

# Leadership Across the Lifespan of a Podiatrist

It's all about maintaining a work/life balance.

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*Tips from the Trenches features practice management issues, and is written exclusively for PM by members of the Institute for Podiatric Excellence and Development (IPED). IPED's mission is to motivate, inspire, and synergistically bridge the gap between students, residents, new practitioners, and seasoned veterans in the field of podiatric medicine. They are committed to the idea that mentors with passion to share and mentees eager to learn make a powerful combination that allows IPED to bring and renew a full life to podiatric physicians, their practices, and their well-being throughout the U.S. and beyond. Visit [www.podiatricexcellence.org](http://www.podiatricexcellence.org).*

**L**eadership looks different at different stages of your career as a podiatrist. In the beginning as students and residents, we have an acute awareness that we have a lot to learn about the path that is set before us—that is when mentorship and guidance are essential. Once we have begun our career as a podiatrist, our focus shifts and creating a healthy work/life balance becomes our main concern. Later, as an established podiatrist, we

look to carry on our legacy and focus on contributing to the betterment of our profession. This article explores three different life and leadership stages within the lifecycle of the career of a podiatrist.

often get overlooked.

Having a mentor is pivotal to your future success for four main reasons—relationship, guidance, accountability, and support. Developing a relationship with a mentor allows you to have in-

## Leadership looks different at different stages of your career as a podiatrist.

### You're as Green as It Gets

In baseball, you would be considered a rookie. As a student or resident of podiatry, you realize that you have a lot to learn about the path that is set before you—that is when mentorship and guidance are essential. As a college student, so much of our focus is on developing our resume or LinkedIn profile that the importance of developing a mentorship relationship can

sight as to the potential pathways for growth within your career. As your relationship grows, the doorway is opened for networking, referrals, and connections beyond the capacity with which you are able to do on your own as you are newly establishing yourself in your career. The mentorship relationship can be leveraged into a career.

In addition to developing relationships and essential career connections, having a mentor is also pivotal to shortening the learning curve. Many times, we try to blaze our own trail or feel as if we don't want to be a burden to anyone else by asking questions or getting support, but that line of thinking is limited. When we receive guidance, account-

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ability, and support from our mentor, we learn to hold ourselves and our aspirations to a higher standard.

### Want a Successful Mentorship Relationship?

Start asking questions. While we learn by watching and shadowing, we also learn on a deeper level by creating our own autopsy of understanding. When you ask questions of your mentor on HOW they came to making a professional decision or WHY they chose a certain decision-making path as opposed to another, we learn in a deeper capacity that helps us to develop our own practice. Asking questions allows us to grow beyond the surface of our on-paper education and into the bigger education—the real-life education as a medical professional.

### Early Career—This Isn't Your First Rodeo

At this point, you have a few years under your belt and you've found that your focus has shifted from solely about work into creating work/life balance. The concept of work/life balance can seem elusive. One of the biggest fallacies about work/life balance is that it is something that you can only experience once you have reached a certain level/title/income in your career. Being successful in achieving your work/life balance comes down to intentional lifestyle design. As I wrote in my book, *Own Your Power: Your Guide to Feeling Powerful, Fearless + Free*, lifestyle design can be defined by three essential elements—vision, intention, and action.

Unfortunately, people have a tendency to spend a lot of time talking about how “busy” or how “stressed” they are feeling. We can get stuck in a mindset that being “busy” or “stressed” are indicators of being successful or important in the work we do, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

### What Is Your Vision for Your Life?

Being clear about who you are and what you want your life to look like is the very first step to creating work/life balance. Begin by asking yourself questions about your current lifestyle and what would be your ideal lifestyle design—Do you like feeling

stressed? How do you define work/life balance? Do you feel clear about what work/life balance looks like in your own life?

Once you have begun to develop a picture of what you want your work/life balance to look like, the next step is to begin planting the seeds of intention. The truth is, it's not enough to develop a vision. When we develop our vision, then fortify it with the intentions of how we want to live our life, we begin to develop a plan for

envision showing up as a leader.

As executives, we motivate the next generation of leaders through two endeavors—working on ourselves and working on people development. People development in the workplace can be defined by identifying the strengths that lie within each member of our team and helping them to develop a clear plan for professional and personal growth.

People development should not be the sole responsibility of the founding

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our lifestyle design. It is through this plan and the goals that we set that we feel empowered to begin taking action on living our work/life balance rather than believing in the myth that it's only for “someday.”

As established podiatrists, we eventually look to carry on our legacy. Leaving a legacy takes other people; as our focus shifts in the later years of practice, it is important that we contribute to the betterment of our profession through people development.

### Why Did You Become a Leader?

Whether you are a partner, CEO, or own the practice, as a seasoned doctor, your path to leadership did not happen overnight. It is likely that you had mentors along the way—other leaders whom you looked up to, felt inspired by, and who positively shaped your career. It is also possible that along the path to leadership, you may have experienced leaders who were difficult, boring, or just simply wrote your paycheck. The first step to inspiring your team to step into leadership for themselves is to get clear about the type of leader that you want to be.

As John C. Maxwell wrote in his book, *The 5 Levels of Leadership*, the pinnacle of leadership is respect—people follow you because of who you are and what you represent. To instill true leadership in today's day and age, a leader needs to have a clear vision of who they are and how they

physician. This is an excellent opportunity to energize your partners to contribute to growing the vision and resource pool for the practice. Discovering the strengths of your team can be accomplished by listening to your team, asking more questions than giving directives, and by utilizing assessments. Assessments such as the Myers-Briggs, Clifton Gallup Strengthsfinder, and Kolbe-A help us to gather more information about our team and look at who they are and how they operate as whole beings—both employee and future leader.

Within the lifecycle of the career of a podiatrist, there are a multitude of life and leadership stages. Additionally, our leadership evolves through the experiences that educate us alongside of the intentions we set about the type of practice, life, and legacy we create. It is by taking time to work on who we are as a person and the lifestyle that we design alongside our practice that allows us to become the doctor, leader, and person that we are meant to be. **PM**



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