



SKILLS FOR SELECTING VALUED LEADERS

Competent leaders are essential to an organization's success and growth. Leaders who have the appropriate skills and abilities and who can adapt to the organization's culture will promote the facility's mission and add to its worth.

In 1990 Eastern Mercy Health System, Radnor, PA, developed an educational course, Selecting Valued Leaders. Representatives of Eastern Mercy's human resources and leadership development departments teach interviewers selection skills on the basis of the organization's values and mission. The course has four major sections:

- Building culture
- Competencies of success
- Strategy for choosing leaders
- Selection skills

Between 10 and 15 hospital chief executive officers and senior hospital managers attend the one-day course. The selection process is best used for selecting top executives; however, Eastern Mercy also uses the process for selecting all managers.

BUILDING CULTURE

Every organization has a culture, which is defined by the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of its staff. Organizational culture includes the mission, styles of communication, language, and climate (i.e., the environment that is constantly changing). Culture sets the boundaries for



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Eastern Mercy Health System Takes a Nine-Step Approach to Choosing Managers

**BY S. FRANK
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growth: The organization grows in relation to the flexibility of its culture.

To select values-oriented leaders, the organization must come to grips with the elements of its culture. In the Selecting Valued Leaders course, each participant examines his or her organization's history, communication styles, behavior, and mission. They describe how the history is visible in daily activities. The class discusses language and styles of communication to determine how formal the culture is and to explore the types

Summary Catholic healthcare facilities seek skilled leaders who can adapt to the organization's culture. Eastern Mercy Health System, Radnor, PA, has developed an educational course, Selecting Valued Leaders, that teaches interviewers selection skills on the basis of the organization's values and mission.

The course covers four major topics. The first is building culture. Each participant examines his or her organization's history, communication styles, organizational behavior, and mission.

Next, course participants discuss the competencies necessary for a leader's success. Eastern Mercy Health System has identified the following six competency clusters essential for its values-oriented leaders: empower people, steward resources, integrate values, act as advocate, support sponsor's priorities, and maintain Catholic identity.

The third part of the course covers a nine-step approach for selecting values-oriented leaders. Participants discuss topics such as the search committee, job description, search strategy, and job offer.

In the final section of the course, participants sharpen their selection skills. They review appropriate interview procedures and discuss open-ended questions to ask the candidate.



of interactions and contacts employees experience in the organization.

Participants also discuss organizational policies, procedures, practices, and activities that contribute to climate. Finally, participants examine their facilities' mission by looking at statements of philosophy and vision. Each participant tells how his or her facility's mission is visible in daily activity.

COMPETENCIES FOR SUCCESS

Every organization requires its leaders to exhibit a combination of competencies to be effective and successful. Catholic healthcare organizations require a special blend of competencies.

Mercy-affiliated health systems have developed leadership competencies out of the values and vision of Mercy. Eastern Mercy Health System has identified the following six competency clusters essential for values-oriented leaders:

- *Empower people.* The manager participates in developing and maintaining a creative, questioning organization united by a commitment to its mission and values, characterized by open and honest communication among all employees.

- *Steward resources.* The manager actively carries on the organization's mission and ensures that the mission guides the use of human, financial, and material resources and shapes plans for community services.

- *Integrate values.* The manager participates in developing and maintaining processes to ensure that the organization's values are reflected in all aspects of organizational life.

- *Act as advocate.* The manager secures the human right to healthcare, especially for the poor and underserved; promotes social justice; and strives to promote societal conditions that contribute to health rather than to illness.

- *Support sponsor's priorities.* The manager supports the sponsorship of the religious congregation by integrating the sponsor's priorities for this healthcare ministry into the organization's current services and strategic plan.

- *Maintain Catholic identity.* The manager ensures that the organization develops and maintains processes and structures to support its religious and spiritual identity as a part of the Church's healing ministry.

In the Selecting Valued Leaders course, participants analyze the competency clusters' focus, measurement, and behavioral indicators. Managers can thus better understand the clusters' practical aspects and unique elements.

For example, in industry, a leader must be results oriented. A strong goal orientation may

be tied to personal achievement. On the other hand, a values-oriented leader in a Catholic healthcare organization may concentrate on the careful management of resources. The focus may be on an expected result without the tie to personal achievement.

