



# DTAP

Thoughts on leadership  
by Karl Pister



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Here we go again. Great ideas shared by me that I learned from other people.

I was speaking with a nurse with decades of experience in ICU and ED departments. Truly a wise person. She is an executive with an extremely successful physician-owned clinic. She was relating a conversation she had with a CMO of a hospital system that has employed physicians. They were speaking about influencing, guiding, and leading physicians in the business aspects of medicine.





The CMO said to her that it was fairly simple from his end...something to the effect that, as employees, they pretty much told them what the directions were, which certainly sped up the decision process.

The nurse executive wisely stated that in the physician-led environment they needed to not tell, but ask, and plant seeds. Thus, the abbreviation at the start of the article DTAP - Don't tell...Ask...plant.

Some thoughts on this:

There is ample concern regarding physician burnout and poor resiliency. And this with a highly educated, value driven, passionate population.

A simple recipe for disaster is this:

1. Take this type of population
2. Take away authority in areas of responsibility
3. Don't involve them in decision making
4. Don't acknowledge areas of expertise
5. Don't provide valid forums for discussion and concern



I would argue that while this CMO viewed his process as efficient, in the long run it will be disastrous. It brings to mind the theme that Stephen Covey spoke to when he said that we always seem to have time to repair a process, out of necessity, but don't have the time to do it right the first time.

Contrast that with the nurse's approach - Don't tell...ask...plant seeds.

Become a master of questions:

1. Know your people well enough to dig deep with such questions.
2. While we have spoken in the past regarding resources on questions, here are my top reads:
  - *Questions Are The Answer* - Hal Gregerson
  - *A More Beautiful Question* - Warren Berger
  - *A Book of Beautiful Questions* - Warren Berger
  - *Good Leaders Ask Great Questions* - John Maxwell
3. Plant the seed with questions...The great three from Simon Sinek's work of *Start with Why*:
  - Why?
  - What if?
  - How?



Karl!!!!....we don't have time for this! Takes too long!!! Way too idealistic!!!

Understood. And are the alternative better?

1. Poor physician engagement?

2. Flight of talent? Checked on recruitment costs lately?

One small organization, struggling to meet budgets, was cutting expenses at all levels. They had lost nine physicians over a period of six years. The flight, as reported in exit interviews, was specifically tied to the C-suite's approach to leadership. Definitely a "tell" environment. At that time the cost of recruitment ranged, for their specialty, from \$250-\$400K, per physician. If my math is correct, that was a hit of \$2.25-\$3.6M to their bottom line...just a thought.

3. Quality issues due to lack of engagement?

I work in organizations that do it both ways. The difference, on so many levels, is palpable.

What side of the fence does your organization, and your leadership, land?



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