

Everyone Is Essential: Guest Author Bob Cooper

❌ Some organizations will use the terms essential and non-essential workers as a way to distinguish between who needs to be on site in the event of an emergency, and who does not. I do understand the purpose of this distinction, however, **it's very important that businesses not give the impression that some employees are more important or valuable than others.**

Have you ever thought about the importance of the Bank Teller's role? Is this individual given the requisite respect they deserve? I once overheard a bank manager say the following – “She's only a teller, you can't expect her to know better.” Think about the responsibility of this role. The Teller helps to build the customer experience and is responsible for very important transactions. I don't know about you, but I want the Tellers in my bank to be satisfied and maintain a good focus on their work.

How do you view each and every member of your team? Do you respect everyone as an important member of the team? How does each person on your team impact the internal and external customer experience?

Your employees are your most important asset, and you need to serve them. If you expect them to deliver exceptional service to others, you need to serve them first.

The following are a few suggestions to **demonstrate** that you view **every** member of your team as **essential**:

1) Show Respect at all Times – Never make the same mistake that the Bank Manager made by saying “She's only a Teller, or clerk, or aide, or any other position. Sometimes the best ideas come from your front-line staff. They have dreams and aspirations and want to know that you value them for their

contributions. They have feelings and want to know that you value them as professionals.

2) Engage their Hearts and Minds – Give every member of your team the opportunity to become involved in all aspects of the business. Show your staff how their work is integrated with other members of the team and is critical to the organization's success. Find out what motivates team members, and wherever possible, allow them to become involved in initiatives that ignite their passion. They should become engaged in offering ideas to build the business and drive strategy.

3) Say Thank You – Show your gratitude for individual efforts by expressing sincere thanks for a job well done. The key is your sincerity. If your thank you is half-hearted, don't be shocked when one of your best performers leaves the organization because they don't feel appreciated. You can't fake sincerity.

4) Care About Them – Have you ever experienced a personal problem only to find your boss is only concerned with the project you are working on? I have heard bosses say – “Leave your personal issues at home.” Oh really? What if a staff member has a loved one who is very ill? Should this not matter? I have witnessed throughout my career many top performers change jobs because they felt their boss was totally insensitive to their personal concerns. When people come to work, they bring their whole selves to the office. Of course they need to perform their duties responsibly. As a leader, part of your job is to help staff keep their head in the game. You need to show empathy and assist the employee to effectively deal with their issues.

5) Bring Them Coffee – In my book “Heart and Soul in the Boardroom” I discuss a former boss named Warren. Although I have not seen Warren in over 25 years, I remember him as if it was yesterday. Warren would say – “Bob, can I bring you a cup

of coffee back from the cafeteria?” He would make the same offer to every member of the team. Warren treated every member of the team with respect. What about the boss who asks his or her assistant to bring back a cup of coffee and never offers to do the same? What’s the message? This individual believes that others are there to serve them – WRONG! You are there to serve others. In turn, they will reciprocate and go the extra yard to help you win.

6) Care About Their Careers – Take the time to listen and understand your employee’s goals. Make every effort to help them to achieve their goals. The key here is to show the effort and desire to assist them to reach their full potential.

Great leaders treat every member of the team as essential. They realize that the receptionist or janitor make a huge impact on the customer experience. I will never forget what a former boss named Harry said many years ago during a meeting. Harry said – **“Remember, the janitor may be at the bottom of our organization’s hierarchy, but is the CEO to his family.”** I can still hear Harry’s voice. He was so right. Every human being deserves to be respected.

If you treat every member of your team as essential, and truly care about them, they will perform beyond your expectations. We must make sure the financial compensation is fair and competitive, but the differentiating factor is that staff know you care, and see them as essential to the organization’s success.

For a complete listing of our services, please visit us at www.rlcooperassoc.com or call (845) 639-1741.

*RL Cooper Associates’ book **“Heart and Soul in the Boardroom”** outlines suggestions for leaders to develop highly respectful and ethical work cultures and is available in the **Manage My Practice Store**. For additional information about their*

services, please visit www.rlcooperassoc.com.



