Grow your own staff

Enlightened managers know that the secret to realising their own potential is to empower the staff that work for them, argues Neslyn Watson-Druee.

Empowerment in nursing means enabling nurses to act. Nurse leaders cannot hope to achieve success by themselves. They need, therefore, to develop other nurses to release their creativity, talent and vision in order to enhance nursing and healthcare.

Nurse leaders who empower their staff do so by enlisting the support of all those who can develop nursing and healthcare. They work to encourage collaboration, build teams and empower others. Simply put, they enable others to make valuable contributions.

Nurse leaders will feel empowered when other nurses are empowered. They will then be more likely to use their energies to produce extraordinary results. Central to empowerment is having the belief in one's ability to get things done. And this requires positive self-esteem.

Nurse leaders need to ask themselves:

- What foundations am I building for nurses' self-esteem and happiness - particularly black nurses? Some nurses perceive that they are more valued than others.
- What qualities and values should nursing continue to embrace, so that diverse communities have access to quality healthcare regardless of the means to pay?
- What price will nursing pay for not promoting and developing equal opportunities within the profession?
- Where do nurse leaders honestly stand in meeting the personal and management development needs of all nurses, including those from black and minority ethnic communities?
- What choices exist for nurses who have no opportunities to perform useful work, no means to demonstrate and develop their skills, and who are denied access because they don't fit in with the status quo?
- What do NHS managers, chief executives, non-executive directors, educators, community leaders and politicians need to do to enable all nurses to be valued and treated fairly?

When a nurse's potential is wasted, it is wasted at a high cost to the community and the healthcare. That is why they chose nursing. That is why they chose healthcare.

Nurses who are empowered feel responsibility for their team's successes and shortcomings. If nurses do not know where the team is going and what the standards for success are, how can they evaluate their own performance objectively?

Nurse leaders need to refrain from platitudes such as 'Nurses are important resources.' They need to believe instead in their nurses, to grow them, and thereby transform their staff into leaders.

Powerless managers tend to use petty and dictatorial management styles. Powerlessness creates organisational systems where covering oneself and passing the buck become the preferred styles for dealing with diversity and differences.

Nurse leaders need to appreciate that when they hand power to their charges, they increase their level of influence with them. When they go out of their way on behalf of nursing, they establish credit with their staff - and they can draw upon this credit in the face of adversity.

Nurse leaders will create a sense of covenant when they help all nurses to grow - including nurses from black and minority ethnic communities.

Nurse leaders who empower their staff ensure that their teams are highly visible, and that the efforts of individuals and teams are recognised. Telling other health professionals and society in general what nursing and nurses are doing empowers both the leader and the team.

By empowering, leaders enlarge other people's sphere of influence, keep people informed and make heroes and heroines of others. Empowering nurse leaders will use four important principles:

- They will give people important work to do on critical issues.
- They will give people discretion and autonomy over their key responsibilities.
- They will give visibility to others and provide recognition for their efforts.

If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain.
If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees.
If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow people.

Chinese Proverb
They will build relationships for others, connecting them with powerful people, and finding them sponsors and mentors.

Reference

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Every nurse leader needs to become an empowering nurse leader by:
- Listening to the needs of clients and patients
- Negotiating for the development of quality healthcare
- Sharing one's goals and aspirations, and engaging the commitment of others
- Building nurses' individual strengths in non-discriminatory ways
- Emphasising co-operation and developing team work
- Coaching staff for growth
- Working with others as if one lacked authority
- Making the involvement of others a habit
- Encouraging healthcare professionals to assist each other.

Guidelines for contributors ...

Nursing Management seeks contributions from nurse leaders and associated colleagues in all sectors of the health services about their work in developing and promoting the profession of nursing.

Articles should aim to help colleagues in nurse leadership survive and thrive amid the often harsh realities of the new health service.

We are interested in your opinions on best practice; in the new solutions, innovations, and approaches to healthcare, education and policy. Nurses are at the leading edge of many developments, and we want to share your experiences.

This is not to say we want to hear exclusively the good side of your experiences. Nursing Management is nobody's propagandist.

Articles should be targeted towards a busy audience who seek signposts for the future. The maximum length for submitted articles is 2,000 words, and we prefer articles which are either around 1,000 or 1,700 words in length.

To help ensure that your article hits the target first time, it is best that you telephone or write to the Editor, John Naish, who will be pleased to discuss with you the content and format of your piece.

...We look forward to hearing from you