

Adaptability – (definition) able to adjust oneself readily to different conditions.

Healthcare leaders must develop the skill of *adaptability* for career survival. Changes in healthcare are abundant. For example: varied payment processes require operational adjustments; new technologies for medical equipment require a rapid change of services; patients who are more knowledgeable of disease than healthcare providers deserve attention and listening; generation differences challenge perspectives in the work place; and ethnic and gender diversities add new dimensional opinions to the management team. The ability to adapt is essential to career success.

Skills to rapidly and flexibly adapt to a change in management can be one ticket to career survival. New management often generates new expectations and new directions. Approaches that worked with a past manager may be challenged or ineffective. Leadership approaches may need to be revised in order to raise the bar for the new boss.

Careers, too, need to adapt quickly to change. Environmental changes may occur quickly and subtly, often requiring immediate action to adapt to the situation. Breaking the rules to achieve short term success in a new environment, rather than making fundamental changes to your career plan, may eventually backfire. Too many examples in the news highlight a short term maneuver, often for financial benefit, as an alternative to the right behavior changes. The best approach is to make a long term commitment to adaptation.

Structuring a career for maximum flexibility requires careful self analysis to recognize limitations to change. There is a difference in what one does and what one “can” do. The personal challenge is to capitalize on strengths while maintaining a positive attitude to adapt. Progress occurs when visions are anchored in a firm yet flexible plan. Last year’s decisions or recent developments may require adjustments. Adding an extra 10% effort may be all that is needed. Most likely one can achieve more than one realizes. The plan should be regularly reviewed to keep up with the pace of progress.

A personal score card can serve as a continuous quality improvement process to understand one’s value or contribution to an organization and measure the impact of adaptability. Through accomplishments, contributions, and quantified results, a benchmark can be established to measure one’s total worth to the organization. Adapting to a new work process that enhances productivity or to techniques that produce new deliverables can then demonstrate a real impact.

A common response when changes arise is to wait for someone else to deal with the issues. Take the initiative. The ability to adapt to change is a leadership opportunity. Continuing education helps. Networking with colleagues may reveal new ideas to deal

with traditional issues. When one is fully prepared, adapting to the circumstances can be an exciting and challenging opportunity.

In the future, speed to adapt to changes will need to be even faster. New technologies and new understandings of disease management are being introduced at an ever increasing pace. Future leaders will need to explore perspectives across diversities of gender, age, ethnic, knowledge base and education and be able to respond to new ideas and approaches.

Many people fear change because they are comfortable doing business the current way. But fear of change will lead to certain failure. Adaptability is essential to career survival, advancement, and success. As an ancient Greek philosopher once said, "The only constant is change."

J. Craig Honaman, FACHE, CRC
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H&H Consulting is a leader in executive Career Transition and Career Coaching services for the Healthcare industry. Founded in 2001 by J. Craig Honaman, H&H Consulting has helped hundreds of healthcare professionals plan, manage, and advance their careers. One's career health is as important as one's personal health. A healthy approach can contribute to the management and success of one's career over a lifetime.

Contact:

J. Craig Honaman, FACHE, CRC
Principal
H & H Consulting Partners
560 Cambridge Way, Suite 101
Atlanta, GA 30328
800.403.5972
www.careerpiloting.com
craig@careerpiloting.com