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The Office of Public Health Support presents the sixth IHS CEO Brief in our email series designed to help you address the challenge of retaining our professional and clinical staff.

The focus of this issue is a clinical director who realizes that in complex decisions, an effective leader must understand the needs of the organization and aim to meet them. The best practices demonstrated in this case are leadership, communication and accessibility to your employees.

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CASE STUDY

Clinical Director, M.D.

Location: Small Community Hospital in a Mid-Sized Community Setting

Background: For budgetary reasons, the labor and delivery unit of this hospital had to close.

Challenge: As part of the process, the unit's work force would be restructured to ensure that its six staff members - two obstetricians, three midwives and one operating room nurse - were appropriately reassigned and retained by IHS. With a clear understanding of his administrative options, the clinical director quickly transferred his staff members into their new roles. His biggest concern was finding suitable positions for the midwives, whose positions would no longer be directly in line with their primary career responsibility: delivering babies.

Solution: One of the obstetricians retired, while the remaining obstetrician and the OR nurse were placed in new positions that allowed them to continue their chosen work. The midwives were moved into positions that enabled them to participate in prenatal and postpartum care in addition to performing some case management activities. The clinical director was very straightforward with them about the decisions he had to make on their behalf, what his expectations and hopes for them would be, and how they might be able to maintain their own sense of career satisfaction.

Lessons Learned: Although the midwives' new assignments were not a perfect match for their entire skill set, the clinical director made the best possible decision to help them continue to realize their specific career goals. These are the types of complex decisions that a director needs to make to be an effective leader who successfully meets the needs of the organization.

BEST PRACTICES IN ACTION

Strong leadership involves understanding what your organization can do well and devising a strategic plan to accomplish organizational goals.

You need good communication to articulate your ideas and decisions to your staff and to inspire them to take an interest in achieving the best outcomes.

You must be accessible to your employees so you can share your vision with them and provide them a path to meet their needs while helping achieve the organization's goals.

Making the right decision may require you to explain to your employees what led you to a certain choice. You can ensure that they don't take your decisions personally by helping them understand how your choices fit into the needs of the organization.

WORDS TO LEAD BY

The Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell by Oren Harari, McGraw-Hill (July 18, 2003).

We recognize that you may have successful retention strategies and your own best practices and we value your input. Send your stories or comments. Add a colleague to the mailing list or update us with changes in your email address. Email us at: [IHS CEO Brief](#).



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