

ACOs Offer Opportunities for Physician Executives

Margaret Dick Tocknell, for HealthLeaders Media , April 8, 2011

Healthcare systems have a message for physicians: We want you!

“We are hearing from search consultants that about 20% of their C-suite placements are going to physician executives,” explained Don Hutton, president of MEDI, a Jacksonville-Fla.-based executive placement and leadership development firm.

He says accountable care organizations are a big draw for physicians. “Hospitals and health systems want physician leadership for their ACOs because much of what needs to be accomplished under healthcare reform will need to be [physician-driven](#).”

Hutton pointed to goals such as improving clinical outcomes and lowering medical costs that need strong physician leadership to be achieved.

While demand for physician executives is growing, Hutton said it’s still hard to find physicians who fit the executive mold.

Last year MEDI teamed with researchers in the University of North Florida’s health administration program to try and quantify the core competencies for physician executive leadership. An online survey of 4,000 healthcare executives and physicians across the country produced a list of 12 behavioral characteristics that were deemed most important for a physician executive leader to possess to be successful.

The list includes the usual suspects: integrity; trust and respect; ability to develop relationships; communications skills; and judgment. But it also brings a twist to other competencies that might be difficult for some physicians to fully embrace, including:

Conflict management. Ability to deal with conflict by encouraging the expression of different viewpoints and to collaboratively resolve conflict.

Accountability: Ability to hold leaders and employees accountable for their actions and establish a culture of fair accountability that allows for mistakes when innovating.

Collaborative facilitation. Ability to bring together the right people to transform vision into reality; facilitate groups to articulate and question underlying assumptions; and facilitate team members to make important decisions and set goals.

Motivation: Ability to share knowledge and experience to help motivate others; and demonstrate a clear willingness to address individual needs of employees.

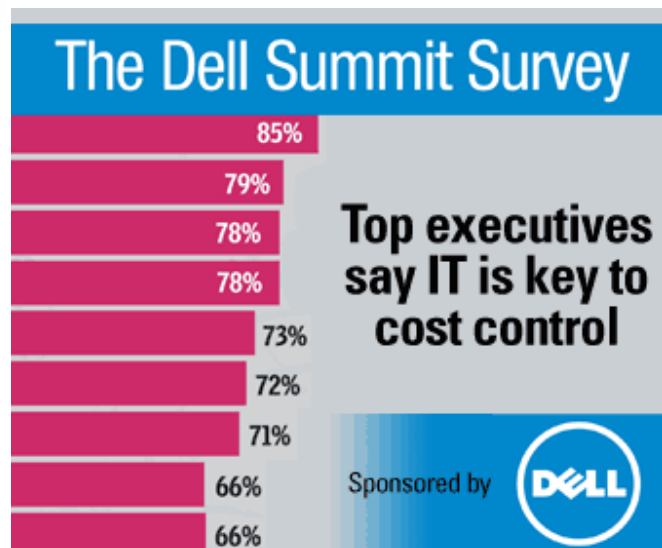
Strategic perspective: Ability to demonstrate flexibility and creativity in meeting new challenges; develop strategy for long-term success; identify efforts that will have the greatest strategic impact; and use the organization's strategies as a guidepost for conducting day-to-day activities.

Adaptability: Ability to adapt to changes in situations/direction/people; and be flexible when considering options/opinions.

Hutton said he sees the list as a resource for physicians who are trying to develop their executive skills as well as a resource for health systems and hospitals looking to hire physician executives. He also sees the core behavioral competencies as a way for existing physician executives to measure their success in the C-suite.

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