The Magic Trick: Moving from Staff Psychologist to VA Leader in Times of Calm and Crisis

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The Magic Trick Metaphor

Graduate Student

Professional Psychologist
Evolution of My Career Vision
NCOD’s mission is to support leaders in VA to enable them to create a highly engaged workforce from where they are. ~NCOD is a soft place for leaders to land when they’re struggling and a launching pad for them to soar when they’re ready.

Our services include individual and organizational assessments, organizational consultation and intervention, and supportive services such as survey consultation and 360 assessments to all offices within VA at no cost to local facilities/organizations.

NCOD is an office of currently nearly 50 professionals, based in Cincinnati, OH. Our staff has experience in the fields of organization development, industrial and organizational psychology, health services administration, and program evaluation.
A Whole New World

2010
Organizational Health Business Line Lead (Supervisory Program Analyst)

2016
Deputy Director, Consulting Services Business Line (SES)

2018
Deputy Director, NCOD (SES)

2020
Executive Director, NCOD

Nonvoting member of VHA Governance Board
Chair, VHA Organizational Health Council
Member, GB Executive Committee
VHA Modernization - DEI Lane of Effort Co-lead

Associate member, IDEA Taskforce
Member, Equity Action Team
Co-chair, VA Employee Engagement Council
Translating Clinical Training to Leadership Roles

"The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority.

- Kenneth Blanchard"
Translating Servant Leadership in a Time of Crisis

“Storms Make Trees Take Deeper Roots”
- Dolly Parton
Leading from a State of Natural Tensions

Communication, Communication, Communication!

Present-focused
Behaviorally specific

Future-focused
Visionary

Transparent
Honest
Authentic

Hopeful
Optimistic

Frequently

Not randomly
Leading from a State of Natural Tensions

Leader Behaviors

- Assume authoritative role
- Continuously learn
- Motivate full effort and investment
- Acknowledge limitations
- Ground in leadership philosophy
- Adapt to situation
- Be reliable
- Be willing to change
- Focus on people
- Focus on outcomes
People want to know their leaders are in the trenches with them

People want to know their leaders are looking out for their safety and the safety of their loved ones

Importance of acknowledging limitations of self, team and organization inviting honest feedback from staff to determine how to mitigate those limitations together

Importance of frequent communication through a variety of modalities

But some things remain constant…
Final Thoughts
For more information, please contact VHA National Center for Organization Development (NCOD)

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