Guest Author Bob Cooper “Balancing Two Sides of Work”

✘ I would like you to think about a great boss or mentor you had sometime in your career. *What made them great?* When I ask this question to seminar participants or during an executive coaching session I get responses such as “Gives me excellent ongoing feedback”, “Has a vision and knows how to execute the strategy”, “Builds an excellent and supportive team”, “Took the time to teach me the business”, and “Is supportive, respectful and compassionate.”

As you look at the above responses, what comes to mind? In asking this question to hundreds of people in many settings it has led me to one conclusion – great leaders know how to drive business results, and inspire others to want to follow.

When teaching service excellence workshops I often discuss the two-sided service coin. One side represents the “technical” side of service, the other the “human” side. The technical side of service represents the day to day responsibilities of one’s job (e.g. assisting customers, completing reports, etc.). The human side involves building the relationship with all internal and external customers (e.g. acknowledging the customer, following-through on customer commitments, demonstrating kindness and respect, etc.)

Great organizations recognize that everyone needs to pay close attention to both the technical and human sides of the

customer experience. So what does this have to do with leadership. In short – everything!

If you develop a sound business strategy, but fail to build the human experience, bad things can and will happen. Think about the restaurant which serves outstanding food, but delivers poor service. Will you return? I suspect you probably will not. Top performers will leave your organization if you fail to treat them with complete and total respect. Increased turnover means increased costs to your business. Performance and morale will suffer, and trust can erode.

The following are suggestions for all leaders to develop a culture that addresses both sides of the coin:

1) Look in the Mirror – Do you effectively balance the coin? If you focus only on the day to day technical side of the business, and fail to address the human side, you may fall short. For example, if you are running a meeting and do not engage others through effective collaboration, you may not attain true consensus. The group might not achieve the best decision for the business, and some team members might feel that you do not value them or their ideas. If you walk by the receptionist and do not say good morning, how might he or she feel? Acknowledging others and showing respect helps to keep your team's head in the game. The last thing we want is a receptionist who feels under appreciated. After all, who makes the first impression for the business?

2) Teach Business Strategy & Customer Relations Skills – Starting with senior leadership, every executive must be on the same page relative to business strategy. If we are going left, everyone should know why we are going left and how this compares to our competitors, and grows market share. Every executive must model excellent interpersonal skills by showing respect at all times, thanking others for their contributions, acknowledging everyone they meet throughout the day (this means everyone – no exceptions). Great leaders also take the

time to engage other members of their team in strategy development, and mentor others to think strategically. They see themselves as mentors, and take great pride in helping others to learn and grow. They are also patient with team members, recognizing that every individual is unique and learns differently. They turn mistakes into opportunities for learning and growth.

3) Lead with Your Heart – In writing “Heart and Soul in the Boardroom” – my objective was to get current and future leaders to test their assumptions about leadership. My goal is to create a dialogue about this most important issue – leaders who lead with integrity and compassion are models of excellence. Doing the small things such as showing a member of your staff that you are concerned about their sick spouse or their career aspirations forms a powerful bond. This facilitates the building of trust and mutual understanding. Your people want to know you care. They want to know that the project they just handed to you is as important as their personal struggle.

You see – we bring both our hearts and our minds to work every day. People don't lock their hearts up in the car before they walk in the door. Authentic work cultures have individuals working hard to achieve excellence, and at the same time show caring toward their fellow colleagues.

The best leaders I have worked with understand this topic very well. They are the individuals who were my greatest mentors. People like Bill, Susan, Warren, and a few others whom I have discussed over many years with you. It's been a long time since I have seen any of them, but I remember them like it was yesterday. The reason why I have such fond memories is because they were brilliant business people who achieved excellent results, and most important, they were and are great people!

I ask that you commit to balancing the two-sided coin. Bring your “A” game when it comes to leading the business and

building outstanding business relationships. You will achieve great business results, and you will have a lasting impression on your most important asset – your loyal followers.

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Bob Cooper on Giving Thanks as a Manager

During the holiday season we are reminded to give thanks and extend our best wishes to family, friends, and colleagues. It's a time to step back and reflect upon the accomplishments achieved in collaboration with your team, and feel a sense of gratitude for what you have.

