



Communication is Key

The IHS Office of Public Health Support presents the sixth Retention Brief in our series designed to help you address the challenge of retaining health professionals 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 staff *accessibility*.

Words to Lead By

The Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell
Oren Harari. McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Case Study

Clinical Director, MD | Small Community Hospital in a Mid-Sized Community Setting

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

Challenge: As part of the process, the service 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. With a clear understanding of his administrative options, the clinical director knew that while he would have to transfer staff members into new roles, he must take into consideration how they would adapt and prosper, particularly the midwives whose positions would no longer be directly in line with their primary career responsibility of delivering babies.

Solution: As it turned out, one of the obstetricians retired and the remaining obstetrician and the OR nurse were placed in new positions that allowed them to continue their chosen work. The clinical director worked with the midwives to find them positions that enabled them to participate in prenatal and postpartum care, in addition to performing some case management activities. While, the clinical director was very straightforward with them about the decisions he had to make on their behalf, he also expressed his expectations and hopes for them to further their careers through new opportunities, such as case management, and he encouraged them to learn how they could expand their specialties.

Lessons Learned: Although the midwives' new assignments were not a perfect match for their entire skill sets initially, the clinical director communicated his strategy for retaining them and expressed his belief that the new roles could open up opportunities for expansion and advancement in their chosen careers. 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 while, at the same time, takes every staff member into consideration.



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 the staff and to inspire them to take an interest in achieving the best outcomes.

You must **be accessible to all staff members** 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 for your facility overall may require you to make changes among the staff and the way the facility works, however,

by explaining any necessary changes upfront with the staff and having them work with you to implement those changes will ensure confidence, dedication and a team environment within the workplace.