



Perfecting Your Practice podcast
EPISODE 34: What Leadership Looks Like

Chris P.: Welcome to Perfecting Your Practice where we believe in a 360-degree approach to your success as a healthcare professional. I'm your host, Chris Panebianco, Chief Marketing Officer at Bankers Healthcare Group.

Chris P.: Welcome to the show, everyone. I want to thank you for tuning in today. Also want to thank Danielle Gerhart, my sometimes co-host for stepping in. I was out with the flu last week and wasn't able to complete our interview with Leslie English. She's an amazing guest and Danielle did a great job. So, we'll start off the podcast today and it looks like we're actually official. Perfecting Your Practice now has a sponsor. So, we'd like to thank the folks at Lands' End. Whether you're a healthcare professional or own any other type of business, you can build your brand and save 10% off Lands' End Apparel and Embroidery. They offer great quality products and customer service with no minimum orders or inventory requirements.

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Chris P.: As I mentioned, Leslie English is a great guest. She represents Dale Carnegie. A lot of our listeners and people around have experienced Dale Carnegie. They've read the book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. It's something that's very personal for me, in 2011, I was with BHG and really learning to be a leader. It's not something that just came naturally, you know, working with my mentors who owned BHG, I was a lot younger and inexperienced having led smaller teams. And they really sat me down and said, "Chris, now is a critical point in your career whereas we start to grow, it's going to be very important that you have the foundation and you set yourself up for success as you go along in your leading and managing people. And to do that, you really have to understand yourself, your communication style and what works for you."

Chris P.: So, I went through the Dale Carnegie Program. It was a very intense program, three hours a night for eight weeks. And then I did an executive management session after that. But it really, it changed my life. It changed how I am at work, it changed how I am in my friendships outside of work. It changed my life how I am in my marriage and how I interact with my family. So, it's really important that we did this interview today with Leslie. Danielle did a fantastic job of explaining



how communication changes and how it's handled in the workplace if you're a healthcare professional or if you're a business owner or even just your day-to-day with their coworkers or bosses. And Leslie does a very nice job of explaining her background. So, I think it's an interview you're really going to enjoy. Dale Carnegie has changed my life, there's a lot of information out there that you or your employees can go participate in these courses are offered nationwide.

Chris P.: So, I hope you enjoy the interview and look forward to getting some of your feedback. Have a great day.

Danielle Gerhart: Hey everybody, thanks for tuning in to this episode of Perfecting Your Practice. I am filling in for our host Chris Panebianco, my name is Danielle Gerhart. I am the PR and Advocacy Manager of Bankers Healthcare Group. Really excited to be in front of the mic today and hope I can live up to Chris' usual great job. So today we are talking about leadership and what leadership looks like. And when it comes to practicing medicine, being a great leader is a critical piece to success. Having strong leadership skills can do many things. It can improve team communication, patient outcomes, and your own personal success.

Danielle Gerhart: So, today we're going to learn what it takes to be an effective leader in order to be a better health care professional. How would you rate yourself as a leader? Excellent? Just okay? Weak? Incredibly, health care pros can have a bad rep for not being effective leaders, even if they are known as masters of their practice. However, the good thing about leadership is that skills can be acquired, refined and strengthened. So welcome to the show today folks. Today, we are going to introduce Leslie English as our special guest. Leslie is the CEO of Dale Carnegie in Central New York. Welcome to the show today, Leslie. We're so excited to have you.

Leslie English: Thank you so much, Danielle. It's great to be here.

Danielle Gerhart: Can you tell our guests a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Leslie English: I sure will. My career started in physical therapy and I did patient care for about 15 years, looked for a little bit of a challenge, so I decided to go into management and administration. And while I was making the transition, it was told to me that maybe my leadership skills were a little rough and that employees really didn't like to be treated the way that I rehabbed some of my sports medicine patients. So, on a very nice recommendation, somebody told me to take the Dale Carnegie course, and I did. And I can say that after the first session, it really changed my life. I looked at what I could accomplish and what others had accomplished by way of the tools that they taught, and it was life-changing. And so, not only did it change the way that I managed individuals and the success of the clinic that I was in, but it also helped the individuals in the



clinic because I referred them into the classes and that really made a difference in their lives too.