Do you take the time to acknowledge the contributions of others? Do you have a full appreciation for the importance of giving praise?



Many years ago I had an eye opening meeting with an engineering director named Pete. The purpose of the meeting

was to update Pete on the progress of my work with several members of his team. I facilitated a process improvement initiative that ended up saving the company over one hundred thousand dollars. In spite of this outcome, the group had very low morale. One day I stopped one of our meetings and asked the team why they were so upset. They said "Pete doesn't value us." I asked "Why do you feel this way?" Their response was "He never shows appreciation for our work." I shared this story with Pete in an attempt to provide him with a valuable insight. His response was "I don't need to tell them how much I value them, they are engineers and should know how well they are doing." I said "Pete, everyone wants to be appreciated. It's not based on one's position or degree. You need to express to your team how much you value them."

To this day, I can still see Pete struggling to understand the importance of giving thanks.

The following are a few suggestions for leaders regarding expressing thanks:

1. **Make it a priority to catch people doing things right,** and let them know the importance of their work. For example, if you see a staff member going the extra mile to serve a customer, express thanks. If you see a member of your team assisting a colleague with a difficult issue, give thanks.
2. **As you walk around ask others for feedback.** Ask staff to let you know about co-workers either within your department or from another section who did something special for them or a customer. Take the time to let the individual deserving of the praise know how grateful you are for their efforts. It's important to celebrate successes.
3. In staff meetings, **acknowledge the team for achieving certain goals, and praise examples of excellence.** Give each team member the opportunity to express thanks to a

colleague for any support provided that they appreciate. This builds a sense of team and keeps the meeting positive.

4. **Thank a staff member who brings a mistake to you**, and accepts full accountability for the error, and has a plan to fix the problem. You might be thinking – why should I praise someone who is bringing me a mistake? If you criticize mistakes, you create a fear based environment, and thus, people might look to cover up the mistake. Of course, you are not praising a mistake, but rather acknowledging the individuals integrity.
5. **Engage staff in brainstorming ideas** to improve departmental performance, and give thanks for their input. You are encouraging creativity and innovation, and must not criticize an idea. After the brainstorming is completed, you can take the time to engage the team in clarifying and prioritizing ideas. What's important to remember as a leader is this – if you judge every idea as either “good” or “bad”, how do you think the person who offered a “bad” idea is going to feel? Every idea needs to be given fair consideration with an objective assessment relative to its potential impact on achieving a positive outcome.

What do you believe is more important – a good strategy or a highly engaged and motivated group of people? They are both very important. However, if you and your competitors have similar strategies, **the organization that has done a better job of engaging both the hearts and minds of its employees will always win.** Highly engaged and motivated employees will assist you to develop sound strategies, and help to revise strategies as required to maintain a competitive advantage. They will want to do everything possible to help you win.

One of your most important jobs is to let your team know how much you value them. **They want to know you care.** They want to know that you do not take them for granted. They want to know

that you see them as unique individuals with unique talents. They want to know that you see their potential, and will do everything possible to assist them to reach their full potential.

Great leaders know that their employees are, and always will be, their most important asset. They want to know that you care about their careers and will serve as a trusted mentor focusing on their success.

I have emphasized this in many previous tips – **you must serve your staff**. If you serve them well, they will produce outstanding results. You help to remove barriers and provide the tools needed for success.

I encourage you throughout this holiday season and into the future to take the time to let your staff know how much you value them.

I have one more thing to add. What makes this all work is not just giving praise, but really meaning it. If you fake it, you can cause more damage. When others know you really mean it – you will have loyal followers prepared to leave your competition in the dust.

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Bob Cooper, President
RL Cooper Associates
(845) 639-1741
Innovations in Organizational Management

Should (Female) Leaders Cry at Work?

Many years ago at my first management job, I cried while firing an employee.

It was the first time I had ever fired someone, and this employee was an older woman whose part-time job was being eliminated. She comforted me, patting my arm and offering me a Kleenex.

