

What Makes a Leader?

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The AAAOM conference has just concluded in New Mexico. The association has transitioned with a new leadership team. Jeannie Kang (California) is the new president, and Michael Jabbour (New York) is the vice president with Janet Borges (Virginia) as secretary and Kimberly Benjamin (Colorado) as treasurer. Irvin Tjiong is the student-association president. Amanda Troelsen (Minnesota) is the membership chair. These volunteers, as well as Christine Chong, director of the Chinese Acupuncture Council (CAC), Mark Evans as insurance chair, and Matthew Bauer as chair of the public education task force, have answered the call to leadership and filled the need for the future of our profession. They are taking action, and these actions are consistent with what they truly believe. They are showing us that leadership is the life blood of any organization.

Defining Leadership

Leadership has many definitions, and is complicated precisely because of all those definitions. These are numerous leadership styles because leaders have so many roles to fill. In one way or another, everyone in the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession is a leader. The special skill is discovering and understanding one's strengths and weaknesses and how to develop your own fundamental elements of leadership.

There are some basic skills in leadership which encompass its fundamental traits. Leaders must possess an attitude of service. A humble, caring, service-oriented attitude is a must for a health care practitioner. This helps build admiration, respect and trust among patients and prospective patients. Service encompasses integrity, compassion, understanding and trust.

Finding Your Passion

You must also be passionate about what you do. If you can properly convey your passion, people are sure to notice. Of all the traits of leadership, passion is the most important.

The famous actress Tippi Hedren is the founder of the [Shambala Preserve](#), a sanctuary for rescued "big cats" such as leopards and lions. She explained her passion for her work: "We will proceed! Nothing will prevent this effort to stop the breeding and abuse of the magnificent exotic cat for human possession! No matter how long it takes!" In Hedren's numerous interviews, her passion and love for what she does shines through.

Another example of passion comes from [Katharine Graham](#), publisher of the *Washington Post* during its Watergate scandal heyday. She said, "To love what you do and feel that it matters, how could anything else be more fun?"

You must be passionate about your patients, your practice and the profession. Through your passion,

you will make a difference in the lives of the people you serve.

Spreading the Word

Branding acupuncture and Oriental medicine is a process of getting the word out about acupuncture. It is the process of creating a buzz about the healing properties of our medicine. This is an idea whose time has come. Quality is of the utmost importance when building a branding. British art critic and social commentator [John Ruskin](#) wrote, "Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful education. It represents the wise choice of many alternatives."

The acupuncture profession has come to a crossroads. We must stand together to embrace change and growth. We must have more members in the professional associations. We must have more graduates in practice. We must have more practitioners ready to stand-up for their values. To have the courage to maintain integrity, celebrate success of both ourselves and others, and keep hope alive.

We must take responsibility to develop an attitude of service and make a difference in ourselves, our patients, our communities and ultimately the profession in the United States. Each individual has qualities of leadership, and it is a leader's responsibility to look into the future.

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