Leslie English: So, after doing that for a little bit, I decided to make a little change and Dale Carnegie of CNY offered me a position because I had stayed with the Carnegie Program, I became a class coach and went on for instructor training. So, at that point, I thought, well, maybe I'll give it a shot. So, I started as a business development individual consultant and was very successful with no sales training. And from that became a managing partner, and then at that point, the local franchisee asked if I would be interested in purchasing the franchise. So, I did. So, we're going on our fifth year of the purchase and it's been very successful. I love it. Couldn't imagine doing anything else.

Danielle Gerhart: Oh, that's awesome. Congratulations. Wow, what a great story. My brain is jogging with all these questions I want to ask you. First of all, I wanted to say, I totally get when you say how impactful the training was when you did it. Full disclosure, at BHG, a number of our team members and we have a staff of over 400, throughout the years we've gone through different modules of the Dale Carnegie Training. And the marketing team recently went through it just last year. So, we definitely picked up a lot of great skills, some new tips and tricks and some just reinforcements of things that we forget to do but make all the difference in the world when communicating with each other, our customers or even when we hear our customers talking about how they interact with their patients. So, tons of great takeaways that you can get from Dale Carnegie.

Danielle Gerhart: And so now you've been with them for, you've been training for nearly two decades and that's incredible, that's really exciting.

Leslie English: Thank you. I'm actually coming up on my work anniversary. I started with Dale Carnegie April 1st of 2000. And so, as April Fool's day would have it, it's been everything but a joke, so it's been great.

Danielle Gerhart: All right. Well, you definitely have to celebrate big for that. That's great. So, another thing that caught my ears was how you were actually in physical therapy and then you transitioned over to a management role. Can you tell us just a little bit about that? Because I'm sure some of our listeners are thinking about making that jump or maybe they haven't entertained it and this could sound like a good move for them. Can you just talk a little bit about that transition for you?

Leslie English: Sure. It was something that I was looking for a challenge. It's not that I didn't enjoy rehab, but I really was looking for a challenge and I really, you know, at times liked the business aspect of it. So, when there was an opening, I thought I would take a shot. And it was a hard transition. And later on, a Dale Carnegie customer actually summed it up well. He was one of my executive coaching clients and he said, you know, when you think about it, a person that makes



phenomenal widgets on the line does not necessarily make a great leader of people making widgets on the line. And you need those tools and you need those resources and you need some guidance and mentors. Through the Carnegie Program, but also a wonderful mentor that I had, it really helped me see that there is so much to be had on the people side of leadership and running a business or a practice than people think.

Danielle Gerhart: Yeah. I mean, some people might think, well, I'm not a leader. I'm not born with those skills, I can't do that. I mean, is that true? Like are leaders just born? It is who you are or you're just not a leader? Or is it truly something you can learn to become? Are these skills acquirable?

Leslie English: They are. And the reason I say they are is because I truly acquired them, and I have seen people over the last 20 years acquire them. So really, what you need to have is a desire to want to change. It's very similar to losing weight or getting healthy. You cannot go to the gym for 15 minutes with a desire and think that it's going to change your life. You have to do it consistently. You have to have the guidance, you have to have a good mentor and you have to have the right tools. And so, that is all of the things that make up a great recipe for someone who truly wants to be a successful leader/role model because that is one of the biggest things that we look at as far as somebody who can gain credibility and trust and earn that trust, and also the engagement of people is that you'd have to want it and you have to work at it.

Danielle Gerhart: So, dedication and commitment sound like two underlying themes. When you say that you need to have a desire to want to change or want to learn, in your experience, I'm sure that you have coached hundreds more than that of executives.

Leslie English: Little more of that. Yes.

Danielle Gerhart: Lots and lots of executives. I mean, are there some common themes that you've seen, and I don't know if you can apply this to people who you've worked with in health care just if you want to speak generally, but are there some common buckets of areas that you see people often want or need to work on to be a better leader? Or is it kind of all over the place and it's very tailored to the individual?

Leslie English: Well, you know, that's an interesting question because over the years and plus with my experience in medicine, one of the things that's very clear is that when you're a practitioner, you have to have a high level of confidence because of what you do. And depending on what your specialty is, you're always putting yourself on the line to help somebody. And that means, you know, in many cases, life or death or the satisfaction of a quality of life. But, you have to have high level of confidence to do that. That's a big piece of it.