Although no one else saw me cry, I was extremely embarrassed and vowed then and there that I would never cry at work again. It took a few years, but I learned to control my emotions and was able to stop crying at work. It was a big step forward for me in attaining the professionalism I craved. Or was it?



Are Women Dinged for Crying at Work?

Much has been written about the negative cultural and professional interpretations of women crying at work. Tears may signal the crier is weak, vulnerable, unable to handle stress, or god forbid, hormonal!

Criticism of crying relates more to crying about work issues than crying about personal issues; most people will give a pass for crying about very bad news – an accident, death, or disaster. But crying about lesser-ranked home issues at work is not usually tolerated if it happens on a regular basis.

Leaders are held to a higher standard than other employees. At the time I cried during the firing, I believed that crying at work was not only inappropriate for a leader, but would limit my ability to succeed in my field – a field full of strong male doctors!

Why is Crying in the Office Seen as a Women's Issue?

Anne Kreamer explains it in her book **It's Always Personal; Emotions in the New Workplace**

1. **Women cry more than men at work.** Kreamer discovered that women cry nearly four times as often as men.
2. **Women's tears are much more visible.** "Women have six times the amount of prolactin (the hormone that controls tears) than men do and our tear ducts are significantly larger," she says. "Additionally, women's tear ducts are anatomically different from men's which explain why women – for example – tend to gush tears while men often barely elicit a trickle."
3. **Women often cry when they are angry or frustrated,** whereas men's tendencies lean toward physical expressions of strong emotion.

In my desire to learn to control my emotions, however, I found myself struggling to transition from my daytime persona as a cool businesswoman to the warm and nurturing mother and wife I wanted to be at home. My husband even came up with a loving way to let me know when I hadn't switched gears from work to home successfully. "Take off your manager's mask," he would say, "You're home now." Eventually I decided that I wanted to be the same person at work as I was at home, and I started the journey of allowing myself to be compassionate and show emotion while being a strong leader.

Only later did I find out that there is a name for this

balancing act – it is Emotional Intelligence (EI).

What is Emotional Intelligence?

“When misused, emotions can lead people into catastrophe – yet feelings are also the key to trust, communication, motivation, and optimal decisions. The difference is **emotional intelligence** (EQ), the science of using feelings effectively.”
(www.sixseconds.com)

SixSeconds recently released a landmark analysis called “Women’s Leadership Edge: Global Research on Emotional Intelligence, Gender, and Job Level,” Over the world, 24,000 leaders and workers were surveyed and the findings were that “In key aspects of EQ, women in leadership roles are even further ahead of their male counterparts, suggesting that these differentiators may be essential for females to advance their careers. For both females and males, the new data suggests important opportunities for leveraging strengths to become more effective at people leadership.”

The answer then, is to understand your own emotions, and leverage that understanding to your advantage in the workplace.

Here are a few of my own rules:

1. Try not to cry at work because you’ll have all kinds of explaining to do. It can and will happen to almost all women, so get past it and go on. Unless you cry at work regularly, life and your career will go on.
2. If you find that your emotions are close to the surface and you think you might lose emotional control at an inopportune moment, back off and either take a few hours or a day off, get some extra sleep or if you can, work at home for the day instead of going in to the office. Just a little distance can do wonders.
3. If there is someone who seems to challenge, frustrate or

anger you, always sit beside that person in a meeting. Never sit beside your supporters, no matter what.

4. Do not be afraid to share things with staff about your experiences (especially bad decisions and embarrassments) when it helps them to put things in perspective. Telling your story makes you a real person, which of course, you are.

Guest Author Donald “Tex” Bryant: Good Communications Equals Good Outcomes

According to Charles Duhigg in his newly released book, *The Power of Habit*, Rhode Island Hospital was one of the nation’s leading medical institutions. It was the teaching hospital for Brown University and the only Level I trauma center in southeastern New England. Rhode Island Hospital also had a reputation as “a place riven by internal tensions”. In one surgery for instance, a neurosurgeon was preparing an emergency surgery for an elderly gentleman with a critical subdural hematoma. Just before the surgery a surgical nurse noticed that the medical chart and other paper work did not indicate the location of the hematoma. The nurse cautioned that the surgeon should wait until the needed paper work was seen. The surgeon yelled at her that he had seen the cranial scan and said he knew where to operate. He didn’t. He opened the skull on the wrong side. Although he corrected his mistake quickly, the patient died soon thereafter. Such errors are not foreign to most hospitals but the number of errors at this

hospital due to poor communication, especially between nurses and physicians who overpowered them with their authority, eventually created a culture of high tension and anxiety.

