



# Emerging Leaders: Part 1

By Richard A. Green, DDS, MBA,  
Director Emeritus of Business Systems  
Development

## REPRINTED FROM THE PANKEYGRAM

When people ask, “Where are the leaders in dentistry today?” My sense is you are looking at the potential as you look in the mirror! What are you willing to do about it? Thirty years ago, at a leadership workshop, I heard the definition of a leader as someone “willing and able.” I have been rubbing that definition around in my crucible for a very long time and have taken as my own definition the following. A leader is a person who is willing and able to influence behavior – his or her own and others’.

I see leaders emerging as they intentionally accept responsibility for developing their own leadership. Emerging leadership is first about being willing. It’s an attitude, a positive one at that! Next, it’s about being able, which demands intentionally developed skills. Leaders are continually learning and growing.

We tend to think leaders have always been leaders. But, in actuality, they’re individuals like you and me who are positive minded and have been taking advantage of opportunities to practice skills in an effort to make responsible change. Emerging leaders, who are dentists, learn to engage others in order to build, evolve, enlarge, and change their practice through a positive attitude and newly acquired skills.

Glimpses of Leadership: From time to time, developing leaders see glimpses of their leadership as they clarify and communicate the beliefs, assumptions, and values that hold their organization together. They share ideas that are set at an angle to conventional thought and action. In this sharing, a discontent occurs that hopefully moves the leaders and others toward a preferred future. Sharing ideas (and discontent) intentionally fuels change.

The movement toward a preferred future can take intentional effort over a period of years. Emerging leaders are not disheartened by this understanding. They persevere. Dr. Pankey often said, “It takes 15 years to get it in your tissues!” A book that I am presently reading offers a similar observation on Corporate America. Experts on organizational behavior tell us

[rich@evergreenconsultinggroup.com](mailto:rich@evergreenconsultinggroup.com)

5302 Ladyfinger Lake Road

Sanibel, Florida 33957



that meaningful change in an organizations' culture (the "why" and the "how" of getting things done or accomplished) can take 15 years!

For many of you, at first glance, this is not good news. You want to be done. Instead, take a breath, be gentle on yourself, find a study/support group, and keep on going! You will become what you think about, even though it will take time to develop the skills for accomplishing your goals. Find ways to celebrate the small achievements and bits of developing clarity along the way.

**Fitting Pieces:** Success, even when clearly defined, is often experienced as a moving target. Putting your "life puzzle" together, while the pieces are simultaneously morphing, is at best difficult. Leading requires learning, and learning requires doing. Therefore, leading is not a spectator sport. In order to learn about learning, and to lead for all that matter, we must do it, experience it, and then reflect on what happened in order to refine the process. Sound complicated? It's not. It's called "life through intention," a "proactive lifestyle," or "future focus." If we do this ourselves, we can lead others in the same process of choosing to choose.

So, how do we deal with discomfort? Though the waters may have been charted by others, they are uncharted in our

own experience, and that tends to create a tension or anxiety. But, stick with it! Know that when you feel uncomfortable, if you stay in those moments, you are about to learn something. The challenge is to apply afresh the tasks and responsibilities of a leader, even in the midst of being a dentist. In time, a competence and confidence will emerge with yourself and others. Ultimately, you will own your attitude, decisions, skills, and achievements. And, you will own the vision of being a leader. The pieces will come together.

**Focusing on Outcomes:** Great leaders are measured by what they achieve, including, but not limited to, improvements in operational profits, an intentional market niche, an organizational culture, and increased equity for all stakeholders. In the practice of dentistry, these are accomplished through applying behavioral principles of patient and staff engagement to effectively manage the organization.

The many tasks of leadership work together to shape your desired outcomes. Step back and look at the whole before dissecting the parts. Then, seek to learn, understand, and develop requisite skills to perform the tasks. As you rearrange the pieces of "your puzzle," the tasks will always remain. This is to say that you are never done; there is no finish line, just more refining, refocusing, and refreshing

[rich@evergreenconsultinggroup.com](mailto:rich@evergreenconsultinggroup.com)

5302 Ladyfinger Lake Road

Sanibel, Florida 33957



your approach to a frequently re-energized vision for your future.

**The Tasks:** A leader is committed to responsible change. The tasks used to accomplish this include but are not limited to:

1. Vision and revision (a lifelong task).
2. Be a mentor. (You learn best when you engage others in learning.)
3. Know yourself. (You cannot take someone where you have not been.)
4. Make sense of operational experiences. (Use concepts to organize and understand seemingly unassociated or random events.)
5. Stabilize values. (Identify, clarify, and claim operational values.)
6. Build a constituency (through employee and patient engagement).
7. Create experiences that challenge the accepted norm (for all involved in the practice).

These seven tasks need to be intentionally performed habitually to maximize your leadership impact. As you internalize these seven and practice them, your leadership will emerge. You will do well to remember that there are important individual differences in leaders – their styles and their strengths.

Build on Strengths. Accentuate Development. Emerging leaders have learned to leverage the use of their strengths to maximize team and organizational performance. They see themselves and others as a work in process. They go about the lifelong building of a strengths-based learning organization that accentuates leadership development for all who participate.

They measure and monitor the impact of human and financial capital. They study measurable performance outcomes in order to learn where the organization is strong and where it is weak. They then align their leadership and commit to behaviors that will accelerate desired change. They learn to energize their organization's emotional economy, inspire patient and team loyalty, think strategically, and lead into the future – maintaining the highest level of integrity and ethics.



Have you identified your unique strengths and talents that you can leverage in performing the seven leadership tasks? Do you fully realize that we are never done? Next issue, I will place, in the crucible, identifying strengths and being a role model of growth.

[rich@evergreenconsultinggroup.com](mailto:rich@evergreenconsultinggroup.com)

5302 Ladyfinger Lake Road  
Sanibel, Florida 33957