

Dynamic leadership speaker impresses YPS Forum at Plastic Surgery 2010

BY FARZAD NAHAI, MD

Leader: A person who by example, talents and quality of leadership plays a directing role, wields influence or has a following in any sphere of activity or thought. A man or woman is considered a true leader when others make the choice to follow that person – not because it's required by some authoritative relationship.

– Bruce Manchion
CEO, Universal Training Concepts

Why did Colonial Army troops risk their lives by following Gen. George Washington into battle rather than retreat from the well-armed British army? Because they *chose* to support the man who had earned their trust, motivated them and gave them purpose – hallmarks of true leadership, according to Universal Training Concepts CEO Bruce Manchion.

Manchion, who delivered the YPS Forum address during *Plastic Surgery 2010* in Toronto, titled his speech “Not Too Young to Lead” – and his remarks made many of those in attendance feel as though their inner leadership qualities had been stoked by his illustrative examples of a successful leader's skills.

What defines a leader?

A “manager” influences by the authority of position and title; a “leader” is influential because people *choose* to follow him or her, Manchion said.

What makes soldiers willing to risk their lives for their general? What will prompt your staff to go to the mat for you and your patients when you're not around, instead of taking the easy way out? What will create mature residents who learn and excel under your guidance, as opposed to skating by with the minimum?

Leaders have the ability to create relationships with those around them that engender a feeling of importance and worth; a leader focuses on and nurtures others' strengths while neutralizing their weaknesses; a leader knows how to change and adapt to the environment; and a leader knows how to create a motivating environment and give purpose to others.

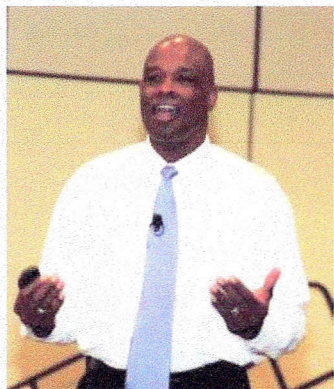
These must be addressed *every day*, Manchion noted.

Foundation of leadership

In many instances, possessing the most basic information on your staff can have far-reaching benefits, Manchion said.

“Do you know your secretary's birth-day?” he asked. “How many children does your nurse have, and what's his or her spouse's name? If you don't know the answer to these questions, you should learn them – because they're part of relationship-building, which is the key foundational element in being a leader.”

Talking with your staff and showing a genuine interest in their lives and likes demonstrate that you care about them, and that he or she has more meaning to you beyond the fact that they work for you. Taking a personal interest in team members will make the difference between the person who chooses to follow your lead no matter what the circumstance – and the person who does only what's required in their job description and withers in the face of a challenge. Your staff, residents or team members will respond to your interest in them in a very favorable manner. Once a strong foundational relationship is formed, everything else can be built on top of it.



Bruce Manchion discusses leadership with the YPS Forum during Plastic Surgery 2010.

Nurture strengths

Putting more effort into working on strengths rather than weaknesses was perhaps a more contentious part of Manchion's presentation. “It's wiser and more efficient to spend energy on supporting and nurturing the strengths of those around us, in order to improve overall performance,” Manchion said. A small amount of effort will result in a significant increase in this area, he added.

At the same time, it's equally important to manage weaknesses to “neutral” so they don't become problematic, he added. That's because it's wasteful and ineffective to pour energy into trying to correct weaknesses when at most you may receive a modest diminution, according to Manchion.

However, many audience members felt that weaknesses should be directly addressed, with the goal of eliminating or significantly reducing them. Some YPS members in the audience noted that strengths are strengths, and there's little to gain in improving them – but there's more to gain in reducing weaknesses. An analogy can be found in the advice residents often receive when studying for the In-Service or ABPS exams: Spend more time on the subjects you don't know as well, versus the subjects in which you're strong.

Manchion countered by saying that when dealing with team members, bolstering their strengths and neutralizing (not ignoring) their weaknesses will have the best results and be the most efficient use of your efforts. This principle is summed up by author Marcus Buckingham in his book *Now Discover Your Strengths*: “Taking something from below average to slightly above average takes a great deal of effort and... is not very rewarding. Transforming something strong into something superb takes just as much effort.”

Change yourself not others

Manchion also encouraged us to look into ourselves for change, rather than exclusively trying to change others. “You need to change *you*,” he said. “You need to grow *you*.” We can succeed by adjusting ourselves to the situation versus spending more energy trying to change the situation or the person to suit ourselves, he said. Changing yourself is a daily exercise and is often difficult; however, it's an easier and more effective means of being a leader than trying to change others.

