead and sustain culture change,” Bowen writes. She explains that ACHE’s partnership with the National Patient Safety Foundation on developing Leading a Culture of Safety: A Blueprint for Success helps create tactical plans for identifying areas of improvement for healthcare leaders while also providing operationalized solutions “that will make a meaningful difference inside healthcare organizations and – ultimately – for patients.”

Editor’s Note: Deborah Bowen’s article “Leading with Intent”
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