

# Essential Skills for Managing in Healthcare



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Foreword by John Edmonstone

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Radcliffe Publishing  
Oxford • New York

CRC Press  
Taylor & Francis Group  
6000 Broken Sound Parkway NW, Suite 300  
Boca Raton, FL 33487-2742

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CRC Press is an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa business

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Version Date: 20160525

International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-138-03149-4 (eBook - PDF)

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# Foreword

We live in an era in which it has become clearer and clearer what good leadership and managerial practice at work is. We know that if we are to attract and retain excellent staff and get them to 'go the extra mile' then we have to treat them with respect, empathy and skill, and that the quality of our relationships with them is a major key to success. Yet report after report, survey after survey, show that many staff feel undervalued by their leaders and managers, whom they typically describe as 'arrogant', 'insensitive' and 'clumsy'. As one employee told me in a focus group looking at employee engagement, 'They regard us as human doings, not human beings!'

Clearly no one does this deliberately and many leaders and managers would be amazed and incredulous if they were able to hear what their staff really felt. Andrew Scowcroft and Andrew Price suggest that we should begin with an expectation that people will be led and managed well at work and that this should be the norm and not a lucky bonus. As they point out, no one would expect such professionals as doctors and lawyers to learn on the job, but that this is usually the case with leaders and managers. This book is dedicated to helping leaders and managers prepare for those responsibilities by focusing on working with individuals, teams and change. It also addresses three areas that usually make leaders and managers uncomfortable – running meetings successfully, making presentations and writing reports. Getting all these aspects right will go a long way towards ensuring that instead of negative reports, we will begin to hear staff say that they are 'pleasantly surprised' and even 'delighted' by the way that they are treated.

Making (and mending) working relationships is *the* means of building up the social capital that our organisations increasingly rely on to succeed in this interdependent world. This book gives accessible and practical examples of how this can be done and I have no hesitation in commending it to a wide readership.

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August 2010



# Preface

Have you ever wondered what people talk about with their partners and families after a long day at work? Closer to home, what do you talk about when you drop the keys on the table and slump into a chair? Somewhere in those conversations, you will probably recognise the phrase: *'You won't believe what they did today!'*

The way people are managed at work not only affects their work performance; it leaks out into the rest of their lives. It affects their evenings, their weekends, their holidays and even their career choices. The reputation of managers in organisations, particularly in terms of how their decisions impact on their staff, will travel far and wide. Bear in mind that management is not a popularity contest and occasionally managers will be required to make decisions and bring about changes that people feel uneasy about. However, these decisions can *always* be made with integrity and respect. Many of the 'you won't believe what they did today' stories we hear about tend to focus on the sheer inexplicability of the management behaviour or its unfairness, insensitivity or complete detachment from the people most affected.

Now for the really scary question if you are a manager: what do you think your staff will be saying tonight when they get home and regale their family with the edited highlights of your management actions? You may have a good idea, or you may be blissfully ignorant, but whatever your answer, it should give you food for thought.

This book is for managers who want to get 'people management right'. It is written by two people who have had their share of good and indifferent people management, who have managed staff and who now make their living developing the people-management skills of others. We have gone home and muttered about our treatment and we have been the patient listeners whilst others have done their muttering. As a result of these experiences, one simple question emerges.

What is it that we do to people at work that makes them so annoyed, so undervalued and so unwilling to give their best?

Both of us have had successful careers in healthcare management, leadership and management development and, latterly, as independent development consultants. We have both obtained master's degrees in management and change in complex organisations. These careers have brought us into regular contact with new managers, rising stars, world-weary managers, top executives and even those whose 'escape tunnel' has finally come up outside the perimeter fence and they have forged new careers.

We have also talked long into the night with the staff who work for and with these managers. Time after time we see that people management is absolutely vital to bottom-line performance and that routinely it is not done well. By this we do not mean that it is deliberately done badly, but that for many managers ignorance and the lack of meaningful feedback result in poor people management. The self-aware managers tell us that there are some skills they wish they had been given at the start. Their staff tell us that there are some skills that really would make the difference between them coming to work with a positive outlook and coming to work with a heavy heart. Unsurprisingly, the same topics come up again and again, and this book is designed to support the development of just those skills.

**Andrew Scowcroft**

**Andrew Price**

*August 2010*

# About the authors

## **Andrew Price MSc, MHSM, DIPHSM**

Andrew's main focus is on leadership and team development, helping people to work positively and effectively with each other. He works in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Andrew moved into consultancy after a career in NHS management. During this time he moved from hospital management into leadership development, and his final NHS role was as the acting chief executive of the Centre for Health Leadership.