In order to change yourself, you sometimes need to “let things go.” For instance, your nurse forgot to set up your syringes for a local injection for the third time; instead

of lashing out (changing yourself by remaining calm), you should address it (maintaining accountability) and let it go (creating a motivating environment versus a negative environment). Your spouse forgets the dry cleaning again and you don't have clothes for work – make a change in yourself by addressing the situation to find a solution, and let it go. Change is necessary, inevitable and can be hard to do, but you need to embrace change in yourself, Manchion said.

Environment and purpose

An accompanying aspect to changing yourself is creating a motivating *environment*, as opposed to trying to motivate people. Lift others around you based on your example and behavior. Be a positive person. Instruct and lead from a position of positive reinforcement and support rather than motivating based on fear of failure or threats, he said.

Manchion provided an example from the home setting: If you say to your child, “If you touch that one more time, you will be sent to your room for a timeout,” you might instead say, “It would make mommy/daddy very happy if you did not touch that any-

more.” You can use positive language and still get important points across.

What's your purpose, and what's your team's purpose? “Leaders know their purpose and remind their people – *aggressively and daily*,” Manchion said. Give other people purpose behind what they do, and let them hear it from you each day. To ensure this action has the desired effect, a leader must be direct, clear and remove any barriers in his or her team's path of purpose.

What kind of leader are you?

Manchion made the most of his short time with YPS Forum members by encouraging us, getting us to participate and helping us see what it takes to be a leader. He taught us that leadership is a strategic choice, and that we should choose wisely.

All that he presented – from the importance of relationships, nurturing strengths, changing ourselves, creating a motivating environment and giving purpose – are tools we can use every day to live up to the motto “not too young to lead.”

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YPS completes productive year – and plans for more progress

BY LYNN JEFFERS, MD
YPS STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR

The Young Plastic Surgeons Steering Committee has had a very productive year, and both its leaders and members hope to build upon the momentum that's been created. Several changes have occurred in 2010, including the committee's restructuring and a change in the definition of a “young plastic surgeon.”

Steering Committee restructuring

The YPS Steering Committee has been restructured to better reflect the committee structure of ASPS. The expanded committee consists of the Steering Committee chair (Lynn Jeffers, MD), the Steering Committee vice chair (Bob Basu, MD) and YPS Workgroup vice chairs: Academic and International Affairs (Raman Mahabir, MD); Advocacy (Sami Khan, MD); Communications (Farzad Nahai, MD); Education (Jeff Janis, MD); Membership (Stephanie Rowen, MD); and Research (Andrew Chen, MD, and Howard Wang, MD).

Each vice chair is responsible for keeping abreast of the committees within ASPS that fall under his or her section, as well as the YPS special projects that fall under his or her workgroup. Not only will this allow YPS to better coordinate efforts with ASPS, it will foster excellent training for leadership development within our Steering Committee.

Additionally, each Steering Committee member has been assigned a specific workgroup – so that everyone has direct involvement in a YPS project or workgroup.

Redefining YPS eligibility criteria

Acting on a proposal from the YPS Steering Committee, the ASPS Executive Committee approved new eligibility criteria for YPS membership: age 41 years or younger and within the first eight years of practice – whichever occurs last. The addition of the eight years of practice reflects the changing

demographics of young plastic surgeons in the Society.

Events and advances

Get involved in the YPS Forum and Steering Committee, and let us know what we can do for you.

Both have been sources of great events and new ideas, including:

- The ability of members to pay their dues in installments or online
- A proposal from YPS to allow for a personalized, online checklist for the MOC-PS[®] process that was passed onto the American Board of Plastic Surgery
- The YPS “Young at Heart Award,” bestowed each year to a deserving and seasoned ASPS Member Surgeon (The 2010 award was presented to Michael McGuire, MD, in Toronto.)

Other popular events at the annual meeting include Medical Students Day, Breakfast with Champions and the “Fresh Faces, Real Cases” panel.

Our plans for 2011 include continuing our work on a database for researchers, initiating better resident communication and planning our second annual YPS Annual Meeting Service project.

We will soon send a survey to YPS members and residents in which we will ask how we can best serve them. Anyone with an idea for the Steering Committee or interested in becoming involved can contact me at lynnjeffersasps@gmail.com, or the appropriate vice chair.

To find the YPS Steering Committee web page and contact information, go to the Members Only section of the ASPS website at plasticsurgery.org, click on “Committees,” followed by “Committee Listing” and then “Communications/Member Services Committees.”

We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Jeffers can be reached at lynnjeffersasps@gmail.com.