Leslie English: What we look at in leadership is that you don't want that confidence to become overkill to where now your ego is taking over. And when ego takes over, that's one of the biggest things in leadership that I have seen kill companies. I've seen them, you know, I've seen ego take down people that really did have a good shot at being very successful because they wouldn't put their ego aside. And so, when we talk about having an open mind, you really have to understand that no matter what you've accomplished, there is always room for improvement. So we call that continuous improvement. Having an open mind to accept that and then take a look at the resources that are out there to make that happen for yourself, that's what puts you on top of the average. And those are the people that you really see striving for that leadership excellence or that role model excellence and they make it happen. People gravitate towards that.

Danielle Gerhart: I love that phrase, continuous improvement. And I think our listeners in the healthcare space, I mean, that's just part of their job. I mean, continuously refining their skills, learning new technologies, learning new techniques. This is just inherently a part of who they are, that continuous improvement.

Leslie English: It is. And one of the things that we forget though is that it's not just about a process improvement or a technique improvement, it's about the people side of your practice as well or your business. And we forget that there needs to be continuous improvement in that area as well. So, when you look at some of the process improvement initiatives like six sigma or lean or 5S, continuous improvement is a term that people use often because that's what they're striving for. In medicine, sometimes we equate that with, continuous improvement with our technical skills, but we forget that there's a people side as well.

Danielle Gerhart: Can you talk to us a little bit more about what you mean by that or how people can continuously work toward improving the people side? And what people are important? Is that your staff, is it your medical device vendors, is it your patients, maybe it's everybody?

Leslie English: Well really, it's everybody. Because when you think about it, you have internal and external customers, or in that case, internal patients, external customers. You know, we look at leadership as a role model. And when you think about a role model, what does that really mean? Well, it's an individual that people gravitate towards. It's an individual that practices consistent attitudes and skills that people can relate to, that they feel comfortable with and that they provide that person explicit trust and credibility. That's a role model. So when you think about, where am I at with the people side of my business, the first thing you have to say to yourself is, where are we at. And there are a lot of baseline tools that you could use to measure that.

Leslie English: One of the things that some of our clients here utilize is the best place to work survey. That's a great evaluation. It can be used in a medical practice as well. And



it's great feedback because you can see exactly what your internal customers and at times your external customers are feeling and what they're saying about the environment and the leadership and communication and all that kind of thing. You can also use a 360 tool, and that is a tool that not only yourself but others will rate you on a very specific set of questions having to do with leadership. You look at those results and then you identify where your gaps are.

Danielle Gerhart: You know, I think that's so important to solicit or actively try to get feedback from your people. I mean, oftentimes, your patients are going to see your staff before they get into the room with you. If they're not happy or if they're struggling with something and you're just not aware because of a lack of leadership, I could see how that could create a cascade of challenges.

Leslie English: It does. It starts at the top, and when you think about it, the top controls the tone, the environment, the vision. And with that, even though there are some physicians that they like to be a little bit removed from what's going on in the practice, they have practice managers, they have office managers, they still should get together and have a very consistent vision and culture and environment that they want to see throughout their practice. Because when a patient comes in, their first opportunity to see what that physician is like or what that physician believes in or what that clinician is going to dedicate themselves to is the receptionist or the person that first greets them. And if that's kind of shaky, that sets the tone for the rest of the visit.

Leslie English: So, there have been experiences where, when I go in with some of our clinicians here and I'll start tracking a patient through the practice, I'll notice that when the receptionist or the billing person meets with them and kind of sets the tone, that travels right into the exam room. And then the physician or the clinician will come out and say, why are they in such a grumpy mood today? Well, they weren't until they interacted with your staff. It does come from the top and those resources are something that you have to give people the proper tools as well because I will guarantee that in most cases, people will say, well, I am, I am smiling, I am saying good morning. Well, you can be but it's the way you're saying it or it's the consistency that you're delivering it in. It could be body language, right? Your facial expressions.

Leslie English: And so, without the proper tools and technique and then coaching, it's hard for them to know if they're not. And so, their desire is there, their intention is there, but yet their actions or something different.

Danielle Gerhart: So, did you say that you define, Dale Carnegie defines leadership as being a role model?

