

Predicting Physician Executive Performance:

STUDY 978

2015



THE SCIENCE OF PERSONALITY

Healthcare systems benefit when physicians become leaders. Many leaders focus on the bottom line, but in health care, financial success is not everything. Physician executives have a unique understanding of the patient experience and can bridge the gap between making money and providing high-quality patient care, creating a truly integrated healthcare system. For these reasons, hiring and developing physician executives who can provide quality integrated care is critical.

Providence Health & Services and Swedish Health Services (hereafter “Providence”) wanted to improve its practices for identifying and developing physician executives throughout the organization. To this end, Providence collaborated with Witt/Kieffer and Hogan to conduct research aimed at 1) identifying personal characteristics to differentiate good versus excellent physician executives, 2) identifying differences between physician executives and other health care leaders, and 3) developing unique personality profiles to drive a customized competency report for physician executive identification and development throughout the organization’s talent pipeline.

First, we used information from focus groups and archival data to identify personal characteristics related to success across competency-related behaviors (e.g., communicating a vision, giving feedback, developing high-performing teams, and emotional intelligence, among others) in the physician executive role. Next, over 130 physician executives across the health system completed personality and values assessments to provide information about their personal characteristics. Then, Hogan and Witt/Kieffer created an online performance rating form based on job analysis results, the 16 Competencies Leadership Model for Healthcare, and expert judgment. Using this form, supervisors provided overall performance and competency ratings for nearly 100 physician executives. In addition, Providence provided information regarding operating commitments for accessible physician executives. Finally, Hogan analyzed all data to examine the characteristics predictive of key performance outcomes and competency-related behaviors.

Good versus Excellent Performers

Our research results indicated several characteristics truly differentiated good versus excellent physician executives. Physician executives who received higher performance scores are:

- Resilient under pressure, able to handle competing priorities with ease, and optimistic and confident
- Even-tempered and do not let the small things become bothersome
- Trustworthy and approachable
- Motivated by sharing credit with others and achieving results

In addition to performance and competency-based ratings, we also examined differences across patient loyalty at the practice level. Our results indicated that physician executives who received higher patient loyalty ratings within their respective practices are:

- Persistent, self-confident, and willing to lead and mentor team members
- Decisive, assertive, and open to new ideas/methods
- Able to build a health care environment focused on professionalism and providing high-quality patient care

Physician Executives versus other Health Care Leaders

High performing physician executives differ from other health care leaders in a number of ways. Primarily, high performing physician executives are:

- More focused on learning and remaining current with changes in the medical field
- More resilient and persistent under pressure
- Unafraid to approach problems uniquely and innovative
- Less focused on financial success compared to other health care leaders
- Data-based decision makers who value hard metrics to guide decision-making

Customized Reports

Because of this rigorous research, we now know what personal characteristics drive critical performance areas. Based on the research findings, Hogan developed unique personality profiles to drive Witt/Kieffer's Physician Leader Report. This report provides end users with information regarding their potential against the 16 Competencies Leadership Model for Healthcare. Using the Witt/Kieffer Physician Leader Report, Providence will be able to drive higher-quality decision making within their physician executive population. Additionally, the report will be used for individual development for each physician executive who participated in the research study.