Poor outcomes for patients and doctors are found in many other medical settings besides surgeries, although these seem to get the most attention in the press. Consider the following scenario, for instance. A family physician during a well baby visit was looking for a pediatric stethoscope. It was not in her office. She excused herself from the exam room and went searching for it in the office. It took her 5 minutes to find it. The incident was very annoying to her and the mother of the child. She had to hurry through the exam and did not have as much time as she needed to talk to the mother. There were no serious consequences from this visit but the outcomes were not optimal either. The mother lost a bit of trust in the doctor that day.

Besides the failure to communicate adequately with the mother, the misplaced stethoscope is also a failure to communicate with staff. With good communication habits at the ambulatory site there likely be good organization too: a place for everything and everything in its place. Good routines and habits would emerge and time spent with patients would improve. Outcomes would improve. Doctors and staff would be more satisfied with their work.

What, then, are some characteristics of good communication? One is that each staff member has the opportunity in the right setting to express his or her opinion about how a particular process could be improved or how patient safety could be improved. Being able to express oneself is not enough, though. Leadership must make sure that good ideas for improvement and safety are implemented in a timely manner. The person who made the suggestion should be recognized.

Another characteristic of quality communication is that time

is set aside for staff meetings to address suggestions brought to the attention of leaders at the site. For instance, in the ambulatory setting described above, the physician can suggest to the office staff director that something should be done about making sure that physicians need not leave their office during a patient encounter to look for missing supplies or the physician as leader in the office can call the meeting. Meetings such as these should be scheduled regularly; other issues other than processes and safety can be addressed. For instance, meetings can be used for training, such as for EMR implementation.

Team meetings are a good place for problem solving using effective communication. To be effective they must be well organized and run. Based upon my experience in working with a variety of teams in a variety of settings and based upon discussions with colleagues along with research, I believe that there are several elements that are necessary for effective team meetings. These are:

- Strong leadership
- Preparation
- An agenda
- Staying focused
- Participation by all members
- Decision rules
- A time limit

Keeping focused is not always easy. There can be staff members who distract or disturb the meeting. Team leaders should be alert for distractors and quickly refocus the group. The *Wall Street Journal* listed a few of the types of distractors recently in an article titled "Meet the Meeting Slayers". One is the "know-it-all". This person keeps promoting his own ideas and will not consider the ideas of others. There is also the "naysayer"; this person tends to shoot down most ideas. Another is team member who tends to drift off to other topics, such as the birth of a child or grandchild.

As you can see there are many skills required of a team leader. Besides controlling disruptions, he must also encourage all to participate. Someone who may be timid to speak should be encouraged; his or her idea may be one of the most innovative and important. When I am leading a meeting before I close discussion of a topic I make sure that I personally address any who have been quiet and ask if they have any comments. If not, I may ask them to summarize the previous discussion so that they will be involved.

As you can tell, communication is very important at medical sites. There are many benefits to effective and ongoing communication—optimal outcomes for patients, satisfaction among staff that they are delivering quality care in a culture that supports them and improved income. While I believe that most recognize that effective communication is necessary for these outcomes, achieving it takes a lot of effort.

On another note, I suggest that you read *Power of Habit*. It has many good ideas that you can apply to your patient encounters. The second section of the book also describes in detail ways to become an effective organization.



Bryant's Healthcare Solutions offers training and advice for helping you achieve optimal patient or client outcomes while improving the bottom line.

(www.bryantsstatisticalconsulting.com). If you want to discuss more about good communication contact Bryant's Healthcare Solutions. Mr. Bryant is certified by the University of Michigan as a Lean Healthcare facilitator.