Alternatively, empowering people is a focus unto itself. A Catholic healthcare leader's activities may include efforts not only to involve co-workers in decisions but to create an environment where decisions are made at the lowest level. Collaboration and consensus-building skills are essential.





STRATEGY FOR CHOOSING LEADERS

Eastern Mercy Health System uses a nine-step process to select values-oriented leaders, from selecting search committee members to offering a candidate the job (see **Box** below).

Establish a Search Committee Search committee members are the key to selecting a values-oriented leader. The search committee should include representatives of the board of directors and management staff. However, the committee should be small (four people) to keep the selection process efficient. Committee members must agree on the process for candidate selection so they can establish expectations and choose an appropriate candidate.

Draft a Job Description The selection committee must determine the duties and responsibilities of the job and set performance guidelines by which the employee will be judged.

The search committee should include representatives of the board and management.

Identify Characteristics Necessary for the Candidate's Success

In the Selecting Valued Leaders course, participants discuss the particular skills needed for successful fit and placement in a specific job. Participants discuss technical, professional, and leadership characteristics to better understand the uniqueness of each set of skills and how they overlap.

Establish a Compensation Package An appropriate salary package is needed to fit into the facility's salary philosophy and practice. The committee must set the salary range and determine incentives, benefits, and perquisites. The need for a contract depends on the facility's philosophy and practice.

Develop a Search Strategy The committee must decide how it will search for candidates. Various strategies are appropriate. It can use internal referrals, which can be informal or formal, such as using an established succession plan. External searching includes placing newspaper or journal ads, posting the job on the Mercy network, or using an external search firm.

Conduct Initial Candidate Screening One or two committee members should screen candidates for technical and management competencies. Through focused or evaluative interviews, the committee can eliminate candidates who do not have the appropriate technical or managerial competencies.

Hold Values-oriented Interviews with Finalists The search committee interviews the finalists using the leadership competencies criteria and rates each candidate (as described later).

Choose a Candidate The search committee should systematically review each candidate's leadership competencies ratings. Together, the committee should select the candidate. The committee needs to determine a methodology for deciding on the candidate. This will include:

- Combining the independent ratings into some overall assessment
- Establishing a determination point below which candidates are rejected

Candidates who have a major weakness in any of the six critical dimensions should be rejected because all are required in sufficient degrees for managerial effectiveness. Consideration should also be given to the position for which the candidate is applying. Some value clusters will be more important than others, depending on the position.

Make an Offer One member of the search committee should offer the job to the person selected and handle negotiations. Appropriate negotiation parameters are essential for the healthcare facility to make a satisfactory offer that the candidate will accept.

PROCESS FOR SELECTING VALUES-ORIENTED LEADERS

STEP 1: ESTABLISH A SEARCH COMMITTEE

Determine who will be on the committee.

STEP 2: DRAFT A JOB DESCRIPTION

Determine duties, responsibilities, expectations, and performance guidelines.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY CHARACTERISTICS NECESSARY FOR THE CANDIDATE'S SUCCESS

- Establish a leadership profile.
- Determine necessary technical skills.
- Decide what characteristics are unique to the position.

STEP 4: ESTABLISH A COMPENSATION PACKAGE

Determine salary range, incentives, terms of contract, and perquisites.

STEP 5: DEVELOP A SEARCH STRATEGY

Decide how the search committee will find candidates: through a search firm, internal referrals, system referrals, advertising, or a succession plan.

STEP 6: CONDUCT INITIAL CANDIDATE SCREENING

- Assess candidates' technical and management competencies.
- Identify finalists.

STEP 7: HOLD VALUES-ORIENTED INTERVIEWS WITH FINALISTS

Review candidates' leadership competencies.

STEP 8: CHOOSE A CANDIDATE

STEP 9: MAKE AN OFFER



SELECTION SKILLS

Trying to get a handle on the values a candidate holds is difficult to do during an interview because interviewers have a tendency to evaluate the candidate before methodically carrying out the steps of the interview. Research shows that interviewers reach an evaluative decision in the first 90 seconds of the interview. Working through the steps of the interviewing process decreases the chances of making a hasty decision.

Much of the section on conducting an interview in the Selecting Valued Leaders course focuses on:

- Eliciting natural behavior from the candidate
- Observing the candidate's behavior

- Assessing the candidate's behavior

Eliciting Natural Behavior from the Candidate An interview does not lend itself to eliciting the candidate's typical behaviors. Candidates are usually there only to impress the interviewer enough to secure employment. Consequently, candidates will say things and try to exhibit behaviors that will reflect well on their candidacy.

