Leadership and Management

Management and leadership are key ingredients in the future of the American Occupational Therapy Association. Bennis and Nanus (1985) define management as doing the right thing and leadership as doing things right. There is a need to establish a partnership between management and leadership, because both are critical to our success in the future. This article focuses on association management as doing things right through planned growth and accountability. The discussion of leadership, or doing the right thing, centers around the concept of transformative leadership as presented by Bennis and Nanus (1985).

In comparing our Association to the rest of the health, education, and human service industries, we must credit, in large part, our volunteer and national office staff management teams for our successes. Our profession’s philosophic beliefs and values also set us apart. Although we spend countless hours trying to maintain a stable association management system, we seem somewhat reluctant to promote that which we have worked so long and hard to develop—our profession. In today’s society it would be unrealistic if we attempted to keep our Association viable and competitive without accepting the responsibility for being accountable for our profession’s philosophic beliefs and values. A primary tenet of the responsibilities of a successful enterprise, and therefore a successful association, is the unequivocal acceptance of the necessity for accountability of the profession. To manage, accountability principle needs to be established and I propose that our principle be stated as “Our Association shall be managed to achieve job security for our members by promoting the discipline of occupation and the applied science of occupational therapy, together with planned growth of our programs. We will grow by building upon demonstrated strengths and meeting members’ needs.”

As with other operating principles of AOTA, accountability of our profession is founded upon individual commitment to, and acceptance of, the collective responsibilities for the promotion of occupational therapy, as well as for our personal performance as therapists. Our Association can measure that commitment and performance through mechanisms attendant to principles of accountability. Such mechanisms include planning and budget processes, cost objectives, established quality levels, and performance and phase reviews. Each of these is aimed at establishing quantifiable measurements against which specific performance can be measured. Accountability would seem to require representatives at all levels of management to establish goals against which they can evaluate their own performance, as well as the performance of the enterprise.

If we manage our Association so that it will be accountable for our profession’s beliefs and values, we will go a long way in achieving accountability for the professional performance of our members. One important component of our efforts to assure accountability is planned growth of our programs. Planned growth is controlled growth: We must manage our resources appropriately to create maximum value by investing in the development of occupational therapy as both a profession and an applied science.

Planned growth implies a system of controls, the primary one of which is forecasting. The ability to anticipate results is the ability to control. Management is in control in the fullest sense of the word if it can accurately forecast the effects of changes in the environment and then institute actions in a timely manner to achieve planned results (and minimize adverse effects). Planned growth is the process by which we maximize our resources through the identification
of priorities, strategies, and accountability (Mansfield, 1986).

Every enterprise has limited capital resources which must be employed appropriately to create maximum value by investing in new programs, products, or services. Our Association may have to deal with limitations that are the result of the enacted policies governing certification; however, we must manage our organization in the face of these limitations. Planned growth for the promotion of our profession cannot be limited or deferred because of our predicted financial limitations. We must balance available resources and efforts necessary to maintain a stable Association against the resources and efforts necessary to promote and maintain our profession. Our Association must be committed to the long-term planning of scientific programs and activities that will enhance our values and instill a sense of stability and predictability in those whom we serve.

As we all know, the winds of change are always blowing; members' needs and our ability to satisfy those needs are always in flux. It is not possible for us to meet all the needs of our members in all segments of their professional lives; therefore, we must concentrate on the activities that will have the biggest impact on the future of occupational therapy, and on those that allow us to best apply our demonstrated strengths.

In his book In Search of Excellence, Tom Peters (1982) characterized one aspect of accountability as sticking to the knitting. Applied to AOTA, the “knitting” would be its mission to assure job security for its members. The important and continuing challenges and opportunities for promoting job security include: (a) legislative and advocacy activities to assure the rightful place for occupational therapy within health, education, and human service programs; (b) pursuits to assure quality educational programs for lifelong learning (including information resources); and (c) an active commitment to the promotion of professional excellence.

Excellence carries its own rewards. By “sticking to our knitting” we shall achieve professional excellence, and our rewards will be: (a) a recognized and respected service profession; (b) a favorable marketplace for our services; (c) an academic discipline through which we contribute to knowledge about human occupation; and (d) an applied therapeutic science that promotes the quality of life for special needs populations. In essence, our rewards will be job security for our members.

An effective operating principle for our Association can be defined as “striving for excellence through the science and art of our practice.” Through scientific research, the beliefs and values of the profession will be verified, rationally explained, and stated in measurable terms. Thus, we must not only promote scientific developments but also develop ourselves as consumers of science. Although the scientific approach is primary to defining the uniqueness of occupational therapy, the artistic approach to therapy is also a powerful force that exemplifies our uniqueness. Art provides us with an awareness or intuitive knowledge. Art provides the dimensions by which science can be applied to promote the quality of life for the persons we serve. And finally, art and skill are necessary to apply the findings of science.