Contact Mr. Bryant at t.Bryant@alumni.utexas.net or call 616-826-1699 if you need more information. With my help, I promise that we can meet your needs. Would love to chat over a cup of coffee or over the phone. Looking forward to hearing from you. If you need a speaker to present at a meeting or

conference, please contact me and I will consider doing so.

Introducing Two New Products Now Available in Our Store: The Smart Manager's Webcourse "Creating a Credit Card on File Program" and Bob Cooper's "Heart and Soul in the Boardroom"!

We are very excited today to announce two new products available for purchase in the Manage My Practice store!



We have had a lot of requests for the recorded version of our Webcourse – *Creating a Credit Card on File Program in Your Practice*, and we are excited to say that it is **now available!** For \$29.95 you will receive the 60 minute video recording of the course, as well as the course slide deck, and the action pack of handouts to get you started on the program including:

- 1. Worksheet for Credit Card on File Program Return on Investment*
- 2. Staff Script & Role Playing Suggestions for Staff Training*
- 3. Sample Security Policy to Comply With PCI Guidelines*
- 4. Credit Card on File Program Timeline Worksheet*

5. *Credit Card Program Comparison Worksheet*
6. *Patient Handout #1: Information About Our Credit Card on File Program & Discontinuation of Statements*
7. *Patient Handout #2: What is a Deductible and How Does It Affect Me?*

Check out the Webcourse!

We are also very excited to be adding a second book to our store: **Heart and Soul in the Boardroom** by **Bob Cooper**. We have been thrilled to reprint some of Bob's great posts about leadership, and are now honored to sell his book. **Heart and Soul in the Boardroom** is a book that champions honesty, authenticity, and a management style based on a real assessment of success – both in the workplace, and in the *workplace's relationship to your life*.



Get Bob's Book for \$14.50 plus 2.95 shipping and handling. And if you are buying for a group (or department, or your staff!) Bob will ship them free with the purchase of three or more!

Check out Bob Cooper's Book!

Guest Author Bob Cooper: The Leader As Talent Scout

Have you ever regretted a hiring decision?

You thought the individual would be a self-starter, but you

found yourself having to give constant direction. Perhaps you needed someone with excellent customer service skills, and received complaints about the individual's attitude and behavior.

One explanation for this dilemma can be found in the book "Now Discover Your Strengths" by Buckingham and Clifton. The authors differentiate between knowledge, skills, and talents. Talents are innate, whereas skills and knowledge can be acquired through learning and practice. You don't teach someone to be a self-starter, no more than you teach someone to have a talent for empathy. This is why even after providing training on assertiveness skills, or how to provide excellent customer service, we don't see much improvement or any at all.

I learned this lesson many years ago from a mentor named Bill. Bill was Vice President of Distribution and an excellent talent scout. During an off-site management retreat, Bill introduced his new warehouse supervisor. Bill explained that what he needed for this position was someone who has excellent communication skills, is decisive, and assumes accountability. Bill explained that he found the new warehouse supervisor in his health club. He had observed over several months how this individual communicated with others, the respect he was shown, and how he thought about resolving problems. Some of you might be thinking – "He found a manager while working out?" The point Bill was making is that he knew that he can provide the knowledge and skills required to be a warehouse supervisor, but he needed the talent to lead. I remember the day Bill asked me to move from the position of Quality Circle Facilitator (a staff position) to Customer Service Manager (with 30 direct reports). I said "Bill, I don't know this operation, and I have never held a management position – why did you select me?" He looked me in the eye and said "Bob, people believe in you, and will follow you. You will learn the departmental functions, I can't teach what you have."

The point in sharing these stories from Bill is this – you must think about your hiring and promotional decisions very carefully. If you focus primarily on knowledge and skills which can be taught, and overlook an individual's talent, you can find yourself regretting the decision.

How do you find talent?