Candidates may be guarded and anxious about sharing what they perceive to be detrimental to their chances for employment. The interviewer must therefore decrease the applicant's anxiety so that he or she will communicate openly and show a wide range of behaviors. The interviewer can accomplish this by establishing rapport and main-

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewers need to ask candidates open-ended questions to bring out the candidates' values. The questions should focus on the six competencies.

EMPOWERS PEOPLE

- What are the people like in your current job?
- What personality types do you find it easiest to work with?
- What personality types are difficult for you to work with?
- What have you done to build a positive working environment in your current job?
- In your current position, how are people encouraged to grow? What role do you play in encouraging that growth?
- Give me an example of programs you have instituted with employee groups.
- Tell me about your relationship and interactions with medical staff, nurses, and other groups.

STEWARDS RESOURCES

- Describe your current employer's mission. What has been your part in achieving the goals of your organization (e.g., financial, operational, other)?
- How have you used resources effectively in furthering your employer's mission in your goals and objectives?
- Tell me about three things you've accomplished in your current job (e.g., financial, operational, other).
- Describe a situation where you had

to deal with conflicting priorities about the use of the organization's resources?

- How does your current employer's mission compare with this organization's mission?

INTEGRATES VALUES

- What does your current organization stand for? How do you support these values?
- Describe an organizational change you've been part of. What was your role in it?
- Tell me about a time when you have had to assess someone's commitment to the organization's values. How did you go about it?
- What is important in the management style of your current position?
- Give me an example of a time when an injustice was brought to your attention. What did you do about it?

ACTS AS ADVOCATE

- What experiences have you had in working toward bettering the lives of the poor and disadvantaged?
- Describe an issue you're concerned about and what you've done about it.
- Give me an example of when you've been involved in collaborative efforts with different groups to bring about some kind of change in society. What role did you play?
- Tell me about a time you've taken a stand on something that was important to you.

- What opportunities have you had to understand the special needs and circumstances of the poor?

SUPPORTS SPONSOR'S PRIORITIES

- How did you go about learning what was important to your sponsors (owners, trustees) in your current job?
- What kinds of interactions do you have with sponsors in your current job?
- Tell me about a time when sponsors changed their priorities for your organization. What did you do?
- How would you assess your understanding of the goals and spirit of the Sisters of Mercy?
- Give an example of how you've responded when a sponsor wanted something implemented.

MAINTAINS CATHOLIC IDENTITY

- What kinds of concerns have you seen religious-sponsored organizations deal with?
- Describe a work situation where you dealt with a difficult ethical issue.
- Tell me about a time when you participated in a project involving persons of different religious beliefs.
- How would you assess your understanding of the Catholic Church's involvement with healthcare?
- How does the organizational culture of your current position compare with the cultures in other jobs you have had? How did you deal with changing from one culture to another?



taining spontaneity. Rapport is probably the most vital condition for a successful values-oriented interview. The interviewer must set the stage for the relationship by choosing the setting and the way he or she greets the candidate and by exhibiting active listening throughout the interview. Guidelines include:

- Ensure proper scheduling for the interview.
- Conduct the interview in a private, comfortable setting, free from distractions.
- Greet the candidate in a pleasant manner.
- Assume a relaxed, informal manner.
- Begin with a "warm-up" period.
- Convey warmth, friendliness, and sincerity.
- Be careful not to give clues that communicate your reactions, attitudes, and feelings.
- Give frequent reinforcement through attentive listening.
- Do not show emotions in response to a candidate's negative behavior or information.
- Do not be reluctant to appear imperfect.
- Interrupt tactfully and only for clarification or redirection.

Another key to eliciting natural behavior is guiding the interview. Interviewers should use the following skills:

- Let the candidate do the majority of talking.
- Probe certain areas without losing the necessary rapport and spontaneity.
- Redirect the candidate who gets bogged

down in irrelevant details or who wanders too far afield of the interview agenda.

- Ask open-ended (rather than leading) questions (see **Box** on p. 39).

Observing the Candidate's Behavior In a values-oriented interview, interviewers need to differentiate between behavior (what the candidate does) and content (what the candidate says). Observation skills are extremely difficult to cultivate.