Doing the right thing for our profession today and in the upcoming decade must include the commitment to professional accountability. That accountability can only be gained through scientific inquiry and the application of science to the reality of practice. Those activities surrounding the science of occupation and the applied science of occupational therapy can be carried out only through the assignment of resources.

It is common to hear our members, and in fact some of our leaders and managers, objecting to the expenditure of funds to activities that would promote our profession, such as research. Reasons given frequently are that research is too expensive compared with the value of the information gained, that we are a practice profession and that therefore the expenditures must be directly related to our members' practice needs, or that an association should not provide funding for an individual's research. As occupational therapists we must ask ourselves two questions. Is it valid to call expenditures for research to be "cost-ineffective" given the fact that empirical data form the basis of practitioner research? Is it valid to expend our resources solely on our present-day demands, which focus on short-term gains, without making an equitable allocation for the long-term survival of occupational therapy?

The threats we face are not just from our major competitors, government regulations, the explosion of knowledge, labor force shortages, the difficulty to obtain reimbursement of our services, and demands for productivity. The threat we face is our reluctance to provide resources for research and actively promote our profession. The threat we face is our own organizational trance.

We are creative individuals who have the ability to shake off our own trance and manage change. If leadership is provided, we can snap out of the organizational trance and become responsible for the accountability of our profession and the planned growth of our Association. Bennis and Nanus (1985) propose that leadership is the wise use of power and that power is the basic social energy needed "to translate intention into reality and sustain it" (p. 17). Effective leadership can move our Association from current to future states; leadership can create visions of opportunities, can instill commitment to change and mobilize and focus energy and resources (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Leadership is viewed as the critical ingredient by which progress is created. Leaders direct change that builds confidence and empowers others. Leading is influencing—guiding in direction, action, and opinion—whereas managing means to accomplish, to have responsibility for, to conduct. Both are necessary, but the difference is crucial. Leading involves activities of vision and judgment, and managing involves activities of mastering programs (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Many organizations are overmanaged; they excel in their abilities to handle daily routines and respond to present-day demands but fail to foresee the future. Many organizations...
never question whether their daily routines should be carried out at all, nor do they question whether their structures and functions are effective (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). We must not allow AOTA to be overmanaged and underled. As managers, we must not only plan growth and direct accountability, we must also view ourselves as leaders who have a vision of the future. As occupational therapists we manage our programs, but we also must lead our profession.

Over the next decade, leadership within our Association will be the pivotal force that provides us with vision, and management will provide the power to face the uncertain and unsettling complex future. Through management, planned growth becomes our commodity and accountability becomes our currency. Through leadership, vision becomes our commodity and power becomes our currency.

As an association we can exert our power by adopting the concept of transformative leadership. Transformative leaders empower others; they commit people to action, convert followers into leaders, and convert leaders into agents of change. Transformative leaders become social architects, persons who understand an organization and shape its future (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). According to DiBianca and Berkman (1986) most attempts to produce change actually stifle it because most attempts are directed toward changing people's attitudes, behaviors, and values; such efforts tend not to produce consequential and lasting change. Leaders bring about meaningful change in organizations that need or want to be changed.

Creating new possibilities in an organization begins with helping people rediscover their own personal power. But in most large organizations, including AOTA, many people have lost their sense of self-determination. All too frequently people merely react; they look outside themselves for the causes of what's happening to them. Rather than be self-determined, people become victims of circumstance. Many of us are resigned to "the way it is" within our own workplace and within our profession. When we see turf battles, difficult communications, politics, and cumbersome structures, we cease to create new and powerful alternatives (DiBianca & Berkman, 1986).

As transformative leaders, we need to help our colleagues realize that they can shape their own professional lives. Occupational therapists, by training and temperament, know how to be creative and perform at high levels. As leaders, it is our responsibility to make others aware of these possibilities within themselves. People are empowered when they take the position that they have the ability to create their own world (DiBianca & Berkman, 1986). As transformative leaders, we permit others to unleash their personal power, to get in touch with new possibilities to create breakthrough changes in their jobs, marketplaces, associations, and lives. As leaders, it is our responsibility to recognize the potential in others and actively support it; in essence, we empower others rather than control or manage them. Our job is easy; we need only to uncover what is already there.

Our Association finds its greatest expression in a common social responsibility, we are translating our beliefs into a living reality. As leaders of occupational therapy, we must become the social architects who translate the ideas and solutions of our followers into action. By doing so, we transform membership into leadership. Collectively we promote the future of our profession; we promote accountability of our beliefs and values; we promote ourselves within the marketplace. Collectively we can accomplish the mission of our Association to serve members by promoting public acceptance of occupational therapy as valuable and cost-effective services that enable productive living.

References