



Max D. Ray

Grow, Create, Lead

Max continues to be adroit in not only thinking about critical issues facing pharmacy but in putting his conclusions into publications so others can benefit. This skill is evidenced in his 1997 Harvey AK Whitney Lecture, *Letters from the Edge*, in which he writes three imaginary letters on what is meant by professional practice, the qualifications, and activities required. The letters are from 1940, 1997, and 2040. He has seized various opportunities throughout his career to contribute, moving from practice leadership and college faculty, to professional organizational staff, and culminating in being a college of pharmacy dean.

His bachelor of science degree in pharmacy is from the University of South Carolina and his doctor of pharmacy and master's in hospital pharmacy degrees are from the University of Tennessee. He completed a two-year residency at Methodist Hospital in Memphis. Max currently serves in a contractual capacity as a consultant to the American Council for Pharmacy Education and is part time faculty at the University of Tennessee College of Pharmacy.

In his letter he states that *serving a purpose bigger than ourselves is more important than embellishing your resume.*



Dear Young Pharmacist,

You will receive this message interleaved with several others, all written by experienced pharmacists whose only motive is to help you achieve your potential as a leader in pharmacy. Through our respective careers, we have all come to understand that leadership

is required of us—it is not an option. If our hard-learned lessons can assist you in becoming an effective leader, our goal will be achieved.

Here, then, are my thoughts on the topic of leadership.

Leadership requires a purpose. It is not sufficient to say “I want to be a leader,” or “I am preparing myself to be a leader.” What completes that thought? For instance, you want to be a leader in improving health-system pharmacy. That would clearly state the general direction in which you might lead. Remember that the phrase *to be a leader* is an incomplete thought—it requires a predicate (in other words, action)!

Leadership should serve a larger purpose. To what purpose are you, as a pharmacist, willing to devote yourself? Can you say clearly that you are motivated by some deeply held sense of professional responsibility? Is it more important to pursue that responsibility than it is to embellish your resume? Do you care who gets credit for accomplishing a goal? *Servant leadership* is a term Robert Greenleaf uses to describe this altruistic form of leadership (*Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*).

Pharmacists have a moral responsibility to provide leadership on behalf of their patients. Dr. Doug Hepler reminded us that this is part of our covenant with society (“Pharmacy as a Clinical Profession” in *Am J Health Syst Pharm*). It really is not acceptable to opt out of being a leader when we are actively engaged in providing patient care. To speak up and to take forceful action (e.g., when we become aware of potential medication problems) may require moral courage. But to *not* provide leadership in such instances is an act of moral cowardice and professional malfeasance.

Leadership also requires creativity. Effective leaders always have alternate pathways to achieve their goal. To envision those alternate pathways requires creativity. Some of us are more creative than others, but I believe creativity (much like leadership) can be nurtured and cultivated. By trusting our creative abilities, we will be more effective leaders. To broaden your thinking about creativity and the creative process, I recommend Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* and Daniel Boorstein’s *The Creators: A History of Heroes of the Imagination*.

Great leaders are dragon-slayers. While in fiction some leaders may have faced actual dragons, in more mundane settings (for example, in a health-system pharmacy setting or a patient-care setting), this translates to confronting problems *as individuals* and struggling with