

### Box 7-1. Transformational Leadership

Athletic trainers are faced with challenges every day in their daily duties. As an athletic trainer, you are faced with appointing one of your organizational leaders into a chair position for a specific committee. This committee is responsible for promoting a change initiative that will likely create some tension within the organization. Committee members are quite contentious with each other and agree to disagree but hold grudges that affect decisions and communication.

- Identify the key characteristics you would like to see in the leader who is selected.
- Would a transformational leader, transactional leader, or both fit this position best?
- How would you know if he or she is suited to lead this challenging group?

Within this model, people skills, discipline-specific knowledge, personal qualities, initiative, strategic thinking, and communication all shape the leader in the professional journey.

People skills are commonly addressed in leadership approaches and include, but are not limited to, professionalism, manners, and verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Brennan and Monson (2014) contend that professionalism is “an indispensable element” (p. 644) in leadership because it secures the compact between the medical professionals and society. These authors conclude that individual and organizational professionalism create broad benefits for the organization and patients/clients.

As with all leadership, discipline-specific content knowledge enables the leader to create credibility and confidence amongst other professionals. Content expertise provides the foundation for informed decision making because of the rich understanding of the factors influencing the leadership decisions. Without content knowledge, a leader must rely on secondhand information that may have bias and/or inaccuracies. Although discipline-specific content knowledge is very important, it cannot stand alone in supporting ethical leaders. Interpersonal skills are equally important to leading with integrity.

Personal qualities of leaders are quite variable. Some leaders have a quiet presence and are effective leaders, whereas others are more outgoing and assertive. Regardless of the personal characteristics, all leaders need to develop a strong sense of character and become consistent in their behaviors. Behaviors, in general, reflect your values, whereas consistency in behaviors defines your character.

Initiative is another element essential to establishing a leadership presence in the profession. Although mentored by others, it takes courage and initiative to become involved in leading the profession. Opportunities for leadership are extensive within the athletic training profession and require assertiveness to engage with others and take risks to become involved. Athletic training leaders are always thinking of ways to involve interested and motivated members in the strategic initiatives of the organization.