Leslie English: Yes.



Danielle Gerhart: I love that. It's so simple and it really creates a picture in your head. Like it clicks, you get it. And you said that a role model is someone that people gravitate toward, they have the right attitude and skills. What do those look like?

Leslie English: So, we use what we call the triangle of success in our classes, especially in the first class. And what we say to folks is that, you know, think of someone in your mind that's a role model to you, someone that you gravitate towards, someone that has earned your trust and respect. And then think about what is it about that person that you admire. And they come up with a list of qualities or characteristics and we put them into a triangle. And undoubtedly, what you'll see is one leg of the triangle will be heavily weighted. You'll come up with things like empathy and humor, a great attitude, they're confident, they're consistent, they have passion for what they do, they have a good understanding of people, all these different terms, and that'll be on one side of the triangle.

Leslie English: On the other side, the second weighted side would be things like, they're a good delegator, they're good at coaching people, they're good at time management, they're good at stress management. And those are processes, and we call those skills because you can follow a formula to learn how to do those things.

Leslie English: The last thing that you hear them mention, and sometimes you actually have to ask is anything about knowledge. Like, do they have experience, do they have a degree, are they a specialist in their field? And the reason why I say how the triangle is weighted is because statistically it shows us that people relate and respond to the attitudes piece. Those quality or characteristics like empathy and understanding and humor and passion, those are choices that people make. Sometimes they're conscious and sometimes they're unconscious choices. But those are attitudes. And that's what people relate to. And so, we know statistically, the reason why people stay in a job is because they have a great relationship and they feel respected and appreciated by the people that they report to. Still today, people leave jobs not because of money but because of the lack of relationship with their managers.

Danielle Gerhart: Yeah. That relationship goes a long way. I mean, it really runs deep and it's interesting to hear how the knowledge or whatever prestige that you hold within your industry is really not the most important thing to people around you. It's how you make them feel and how you make them just succeed in their own roles.

Leslie English: Exactly. Exactly.

Danielle Gerhart: So, we have a group at BHG called the BHG Ambassadors. It's a select group of our customers. And we asked them like, what do you think successful leaders have, like what are their traits? And I just wanted to share some of them with



you and get your reaction. Vivian wrote in and said, confidence and humility. And I think I heard some similar traits to that you were describing.

Leslie English: Their attitude. Sure.

Danielle Gerhart: And then Tom said emotional intelligence. And that's definitely a hot phrase right now. Everybody's talking about your emotional IQ. So, I didn't know if you had any reaction to either of their feedback.

Leslie English: So what Vivian and Tom are referring to is that attitude side of the triangle, all of those quality and characteristics that people can relate to. The empathy, the understanding. Now with EI, the other thing that goes into that as communication, confidence and being able to coach and lead as far as projects and moving people through strategy. So, when you think about leadership at the very top, the CEO or the president will have a vision and sometimes that's created on their own or sometimes it's given by a board. And that vision is basically, what does our practice look like in five to 10 years? And from that, then they develop a strategic plan, and that strategic plan outlines some of the key areas that are going to get that organization, that practice to that destination in the next five or 10 years.

Leslie English: After that, it's important, they have to be passionate about communicating that, right? So, they have to be able to be in front of people and be good presenters. They have to listen for understanding as far as, is my audience or is my staff, are they nervous about this? And they have to calm that nervousness. They have to get them to see that change is an opportunity, not something that we should be fearful of. So, a leader takes all of that into consideration as they're trying to set the stage or a strategy for where they want to go. Then those people feel empowered. And when they feel empowered and they feel appreciated and they feel respected, they will then go to their teams and design what needs to happen like an operating plan for that strategic plan to become reality.

Leslie English: So, you're really creating this domino effect of growth and development and engagement because of how you set the stage in the very beginning. I have a couple of individuals that when I train them to get up in front of a group to present their strategic plan, whether it's in front of the board or the organization, they look like paint drying. And I say to them, if you're not excited about this, they're not going to get excited about it.

Danielle Gerhart: Right. You don't even think about that but it's so true.

Leslie English: So, not only do we work on the words that they use and the passion and the enthusiasm in their voice, but I also work with them a lot on their body language. How they're carrying themselves, what their hands are doing. Are you smiling



when you're coming to all the good news pieces. And that goes a long way because people respond to that. That's EI.

