

Leadership lessons from a year with the Philadelphia Eagles

Navigating the Academic Waters

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10:00AM-10:30AM

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Course Description:

Professional football and academic emergency medicine may not intersect at first glance. The speaker will share leadership lessons gained from a year of working with the Philadelphia Eagles football team, and discuss how they can be applied to promote faculty development in academic emergency medicine.

Course Objectives:

1. Discuss leadership principles that contribute to career development in emergency medicine
2. Translate experiences from outside of healthcare into lessons for professional growth

Outline:

1. *Find a mentor*

- veteran Eagles running back Brian Westbrook became a mentor to LeSean McCoy in his rookie season; they still maintain a mentoring relationship almost 10 yrs later¹
- mentors help less experienced colleagues navigate their work environment
- mentoring offers assistance with personal development and emotional support, along with components of one or more of the following²:
 - Coaching: impart a specific skill or reach a specific goal
 - Advising: time-limited specific domain of professional development
 - Teaching: active conveyance of knowledge or skills within a topic area
 - Tutoring: one-on-one teaching to achieve a competency
 - Advocacy: represent or publicize achievements
 - Role modeling: demonstration of how to be successful

2. *Surround yourself with people that make you better*

- Head coach Andy Reid has had 10 of his assistant coaches go on to become NFL head coaches³
- Prioritize the development of people on your team
- “Managers of the best workgroups were more likely to spend a disproportionate amount of time with their high producers, match talents to tasks, and emphasize individual strengths over seniority in making personnel decisions”⁴ (p.41)

3. *Let players (people) do what they do best*

- Coach Reid allowed skill players to showcase their talents and trusted assistant coaches to do their jobs
- The next coach (Chip Kelley) tried to fit players into his system → players unhappy and unproductive
- More effective to maximize a person's strengths instead of trying to fix their weaknesses
- A leader "must help each employee mold his job around the way he works the most naturally"
- "Organizations focused on maximizing the natural talents of their employees increased engagement levels by an average of 33% per year"⁴ (p.41)
- "We grow more in our areas of greater ability (our strengths are our development areas)"⁵

4. *Foster a supportive locker room culture*

- Culture: the values and behaviors that contribute to the environment of an organization
- Social capital bridges the space between people⁴
- Helps with building a cohesive team
- Coach Reid liked people, but came across as no-nonsense in his approach
- Current head coach Doug Pederson was chosen partly for his emotional intelligence⁶
- Leaders can improve workplace culture by applying the 5 components of emotional intelligence⁷
 - Self-awareness: ability to honestly assess oneself and how one affects others
 - Self-regulation: ability to control emotions or channel them productively
 - Motivation: have a passion for work beyond money or status
 - Empathy: understand emotions in others
 - Social skills: proficiency in managing relationships

5. *Celebrate all the small victories*

- Players are congratulated on every good play; we should also replay and praise moments of excellence
- "Help your team member recognize what excellence looks like for her...so she can anchor it, re-create it, and refine it"⁵
- Recognition helps with engagement, especially if best practices are followed⁸:
 - Timely and specific
 - Consider peer-to-peer (more meaningful than praise from a superior)
 - Socialize the recognition
 - Make it easy
 - Tie it to organizational goals (encourages more of the behavior that leads to achieving those goals)
- Praise costs nothing, and has dual benefits: "increased happiness and decreases in depression for up to a month afterwards...in the people who give the praise"⁴ (p.58)

6. *Don't let biases get in the way*

- My orthopedic sports medicine colleague and myself were the first women to join the Eagles medical staff, and we faced multiple instances of gender bias during training camp
- Implicit bias affects all of us

- Research has shown a negative correlation between levels of implicit bias in healthcare providers and indicators of quality of care⁹
- Awareness of bias is the first step to increasing impartiality

7. *What happens; it's how you respond to it that matters*

- Defensive coordinator Jim Johnson passed away from cancer during training camp; a few weeks later starting linebacker Stewart Bradley tore his ACL and was out for the season
- Eagles posted a 11-5 record in 2009 despite losing these key members of the defensive team
- Resilience, or “working through adversity”
- Individuals facing adversity need support from their environment – the values and culture of one’s family, community, and society influences their resilience¹⁰
- Too much focus on individual wellness – mindfulness training, stress reduction, self-care
- Need to build an environment that supports the individual – collegiality amongst staff, open and collaborative communication, adequate resources for the job¹¹
- Feeling unsupported by peers/superiors/administration, poor psychological safety and low administrative autonomy were significantly related to burnout¹²

8. *Set a Mission & Vision*

- Everyone has a shared goal
- Mission & Vision become your program drivers
- Mission: the current purpose of the organization → perform on the field and in the community to improve life in the region, make the environment greener, and enhance profitability
- Vision: what the organization aims to achieve → be Super Bowl champs

References

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