What a person says during an interview tends to be positive because he or she is trying to make a good impression. Also, not everyone has a realistic view of his or her own strengths and weaknesses. The interviewer cannot rely exclusively on the candidate's words but must also observe his or her behaviors. Behaviors are generally more difficult to mask and, therefore, are more reliable indicators of a person's relative strengths and weaknesses. Behaviors are also more accurate predictors of *future* behaviors.

Some basic principles can enhance an interviewer's effectiveness in observing candidates' behavior:

- Refrain from making judgments during the interview.
- Refrain from anticipating your next question.
- Let the candidate do the talking.

In addition, the interviewer should take notes during the interview and evaluate the candidate

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SELECTING VALUED LEADERS: RATING SCALE

Interviewers at Eastern Mercy Health System use the following rating scale, giving candidates a score of 1 to 3 (from low to high) in each area.

EMPOWERS PEOPLE

Working with others to accomplish results

- Sincere and believable
- Approachable, open, honest
- Aware of people's feelings
- Friendly, approachable, easy to talk to
- High energy, positive attitude
- Mentors others

STEWARDS RESOURCES

Using resources effectively to accomplish mission

- Completes what is started
- Sets clear directions and priorities
- Recognizes resource limitations

- Conceptual, logical, creative

INTEGRATES VALUES

Implementing effective organizational practices

- Collaborates, sense of team
- Involves people in decisions
- Uses authority well
- Develops positive culture

ACTS AS ADVOCATE

Addressing unmet healthcare needs of community, especially among the poor

- Takes action when issues arise
- Collaborates with community groups
- Sense of urgency
- Recognizes special needs of poor

SUPPORTS SPONSOR'S PRIORITIES

Integrating priorities of sponsor into strategic plans

- Understands sponsor's identity
- Comfortable working with women religious as sponsors
- Develops effective relationships with sponsors
- Seeks to understand healthcare as a ministry

MAINTAINS CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Dealing with religious and spiritual dimension of Catholic healthcare

- Knowledge of religious and ethical guidelines
- Understands heritage and beliefs of Church
- Seeks collaboration with local churches
- Supports ecumenical environment

RECOMMENDATIONS: Hire Pass

COMMENTS/CONCERNS:

VALUED LEADERS

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later. Inattention, bias, and the natural process of forgetting can change or weaken our recall of data.

Note taking should not disrupt the interview. The candidate will probably expect and accept note taking. It will also lessen the intensity of the contact. Note taking should be a natural part of the interview. Guidelines include:

- Tell the candidate you will be taking notes.
- Let the candidate see that you are taking notes.
- Write down what you see and hear, not what you think it means.
- Record anything you hear or observe more than once each time it occurs; these notes will be helpful later when determining whether your impressions were accurate.

Interviewers at Eastern Mercy use an interview rating scale to record data and to assess candidates in each competency area (see **Box** on p. 40).

Assessing the Candidate's Behavior Once the interviews have been completed, the interviewer should assess all the candidates. He or she must:

- Base conclusions on all data (words and behaviors) gathered in the interview.
- Be objective and critical.
- Look for consistencies over the course of the interview.

A BASIS FOR SUCCESS

Values-oriented leaders are fundamental to an organization's success and growth. Leaders who have values congruent with the organization's vision and mission add esteem to it. To select values-oriented leaders, administrators must examine and define the culture. They must identify, describe, and agree on the competencies of success in that environment.

Selecting Valued Leaders has helped Eastern Mercy executives focus on leadership development competencies. The course has increased their awareness of the characteristics of success and of how to select future leaders. Eastern Mercy's leaders have learned to integrate the organization's values and to live out those values in their work. □

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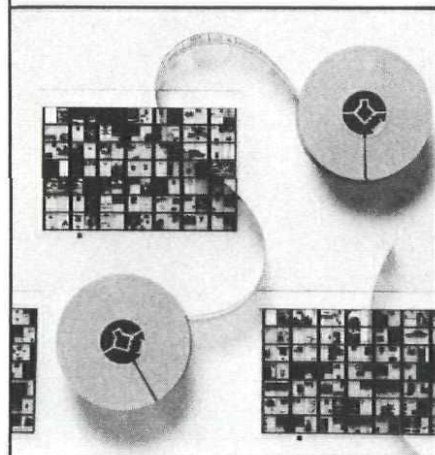
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