Andrew has an MSc in Leadership and Organisation in the Public Sector from the University of the West of England. He also has a Diploma in Health Management and is a member of the Institute of Health Management. He has published in a number of journals including *Health Service Journal*, *Health Management* and *Public Policy Review*.

Andrew lives in Bristol and is married to Ruth, a Dance Movement Psychotherapist. They have two daughters. Andrew is currently Chair of One25, a Bristol based charity working with abused and disadvantaged women.

## **Andrew Scowcroft MA, MHSM, MCIPD, FInst LM**

Andrew is an experienced and respected management development consultant and health service manager, with 37 years public sector experience, including 20 years as a self-financing consultant.

He is frequently engaged by the NHS and other public and private sector clients to provide a range of services, from training and development programmes through to executive coaching for top managers. Andrew has a strong commitment to releasing the potential of leaders and managers, and their organisations, and his development activities are extremely highly rated due to the practical nature of the material and its rapid transferability to the workplace.

With Andrew Price he has developed Vital Signs, a suite of foundational management skills programmes for managers, and has received endorsement from the Institute of Leadership and Management for these courses.

Andrew has a Diploma from the Institute of Health Services Management, BPS Level A and B certificates in Psychometric Testing, and an MA in Learning and Change in Organisations, University of West of England.

He is an Honorary Senior Tutor at Cardiff University, and a Visiting Fellow of the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care, at the University of Glamorgan.

Andrew lives in Llantrisant, South Wales, is married to Ann, an Occupational Therapist, and they have two daughters.

Both Andrews can be contacted via [www.developmentconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.developmentconsultancy.co.uk)

# Acknowledgements

In addition to our writing and consultancy work, we also run a short skills-based development programme called Vital Signs, which draws upon much of the material in this book. As a result of our experience delivering the Vital Signs programme, we have received valuable feedback on the importance of the topics we cover, how best to put across the key messages and how the advice given has transformed the lives of managers and their teams. We therefore wish to acknowledge our enormous debt to the more than 250 managers who have so far experienced Vital Signs and the client organisations that placed their faith in our abilities.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to a number of people whose encouragement and practical help has made this book possible. Nicola Hartnell in the Development Consultancy office has produced, and commented on, numerous drafts and always managed to keep us on track. Ashleigh Dunn, Kim Tovey and the late Professor Stephen Prosser were all immensely supportive in critiquing the work and making wise suggestions for change and enhancement.

Finally, thanks to our families – Ann, Claire and Hannah; Ruth, Abbie and Roanna. You have not only supported and shaped our lives and careers, but have also been extremely tolerant of the frequent drafting meetings, excessive coffee consumption and our unhealthy obsession with crouching over our laptops. Without you this book would simply not exist and for that support we are eternally grateful.

Dedicated to Stephen Prosser, friend, mentor and servant leader.

# Introduction

## Picture the scene

*You are waiting to see your new family doctor. Someone in the waiting area whispers in your ear: 'You do know that they haven't had any training yet? Apparently they did well at interview and this is their first week in the job. I hear that if they struggle, or if enough people complain, they might be sent on a course.'*

Most people would head for the door and find someone who did know what they were doing! It is simply incomprehensible, unacceptable and frankly dangerous for professionals to be let loose without some basic training followed by a demonstration of their minimum standard of competence. Why then is the management of people all too often seen as different? Do we think so little of the new manager, and the staff whose lives and work they are about to influence, that their training can wait, sometimes until years after their appointment, sometimes forever? Perhaps we do not see management as either important enough or even a profession. Our approach to preparing new managers certainly gives the clear impression that the work is unimportant and straightforward, with an expectation that the necessary skills can be picked up 'on the job'.

We think new managers, *and* those they manage, deserve better. Therefore, this book is aimed directly at the person who, for whatever reason, finds themselves managing, or about to manage, others. This might be due to a wished-for promotion, or it may simply be that looking after some staff comes with starting a new project. It may even be that an internal reorganisation has 'bolted-on' people management to an existing technical role.

This book does not set out to cover every management facet. There are several excellent and thoughtful manuals that address the increasingly complex world of management and leadership. Neither does it take just one topic and provide intensive theoretical or step-by-step advice on mastering that single subject. Again, there are many first-class single-issue books available.