One strategy is to use behavioral-based interviews to assess whether or not this person has the talent you need. For example, if you require someone who is decisive, you might tailor your questions toward asking the candidate to discuss difficult decisions they had to make, and how they went about it. You might need to follow-up by asking for specifics. If empathy is an important talent, you might ask the individual to describe specific situations where a customer was very upset, and how they handled the situation. Pay close attention to how they describe the situation, and whether you get a sense that they fully connect with the importance of empathy. Although this is not an exact science, it puts the focus of your interview on the most important area – talent. We often make the mistake of looking at a resume and being overly impressed with the individual's accomplishments. The real question is – how did they go about getting the job done? Are they consensus builders? Do they build strong teams? How did they overcome obstacles? Did they develop a successor? With an internal candidate, don't make the mistake of promoting someone who has good technical skills and poor interpersonal skills, with the hope that they will learn to deal more effectively with others. Identify the talents needed for the role, and determine if this individual "owns" this or not. Don't try to train them to be strategic, or nice, or anything else. They are who they are, and that's OK. Select individuals who demonstrate on an ongoing basis the talents needed for success.

You might not find your next manager in a health club, but

leaders should always pay attention to an individual's talents.

Our role as leaders is to build on people's strengths, not placing too much attention on improving weaknesses. Place individuals in jobs that allow them to leverage their strengths. If someone loves dealing with customers, and has a natural ability to do so, don't put them in the back office. If someone doesn't deal well with others, don't force them into a position where they need to build consensus, and then be disappointed when it doesn't happen.

I encourage you to use peer-interviewing as a strategy to find a good fit for a position. The person being hired will need to work well with colleagues, so why not engage the colleagues in the selection process. Teach your staff to also be talent scouts.

An organization is only as good as its people. Being a good talent scout is a competitive advantage. You build customer and staff loyalty, reduce turnover and the associated recruitment expenses, and build a winning team for the future.

Always be on the look out for talent, it's always around you.

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Bob Cooper

President

RL Cooper Associates

(845) 639-1741

www.rlcooperassoc.com

Innovations in Organizational Management

The Best of Manage My Practice – November, 2011 Edition

In between polishing off leftover turkey and stuffing, we're looking back over some of our most popular posts from the month in case you might've missed them the first go round. Thankfully Presenting, **The Best of Manage My Practice, November 2011!**

- Compliance: a critical issue for all practices, but a subject so expansive, where do you even begin? Learn the "Big Three" with Stark, False Claims and Anti-Kickback Laws: Easy Ways to Stay Compliant with the Big Three in Healthcare
- Are your record retention policies up to date? Can you say with confidence that you have hard copies of everything you should? Find out with Record Retention Simplified – The Ultimate Guideline
- Are you or someone you know thinking about Medical Coding as a possible career? Follow along with Coder Bob in Tales of a Coder Part III: School Begins
- Are you the kind of leader that can see your group through the toughest of times? Bob Cooper asks practice managers in Are You a Resilient Leader?

We've started this monthly wrap-up to make sure you don't miss any of the great stuff we post throughout the month on Manage My Practice, but we also want to hear from you! What were your favorite posts and discussions this month? Did we skip over your favorite from November? Let us know in the comments!

Are Critical Conversations Hard for You?



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A great column in last week's BusinessWeek by Carmine Gallo gives the reader 4 steps to making difficult conversations with employees and coworkers more productive. I like his steps, but I have four of my own, and I'll let you choose which works for you. Read Carmine's suggestions [here](#).

Here are my four steps:

Step 1. Always start with a question. I rarely feel that I know the complete story so I typically ask for more information about the issue or behavior in question. Nine times out of ten I learn something I didn't know that helps the conversation. Asking questions and clarifying information usually gets both parties a little more comfortable.

Step 2. Express your concern about the issue or behavior and let the employee know why you're concerned. More information helps the employee see how their work interacts with someone else's or contributes to the organization as a whole.

Step 3. Ask for the employee's input in solving the issue or behavior. There may be several solutions that would work, and choosing the best one together, or letting the employee choose one is a win/win.

Step 4. Restate the action plan for the resolution and close

the meeting with an invitation for either of you to meet again if the issue needs revisiting.

It may be hard to talk to employees and coworkers about issues or behaviors, but if you are in a leadership position, you must learn how to have hard conversations of all types. The secret is asking questions and collaborating on solutions.