



ACHIEVE RESULTS

THE ROOT OF THE MATTER:

WHAT EVERY HEALTH LEADER SHOULD KNOW

There is no doubt that achieving results is a set of core capabilities for all leaders. The *LEADS in a Caring Environment* framework describes the Achieve Results domain as “Leaders are accountable for managing the resources of the organization to achieve results.” The four capabilities of setting direction; strategically aligning decisions with vision, values, and evidence; taking action to implement decisions; and assessing and evaluating are all supported in the research and literature on leadership.

Research and literature support the ideas of leaders creating a compelling future, identifying specific, challenging goals and outcomes, driving for results, gathering data to make evidence-informed decisions, and taking responsibility for their actions and the actions of their group. The actions do not occur in isolation from other capabilities, because achieving results, in such complex adaptive systems as those of healthcare organizations, requires all of a leader’s wits – leading self, engaging others, developing coalitions, and transforming systems.

Healthcare leaders do not achieve results alone. What this review points out is that leaders need to engage others, collaborate to set direction and strategies that are embedded in the organization, and work for acceptance of goals. They must align all of the elements of the organization—the structure, human resources and skills, and culture and values—to realize their strategies and desired outcomes. But they need not wait until everyone is on board. Leaders take action despite some not being ready to act, and with imperfect plans. They clarify the strategic focus, desired outcomes, and measures of success, and let go of the rest. They use tools to assess and evaluate, such as a Balanced Scorecard or a program logic model, focusing on a few indicators, as a key component of those efforts.

Lead Self
Engage Others
Achieve Results
Develop Coalitions
Systems Transformation



Set Direction

Leaders inspire vision by identifying, establishing, and communicating clear and meaningful expectations and outcomes.

Leaders are expected to be visionary—that is, to have a sense of direction and concern for the future of the organization. Setting the direction of a healthcare organization encompasses scanning the environment, listening to customers/clients/patients, collaborating to develop a compelling vision and specific challenging goals for the future, communicating that vision and goals clearly, and gaining commitment from those who have to act. Setting direction also involves broadening the scope from a focus on the organization to one that includes the community and society.

Strategically Align Decisions with Vision, Values, and Evidence

Leaders integrate organizational missions, values, and reliable, valid evidence to make decisions.

Strategically aligning decisions with vision, values, and evidence requires understanding the complexity of the health system; aligning strategy with structure, culture, and skills; integrating information from various sources; surfacing tensions and conflicting points of view; and balancing the use of evidence with experience. It also requires integrative thinking: the ability to integrate the advantages of one solution with another, rather than choosing one or the other. Leaders build systems out of fragmented parts, make people partners in decision making, and create high-speed transformation by being clear, direct, and predictable.

Take Action to Implement Decisions

Leaders act in a manner consistent with the organizational values to yield effective, efficient, public-centred service.

Taking action requires technical management skills to work across functions and manage projects, time, resources, and budgets. It also requires a focus on detail, developing organizational objectives, policies, plans, program budgets, and structures to achieve optimal performance. And when things fail to go as well as expected, taking action requires dogged determination, a search for creative ways around barriers, and a continued focus on the vision. Effective leaders have an absolute focus on results and are able to command and let go of control at the same time. They acknowledge the finiteness of funds available to them but also seek to maximize their value. They work with those who are ready to act, reducing time associated with decision making in order to deliver results more rapidly. They clarify the strategic focus and the desired outcomes, determine the non-negotiable and transparent measures of success, and then let go of the details. They overcome inertia by engaging in as many two-way conversations as they can.

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Assess and Evaluate

Leaders measure and evaluate outcomes. They hold themselves and others accountable for results achieved against benchmarks and correct the course as appropriate

Healthcare leaders measure and evaluate outcomes against benchmarks and reliable evidence, to be able to correct course if necessary. Competencies for translating vision and strategy into optimal organizational performance include accountability and performance measurement. The leader has to be able to hold people accountable to standards of performance, and to understand and use statistical and financial methods in setting goals and measures for both clinical and organizational performance. Tools for performance-based accountability include project management, the Balanced Scorecard, and logic models. Measuring the achievement of results requires data collection, good information systems, and analysis.

Leaders achieve change results by using all of their capabilities. Successful change also requires recognition of the complexity of the healthcare system and its interactions. This complexity means they need to foster critical connections and networks of relationships, and create opportunities for people to work together in achieving results.

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