Danielle Gerhart: Yeah. So, one thing I wanted to ask you about that when we were talking about building that long term or short-term strategic plan and getting people aligned and to buy into it, from the top down, so you've worked with so many different clients and so many different industries. And not to put you on the spot, but I'm wondering like, do you have an example or just an anecdote from a customer or a client who said, you know, we went through your training, I implemented these things and we saw actual results, here's how things kind of turned around for us or improved?

Leslie English: So, we have, I'm going to say probably 80% of our client base are customers that have been with us for more than 10 years and we're very excited about that because that really shows the partnership that we have with folks and that we're in there with them over time to win it, you know, to do a great job and make sure that they're successful. So, you know, there's probably five or six companies right now that are in their fifth, sixth year of doing consistent training because they know that the employee base has common language, they have common tools, they have a resource to go to, and together, they utilize these things to make the strategic plan happen. And with that, they can be held accountable. And when I say accountable, I don't mean by way of discipline, I mean by way of coaching.

Leslie English: So, because everybody pretty much speaks the same language and they know the tools and they have an incredible toolbox, it makes it a little easier for the managers to go in and say, you know, tomorrow, you're going to have to talk to your team about a significant process change that's coming up over your training last year. What are you going to utilize to make this something of an opportunity and to get them to see this as something that's positive and what's in it for them? And so, they will go into their Dale Carnegie toolbox and they'll take a look at their tools and techniques and say, okay, I'm going to use this, this and this. And they're actually preparing a desired outcome.

Danielle Gerhart: So, I'm hearing continuous improvement. Continually working toward improving those skills and putting them into action. It's really easy to come out of a training, and you got so much out of it, you're invigorated, you can't wait to get back to the office. But as you know, like things often get pushed aside or you forget, but I love that, there is, when you find that commitment and continually work toward refining those skills and you start to see the payoff and then I think that motivates you even more to keep learning.

Danielle Gerhart: So, one question I have for you is leadership skills, is it reserved just for those people at the top? What about the receptionist or a dental hygienist, the vet tech? Maybe they're thinking, I'm not the leader in the office, do I really need the



skills? Or maybe you're thinking, well, I run the practice, I should just worry about improving my own skills. Can you talk a little bit about how to engage your staff regardless of level or role into developing their skills?

Leslie English: Sure. So yesterday, we have a 14-week-old puppy, and the puppy somehow got under the deck and came in the house with a significant cut.

Danielle Gerhart: Okay, wait a minute. What kind of puppy and name?

Leslie English: She's a Cockapoo and her name is Chloe. Chloe is extremely adventurous. And so, I happened to be home working on a project and as I went downstairs, thank goodness to check on her, I see all this blood coming out. So, I wrap her up, go right up to the vet office, didn't even call. I walk in and the receptionist at the desk looks at me and she goes, "Don't worry, we'll take care of her. Everything's going to be okay." That was the very first thing she said to me.

Danielle Gerhart: Game changer. Totally sets the tone.

Leslie English: I calmed right down. And here I had this poor thing wrapped up in a towel. And she took the dog for me, and as she walked with me, she's like, "There's some fresh coffee over there. I'm going to go get one of the techs and they'll be out with you in a second. Is there anything else I can do for you?" And I thought, wow, that's huge, right? And that's what that office does. And that comes from the top. And I know this because I've been a customer there for 25 years. So, I know what they practice, I know what they instill in their folks. The same thing with my daughter's pediatrician. When we walk in the door, if I'm there for a cold, they know that as a mom, I need a little bit more calming down because my poor baby's sick. And they practice that and that's why I'm a customer of that practice.

Leslie English: So, we tell folks, it does not matter what's on your business card, it doesn't matter what's on your door, it doesn't matter what your title is, you are a role model and you can make it as great as you want it to be or you can have people walk out and go, I don't know if I want to go back there. And the one thing that we've noticed in medicine that is different than back when I was in practice, people have choices, and they will exercise that choice if they're not happy because there's plenty of opportunity out there for them to go to.

Danielle Gerhart: Yeah. And you know, the word care is so broad. It's not just, again, not just in the patient room, it starts from the minute that you walk in the door. How are you taking care of your patients?

