



# Strategies for nurse leaders

Turn your vision into a road map for others.

**AUDREY M. STEVENSON**, PhD, MPH, MSN, FNP-BC, has spent much of her 30-year career in nursing and public health focused on finding ways to provide the community with the highest quality public health services. She's currently division director of family health services for the Salt Lake County Health Department in Salt Lake City, Utah, where she manages five public health centers and a variety of initiatives, including the immunization program; the women, infants, and children nutrition program; clinical collaborations; cancer screening programs; public health nursing; and the nurse-family partnership.

An active American Nurses Association (ANA) and Utah Nurses Association member, Stevenson recently led an ANA webinar for nurse leaders on strategic vision, and she moderates the ANA Nursing Leaders Online Community. She received the ANA Immunity Award in 2010 for promoting the tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis vaccine at public health clinics. ANA asked Stevenson about these efforts.



Audrey M. Stevenson

## What can nurse leaders do to challenge their strategic thinking?

To improve our thought processes and become more strategic leaders and thinkers, we need to constantly challenge our assumptions. One of the first steps in fostering strategic thinking is to disrupt and get beyond groupthink. A change in mindset can be achieved by observing and seeking trends and determining key information that may be missing.

Set aside time to improve strategic thinking. Connecting with peers in your organization and professional communities, such as ANA's Nursing Leaders Community, can help you identify the issues affecting the workplace and provide different perspectives and strategies. Strategic thinking also involves asking the tough questions to help identify different possibilities, approaches, and potential outcomes.

## What role does leadership play in innovation?

One of the differences between a leader and a manager is the ability to see a macro view. Leaders need to communicate a vision that will serve as a road map for

staff. They can foster innovation by sharing information with others. Individuals cannot innovate when they are kept in the dark. Leaders need to create opportunities for raising and testing ideas. Provide time, training, and other opportunities for individuals to be innovative so that ideas may flourish.

## How can nurses be advocates for immunization?

Nurses excel in promoting preventive measures. As nurses, we have a responsibility to protect ourselves and others by stopping the spread of disease. We do this through good handwashing, avoiding direct patient care when we are ill, and ensuring that we don't spread vaccine-preventable diseases

by first being vaccinated ourselves, and then advocating for others to be vaccinated.

## How can a leader successfully motivate nurses of different generations?

Leaders cannot assume that all employees within the same generation will be motivated in the same way. I have found that having conversations as part of the performance evaluation provides a fantastic opportunity to learn how the individual likes to be recognized and rewarded and what professional opportunities he or she is seeking.

## Do you have a personal leadership lesson to share?

Leadership is an honor. We have a responsibility to create and communicate a vision that improves the quality of life of all those with whom we work and serve. Many great leaders in nursing, such as Florence Nightingale and past ANA presidents Karen A. Daley and Pamela F. Cipriano, among others, have demonstrated a true commitment to both people and our profession and provided a clear vision that resonated with others. Personally, I feel a responsibility to use the opportunities that my position provides to make a difference in the lives of those with whom I work and those whose lives are touched by our work. We should always strive to give back in any way that we can. ★