Leslie English: Actually, from the phone call, when you call and schedule an appointment. I've had individuals, you know, when I've called and the doctor has given me a specialist to go to. And I'll call and make the appointment and I'll have somebody



pick up the phone and say, you're going to be put on hold, click. And so, I hang up and I call my doctor back and say, give me a different specialist, not going there. So, people do have options, and in many cases, they'll exercise that.

Danielle Gerhart: So, I want to switch gears really quickly and briefly, and thinking about leadership in the healthcare setting. Obviously, health care is one of the most stressful industries. Do you have any advice or tips for how leaders, regardless of their role can effectively manage that stress and overcome it or just control it and help their leadership skills come to the forefront?

Leslie English: So, it's a very stressful situation no matter what part of medicine that you're in because you're dealing with people's lives. And that is something that should not be taken lightly, and it is extremely stressful. One of the things that I would suggest is that, you know, find an executive coach depending on what level you're in, if you're a physician, if you're managing a practice, if you have a fairly large practice, dentist, whatever the case may be, your executive coach is an individual that no matter what's going on, they're an ear for you to share whatever's going on in that day, that week or what's coming up. So that way, you don't have to bring it home and you don't have to share it with your staff. It's your personal, I don't want to say therapists but it's somebody that just will listen and guide you through, they won't answer your questions, they won't tell you what to do, but they're there as a good listener.

Leslie English: The other thing is that, you know, we talk about living in day tight compartments. And for some of us, that means living in five-minute compartments. And I'm just going to handle what I can handle over the next five minutes. I'm not going to worry about later this afternoon, I'm not going to worry about what's going on next week. I'm just going to handle what I can today. So, living in that day or living in that half hour, whatever the case may be definitely can help. And then remember that, you know, you have a great resource in your support team. And if you treat them well, they will be there for you.

Leslie English: So, you have to remember, you know, there's that saying, we take it out on the ones we love the most. And a lot of times that will happen because the practices are very close. You work with those folks who are long time. And so, you have to remember that they're not the ones to pay for the stress that you're under. Everybody's under a lot of stress, especially now, it's a little different than even 25 years ago, a lot going on. And that stress management is very helpful. It's key actually to a lot of success.

Danielle Gerhart: Yeah, absolutely. This has been really great. Thank you so much, Leslie.

Leslie English: Oh, my goodness. Thank you so much for having me.

Danielle Gerhart: So, you have been CEO of Dale Carnegie of central New York for five years.



Leslie English: Yes.

Danielle Gerhart: Tell us just a little bit about practice and if a listener happens to be outside of central New York, how can they get hooked up with the right Dale Carnegie resource in their area?

Leslie English: Well, thank you so much for asking. In central New York, we cover 22 counties. So, we go up to the Canadian border, down to Pennsylvania, to Seneca Falls and then close to Canajoharie. So that is the territory for central New York. There is a Dale Carnegie office pretty much anywhere in the world that anyone needs a Dale Carnegie office. So, if you google dalecarnegie.com and put in your zip code, you will find an office that's close to you, and they will be very willing to help you with anything that you need, answer your questions. If you're having difficulty finding somebody, you can definitely contact me in central New York and I will put you in touch with a partner in your area that will definitely help you be success and be the role model you want to be.

Danielle Gerhart: Oh, that's great. And how can we contact you?

Leslie English: You could reach me personally at 315-457-1300 or at leslie.english@dalecarnegie.com

Danielle Gerhart: Great. And we'll put that all up on our website too so folks can grab it easily. Any parting words for our listeners on leadership before we wrap up the episode?

Leslie English: Well, I heard a wonderful saying and I've made it my own, and it says that, we judge ourselves by our intentions, others judge us by our actions. So, it's very common to have the best intentions in the world but the way that you're demonstrating them through your behaviors are what people are reacting to and responding to, and building perception. So, make sure you have that open mind and be very cognizant of how you're behaving aside from just your intention to be a great leader, a great role model.

Danielle Gerhart: Oh, that's great advice and a great way to wrap up the show. Thank you again, Leslie. We love having you here and thanks everyone for tuning in. If you have any questions, comments, or thoughts, shoot us an email at podcast@bhg-inc.com, we would love to hear from you.